



**Forest Fire Lookout  
Association  
New York State Chapter  
October 2021**

The excitement of last month has continued! There are several updates here as well as some more information and photos from our Annual Lighting event.

**Photo Contest Winner:** This month's gorgeous photo and the one with the most likes on our Facebook page was sent in by Cindy Bishop. It is a photo she took in Oct of 2020 of the Beebe Hill Fire Tower. I can see why it got so many votes, it is beautifully framed by the fall foliage and blue sky. Congratulations to Cindy. This photo is featured here and is the new cover photo on our Facebook page until next month's contest!



**Fire Tower Closures:** Please remember that we are not the only people who enjoy time in the outdoors. Many hours were put in behind the scenes to create easements over private lands that allow us to visit fire towers for many months of the year. Part of the agreement may have been to close the trails over those easements for a short time during hunting season. Your respect for those closures is critical to us keeping the trails open the remainder of the year and to the possibility of future agreements. Fire Tower closures for Swede Fire Tower Trail continue. It will reopen on December 16<sup>th</sup>. Stillwater fire tower trail is closed through December 20<sup>th</sup> and Spruce Fire Tower trail will close on October 23<sup>rd</sup> and remain closed through December 6<sup>th</sup>.

### **Around the State**

**Fire Tower Restoration Business for Sale:** Davana LLC has been in business for 15 years. The business specializes in acquiring, restoring, and sales of all types of historic and new manufactured fire towers and observation towers. Involved with more than 55 projects in 15 states and Guantanamo Naval Base. Towers restored and re-erected from 20 feet to 120 feet tall. Full training available throughout transition based on buyer's needs. Continuing consultation to promote sales. Sale includes any remaining fire tower inventory, all fabrication and erecting tools, work trailer, training, consulting and good will. If interested, please contact David A. Vana 518-354-0763.

**Hurricane:** Last month we reported on the new map at the fire tower there and the tremendous effort to get it up there and installed. An article here tells a bit more about this.

<https://www.adirondackalmanack.com/2021/09/new-map-on-hurricane.html>





**Lyon Trail Work:** A big shout out of thanks to John, Fred, Dawn, Sue and Bob for taking care of the Lyon Mt Trail work for fall! They gave up a really nice hiking day to take care of the trail and it is greatly appreciated! A few trees are large and hanging up, so the DEC will have to go in and grab the remaining few. Thanks so much guys! 2 Photos by John Sasso.

**Berry Hill:** Last month you read about the efforts of many to get things ready for the official Ribbon Cutting and the start of our stewarding program at Berry Hill. On Monday, September 13<sup>th</sup> the tower officially reopened following upgrades to enhance safety and accessibility. We would like to thank the NYSDEC for their efforts in restoring the Berry Hill Fire tower, specifically Mr. Andy Goeller. Often times such a thank you is simply a matter of business or common courtesy. In this case, the thanks could not be more sincere. Andy took an idea he had from 1999 to remove the antennas and reopen the tower to the public, wrote it into a UMP update and kept it at the forefront. When funds became available to make it happen, he re-energized that idea from all angles. The result is what you see today; a historical structure restored to its original condition. Andy and the NYSDEC you have our gratitude for a job very well done. Kindly representing the FFLA at the ribbon cutting ceremony was Tom Murphy, past Observer at Berry Hill. A nice article about the ribbon cutting can be found [here](#). Many thanks to Tom M, Rich, Warren, Abbie, Michele, Donna, Ed, Sue, Elyse, and Tom R for stewarding through Columbus Day. This truly enhances the visitor experience, keeps the history of the tower alive, and provides tons of education as well! If you would like to sign up to volunteer in 2022, please let me know! Photo credit NYS DEC.





**Blue Mountain Observer's Cabin:** Work on the exterior of the cabin was done in the spring by an excellent group of FFLA volunteers (see our May 2021 newsletter). Over the course of the summer, the Steward at Blue and our FFLA liaison, Nick, completed most of the exterior work. In September, we had a great group of people come together to finish the exterior and to tackle the interior work. Thanks go to RJ, Greg, Michele, Sue, Yana, Nick, and Jaime who spent from 1 to 4 days on the work project. I was honored to work alongside these generous people for a couple of those days and to see the transformation. Yana captured some of the work here to share with all of you. Thank you, thank you, thank you to all who helped!! At my annual meeting with the DEC, we will be setting the date for spring 2022 work to maintain all that has been done on the fire tower and Observer's cabin to date and to complete any other projects. Stay tuned for the dates and plan to sign up! It is a pretty fun gig! Photo credit to Yana Levchinsky-Grimmond.



## Calendar

With a few exceptions (Poke O options) the calendar will rest until next spring. But that does not mean that planning is not happening throughout the fall and winter months for the 2022 season. Keep an eye on the calendar as we will begin to set dates for projects and would love to have your assistance with them! There may be a grand opening or re-opening of a fire tower and a centennial celebration or two as well. We've got the first one of those for you to mark on your calendars right now. Sterling Forest Fire Tower will be celebrating their 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on Saturday, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022! Set that day aside right now and plan to attend the events – I also heard there may be some special lighting effects for the 2022 Lighting Event at Sterling to go along with this historical milestone!

Saturday, November 6: Water Drainage Cleanup. Meet at the Observers Trail parking area at 9:30am, 1 mi. south of the Campground on Rte. 9. Please bring a grass rake and/or an iron rake. Contact Mark Robinson, Trails Coordinator, at 518-578-1480 or [peterson12996@yahoo.com](mailto:peterson12996@yahoo.com)

## Calendar 2022

Saturday, January 22: Snowshoe Mammal Tracking with naturalist/outdoor educator Elizabeth Lee. Meet at 9:30am at the Observers trailhead. Be ready for 2-3 hours in the cold , following and identifying mammal tracks in the snow. In cooperation with CATS: [champlainareatrails.com](http://champlainareatrails.com). Sign-up required, minimum of 6 participants.

Saturday, January 29: Back Country Ski Exploration. Meet at the Observers trailhead at 9:30am to explore the trails on the west side of Poke-O. David Thomas-Train will lead this trip for skiers with at least intermediate skills, to manage some steep, narrow terrain. Arduous, 3-4 hours. In cooperation with CATS: [champlainareatrails.com](http://champlainareatrails.com).

Saturday, September 17: Sterling Forest Celebration

## Holiday Shopping 2021

As we approach the holiday season, please consider supporting FFLA through your membership dues and consider supporting FFLA through purchase of our merchandise items too! The Lookout Store has tons of items to choose from: <http://ffla.org/lookout-store.html> You can renew membership or begin a membership on line.

We have many local fire tower groups that could use your support too! Fire tower merchandise such as patches, attire, and books make excellent gifts!





**We have our second FFLA Affiliate!** Friends of Stissing Landmarks (FOSL) has joined the initiative and we welcome them and all of their work at Stissing Fire Tower! The road to save the Stissing Mountain Fire tower was not an easy one. Let's begin at the beginning with the Civilian Conservation Corp who erected the fire tower in 1934. There was a commanding view from this location, though the mountain top is only at 1402 feet in elevation. Its prominence made it an excellent vantage point. One could see into Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, (and it was said, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey). The very first year it was operational, 91 fires were reported! The site was a good choice!

As with many other fire towers, it was decommissioned in 1973. Left abandoned, it was quickly vandalized, including the Observer's cabin at the base of the tower, which was burned by vandals. 13 years after its closing, the DEC decided it would remove the fire tower. Stissing Fire Tower is so very important to the local community of Pine Plains, that it appears on their town's logo. The local friends of the fire tower wanted to save this landmark and thus FOSL was formed. It took several more years for the transfer from DEC to FOSL to occur, but in 1994, the transfer happened. There still has been some vandalism to deal with over the years. On my first visit there, graffiti continued to be a concern, but the group has worked diligently to keep that at bay.

Today, your visit is very likely to see little graffiti. Instead you will find a hand railing in place to assist you as you enter and exit the cab, a feature that I have suggested be placed on many other fire towers. You will find a loop trail around the mountain where one can choose the longer Observer's road where one can still find a telephone pole or two and less elevation gain. Or one may choose the shorter, but steeper route to the summit. In the cab, you will note the expansive view and the nearby Thompson Pond Preserve where bird watching is lots of fun!

Each year the FOSL holds a special 9/11 event. The photo below with the flag is from that event and the other is from Pine Plains during our Lighting Event, that clearly shows the tower is still watching over them! FOSL has a great web page with specific information about the trails, history, parking, and more. <http://stissingfiretower.org/>

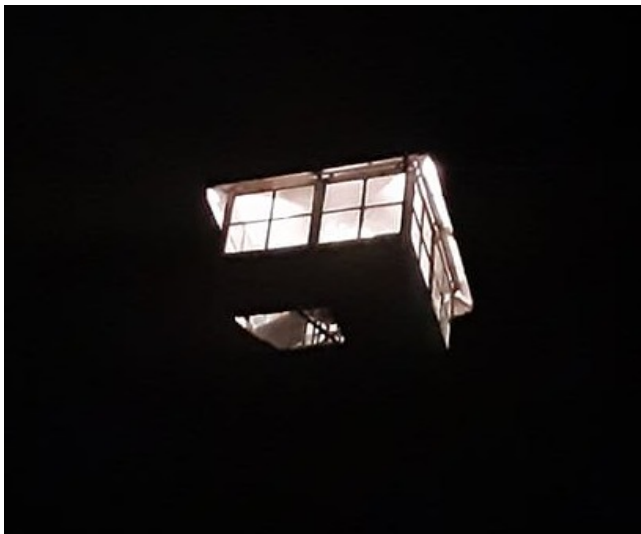


## Lighting 2021 Part 2

Some additional photos and comments from our event in September are up next. Please remember that more photos are on our web page: <http://nysffla.org/> Just click on Light Up the Night! We did have one correction from our Friends of Azure Mt. group where Tom Ortmeier said “It was Katelyn Zatwarnicki who took the photo that I called "Azure tower with stairs". Our 5 friends that night were Jennifer Kaspar, Katelyn Zatwarnicki, Eric Ralyea, Michael Wood, and myself.” Thanks for letting us know Tom. We have made that update on the web page under 2021 Lighting Photos.

A great article was done about the lighting at Mt. Beacon: <https://highlandscurrent.org/2021/09/14/out-there-the-glow-up>

Balsam Lake by Tom Rankin



Azure by Jennifer Kaspar



Hurricane by Brad Wenskowski



Belfry by Brian Collupy



Here are some comments about the event over at Dickinson Hill. From the Friends of Grafton Lakes State Park newsletter: “One of the most notable Observers that served at the Dickinson Hill Fire Tower was Helen Ellett. Helen was the second female Observer in the state and served from 1943 to 1965. Her influence led to the Town of Grafton forming their own fire department in 1944. Over this past Labor Day weekend, fire towers were lit up across the state including at Grafton Lakes State Park to honor the Observers who served their community. The fire tower legacy event hosted by the Friends of Grafton Lakes was the first of its kind, [featuring] hikes up to the tower, a dinner to benefit the Helen Ellett fund, a guest appearance by granddaughter of Helen Ellett, Linda Laveway, and a lighting up of the tower as a tribute. The Friends of GLSP look forward to making this an annual way to honor Observers for their service and provide the public a personal connection to the legacy of the fire towers.”

Dickinson Hill by Heather Silvernail



Randall tower by Nancy Bottling



### **Fire Season continues in the western United States**

News clips and photos continue to be remarkable, but so too is some of what has been happening in trying to get ahead of these massive fires.

<https://www.spokesman.com/stories/2021/sep/15/it-was-pretty-miraculous-how-university-of-idaho-f/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/10/11/us/california-wildfires-dixie.html>

These western fires contain many heroes and here is a great article about one of them. Thank you Kenneth Perry. We hope everyone stays safe out there!

<https://wildfiretoday.com/2021/09/30/smokejumpers-marathons-wff-and-spam/>

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