



**Forest Fire Lookout Association  
New York State Chapter  
August 2019**

Where do I begin with all the news for August in New York State? With new towers, celebrations, Annual events, rescues, the passing of an FFLA Founder?

I think it is fitting to begin the newsletter by honoring one of our FFLA Founders, Bob Spear. Bob passed away on July 23<sup>rd</sup>. Our April newsletter contained the wonder and enthusiasm Bob felt when the FFLA was first begun. "As we slowly got to know each other and what we represented, there came a realization, we might have a good idea growing here." As our National Chair Keith Argow stated, "Bob's heart was in fire lookouts and he enjoyed every hour of it. We are privileged to have known and worked with him in many roles. He will be warmly remembered for a long, long time." I well remember the first time I met Bob at his beloved Sterling Forest Fire Tower in 2006. My 2 hiking companions got a bit impatient with the length of our stay, but for Bob and I we could have talked until the sun went down and not noticed. He knew so much about fire towers and fire tower history. He so willingly shared information with everyone. When he came to our Northeastern Conference in 2016 he was very pleased to be home and to be among fire tower friends. I love the photos here. Bob in his tower and Bob enjoying the camaraderie of other fire tower enthusiasts at our conference. Rest in peace Bob.



Rescues at fire towers throughout the state: This last month's Ranger Reports had several rescues that occurred at fire towers. I suppose that with the popularity of both healthier lifestyles and the promotion of fire towers that this may be inevitable. I propose that we can all help to educate and inform the hiking public to make good, safe hiking decisions and prevent some of these occurrences. Some rescues involved lengthy nighttime carry outs such as occurred on Lyon Mt, some involved entire families that did not have lights such as Poke O Moonshine, and some involved injuries. We thank the NYS Forest Rangers for their vigilance in providing prompt search and rescue services to the visiting public at fire towers. Forest Rangers have also gone to fight fires out of state: <https://www.leaderherald.com/news/local-news/2019/07/local-ranger-puts-out-alaskan-fires>

It is finally time! The Annual Lighting of the Fire Towers Event will be on Saturday, August 31<sup>st</sup> from 9-9:30 pm. We now have 16 towers participating and a special Lighting Dinner happening too! To see all of the towers who are participating and locations where you can see the tower, please visit <http://www.viewsandbrews.com/balsamlake>. The original premise for the Lighting of the Fire Tower Event came from Doug Hamilton of the Red Hill Fire Tower Committee. The idea was to light the fire tower with a high powered light, put lots of press releases in the local paper about the time when this would occur and invite people to go to locations around the community where they could look up, see the light on the horizon and remember that there was a fire tower there watching over and protecting the community and surrounding forest. Rain date is Sunday, September 1<sup>st</sup> from 9-9:30 pm. At 6pm on the 31<sup>st</sup> there will also be a Buffet Dinner Celebration at the Lake Clear Lodge and Retreat and at 7pm a Dessert Buffet on the Lake. You will be able to see St. Regis fire tower right across the Lake while enjoying your dinner and dessert and watching the light shine! Thanks to all of the fire towers and the local businesses who are participating in this event. Thanks to all of the Illuminators who are willing to give up an evening during the holiday weekend and carry the light to the top!



The Hudson River Ramble will include 3 fire towers this year. It includes a hike to Sterling Fire Tower on Sept 21st; Cornell Hill Fire Tower on Sept 14th, 15th, 28th, and 29th; and Dickinson Hill on Sept 14th. <https://www.hudsonrivervalleyramble.com/ramble/documents/ramble-booklet-2019>

Could there be a new fire tower in Lake George? See what the Post Star has to say: [https://poststar.com/news/local/warren-county-lake-george-find-cheaper-fire-tower-for-charles/article\\_345d5f53-cc94-5716-aa3d-2ddb1e49796b.html](https://poststar.com/news/local/warren-county-lake-george-find-cheaper-fire-tower-for-charles/article_345d5f53-cc94-5716-aa3d-2ddb1e49796b.html)

Another new tower? Well a new old tower actually. The possible reopening of Swede Mountain fire tower is something that along with many partners, the FFLA has been working toward for a few years now. We greatly appreciate all of the behind the scene work that has been going on by Horicon and Hague Town Supervisors, Warren County, the NYSDEC, Lyme Timber, the Nature Conservancy, and interested local citizens; Chuck, Barb, Richie, Joyce and Bill. Their energy and efforts are moving this project forward: [https://poststar.com/news/local/plan-to-reopen-hague-fire-tower-hits-snag/article\\_e6153201-4f78-55ce-bf21-8101f6eba21a.html](https://poststar.com/news/local/plan-to-reopen-hague-fire-tower-hits-snag/article_e6153201-4f78-55ce-bf21-8101f6eba21a.html)

Another new tower? Well a new old tower that was removed in 1970 and lovingly stored by a local family for years. The FFLA has been working with the owner of the fire tower and the Catskill Mountain Club to see if the Bramley Mountain Fire Tower can once again be returned to its original location. The CMC has been the driving force behind this project from its inception, with tower committee Chair Ann at the reins. At last month's Town of Delhi Board Meeting, an agreement was entered into to proceed with the next steps of this project. Our sincere thanks to the Clark family and the CMC along with all the other partners to make this happen! <http://catskillmountainclub.org/events/delhi-town-council-supports-the-bramley-mountain-fire-tower-project>

Since the last newsletter was issued I got to see the work of Davana LLC as the new fire tower was put up at the Catskill Interpretive Center in Mount Tremper. It was great fun for me and very interesting to see the different aspects of this project. Dave and his crew had a nice run of weather (though perhaps a bit warm) and a great day without too much wind for the crowning glory when the top of the tower was lifted into place with a crane. The tower is not yet open to the public. As I understand it, the tower will be surrounded by fencing to prohibit people from climbing it except when paid staff are present. Until the NYSDEC erects the fence, the tower will not be open. I will let everyone know when I hear an opening date.



### News from Around the State

**Ferncliff** painting for the win! I committed the FFLA to painting over graffiti on Ferncliff fire tower in an attempt to make it appear less acceptable. I think it might be working. A visit this month to paint over graffiti found very little work needed to be done. Let us hope the trend continues. I will give you an update next month.

**St. Regis:** The St. Regis crew is looking for a few volunteers to help with some projects this summer - could that volunteer be you? From the Committee - "We are undertaking other projects this year. The tower footings and pins will be inspected to determine the extent of repair required. Primer paint or another barrier will be placed between all pressure treated lumber and galvanized tower parts. This will prevent metal corrosion. All recent holes drilled in the tower's metal parts will be painted with a galvanizing primer to prevent rust. The entire tower will be painted with a metal based finish paint. The wire fencing on the stairs and landings need minor repairs and replacement of rusted wire ties. Eventually the fencing will be replaced with larger gauge fencing material and installed in a neater manner. On the education side, interpretive panoramic panels will be installed for the southern and eastern views. If you would like to be involved in any of the projects we are working on please let us know. Also, if you would like to be a summit steward go to our website to sign up." <http://www.friendsofstregis.org/calendar/>

**Azure:** The ADK Professional Trail Crew did a great job repairing the stone steps near the tower that leads to a grand view. The Azure Mt Friends group obtained a grant through Parks and Trails NY and did fund raising to pay for this work. This is a perfect example of volunteers putting your donations to good work through their fundraising efforts, grant writing and a thank you to the ADK Pro Crew for their work too!

**Hurricane:** On July 31<sup>st</sup>, just in the nick of time, the facebook post read - "The roof is on! Almost exactly 100 years after the tower was first erected. Thanks to David Vana and his crew, Tom and Mason, and the state of NY for funding and flying the new roof up there." Not only was the work done just in the nick of time for their centennial, but it also got done just before a terrific storm blew in. It is said they barely made it down the mountain from their work without getting blown away!

**Smokey celebrates his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday!** In honor of both his birthday and the Balsam Lake Fire Tower centennial, Smokey decided to go for a hike! His presence sure made many people smile. A HUGE THANK YOU to all who made this happen; Forest Ranger Lt Ken Gierloff, Forest Ranger Eric

Stratton, Assistant Forest Ranger Travis Acuna and an even bigger thanks to Assistant Forest Ranger Ryan Lowe! It is no easy feat for a fellow as large as Smokey to climb a mountain. Happy Birthday!

**Balsam Lake Centennial:** Centennial events were held at Morgan Outdoors in Livingston Manor, at the tower and at the Dry Brook Community Hall. All events were fun – the cake was delicious – the history and memories that were shared were informative. We even had Smokey join us and celebrate his birthday too – see above. Centennial Patches are still available if you would like one. One of the most memorable parts of the celebration was a comment in the guest



register - *“This tower has a life of its own and makes ours richer just knowing it is standing watch, generation after generation.”* Truer words were never spoken.

**Hurricane Fire Tower Centennial:** They sure know how to throw a party in Elizabethtown! The Adirondack History Museum unveiled its new Hurricane Mt Fire Tower exhibit along with delicious food and drink on August 8<sup>th</sup>. The Friends of Hurricane Mountain did a wonderful job of putting together the evening events as well as the new exhibit. The party was well attended and followed by hikes to the tower the following weekend. Photos courtesy of MJ Bland



**Trivia Question from July:** What fire tower was the farthest from a vehicle access, vehicle defined as something the Observer would be expected to own and drive regularly? In other words, which Observer in NYS had the longest walk to work? Bill Tindall is pretty sure it would have been Kempshall Fire Tower, on the eastern side of Long Lake. A long walk on foot for sure. Would you agree?

**Trivia Question for August:** There was an important event that occurred in the winter of 1926-27 that relates to a NYS fire tower. Do you know what that event was? Get me the correct answer and I will send you a NYS Centennial Tower Patch! (upping the ante from the FFLA sticker to see if it will help participation.)

**Book of the Month:** I was looking at the FFLA webpage the other day and was amazed at all of the books that are listed in the store there. There are trail guides, history, cookbooks, and fiction all in one spot, all dedicated to what we love; fire towers. Take a look and choose one! <http://ffla.org/lookout-store---books.html>

## Calendar

Saturday, August 24, 2019, The Friends of Stillwater Fire Tower will be holding their **Centennial** celebration.

Saturday, August 31, 2019, Fire Tower Lighting Event Date / Rain Date: Sunday, September 1<sup>st</sup>

October 11<sup>th</sup> through the 13<sup>th</sup> will be the Western Conference of the FFLA hosted by the California Chapter in San Diego California: <https://firelookouthost.org/western-conference-2018/>

Sunday, October 20, 2019 Your chance to visit the Alma fire tower. Registration for the 27<sup>th</sup> Annual RidgeWalk & Run is open <https://runsignup.com/Race/NY/Wellsville/RidgeWalkRun>

Laurie Rankin, Director  
New York State Chapter  
Forest Fire Lookout Association  
[www.ffla.org](http://www.ffla.org)

“Enjoying the grandeur of the mountains from a rocky ledge or summit cannot compare to the 360 degree panoramic view of a fire tower. Anticipation builds with every flight of steps that you ascend, until you poke your head up into that small, fragile, glass enclosed room. For some, it's a frightening, yet exhilarating accomplishment. For others, it is pure pleasure.” NYSDEC Forest Ranger, Bob Marrone, ret. – from Kaatskill Life 2003

