



**Forest Fire Lookout Association  
New York State Chapter  
August 2022**

As promised, this newsletter is a couple of weeks late due to vacation (more on that in a bit) and also due to the final days of getting the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Lighting of the Fire Tower put together! With the help of so many wonderful volunteers, we will be seeing 33 fire towers lit on Saturday evening September 3<sup>rd</sup> from 9 to 9:30pm! Web master Tom has been keeping the site up to date with all of the information you will need: <http://nysffla.org/light.html>

Some articles/events that we have seen about the Lighting event include:

- If you want to travel in a unique way to the shores of Lake Clear to see the light come on at St. Regis, you might consider a stage coach!

<https://www.lakeclearlodge.com/experiences/stagecoach-wagon-rides>.

- Utsayantha Fire Tower is participating this year - <https://sway.office.com/90lqZN4ISskQXvfw> and this article: <https://suncommunitynews.com/news/98675/fire-towers-to-light-the-night/>



We hope you all plan on finding the perfect location and looking up to see the light come on in a tower near you! Think about that Observer who spent countless hours watching over your home, community, business and forests.

We have a winner! This month's photo contest winner is Adrienne Kallner's view from Mt. Adams taken 8/14/19. Her photo will be the new cover photo here ?? and will also be included in the August 2022 newsletter. Congratulations Adrienne and thanks to all who entered photos and voted!



**Western Conference of the FFLA:** The Western Conference scheduled for this September 16<sup>th</sup> through 18<sup>th</sup> will be held in Enterprise, Oregon. Information about the western conference and registration is available on the web page: <http://ffla.org>. If you love fire towers, these gatherings are something you do not want to miss! Like minded people gather to share stories and information and travel to several lookouts during the weekend as well.

A fictional fire tower or a real fire tower? If you have not seen the movie, here is a sneak preview of *'Where the Crawdads Sing'*. I have to believe they did use a real fire tower, but I do not know which one. Check out the trailer here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZRXAYfFRs4M>

New York State continues to be well behind in rain fall. At one point in the past month the entire state was in the High Fire Danger level. <https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/68329.html> With a cold front moving through yesterday, August 30<sup>th</sup> we had some rain and some areas were lowered to moderate and high ?? levels. Fire Danger continues as we go into what is often a dry time of the year. I am often asked if I think we could have large fires like the western US. Yes, I think we can. It is no surprise that the weekly Forest Ranger Reports of the last month and a half have been filled with fires.

**7-26: Village of Wurtsboro/Sullivan County/Wildland Fire:** On July 25 at 11:30 a.m., Sullivan County 911 reached out to Ray Brook Dispatch requesting Forest Ranger assistance with a ground fire that was reigniting on a private wooded lot in Wurtsboro. According to the Wurtsboro Fire Chief, the fire was first reported on July 24 at 2 PM. Multiple fire departments responded to suppress the fire. Ranger Lieutenant Ashida and Ranger Pries responded and estimated the fire at 0.8 acres. A lighter was found near the origin of the fire the day before, but nothing else at the scene indicated the cause. DEC continues to urge campers to practice the utmost safety when building campfires. Dry weather throughout June and July has increased the risk of fires.

**8-10: Town of Webb/Herkimer County/Unattended Fire:** On Aug. 2 at 6:15 AM, the Alger Island Caretaker contacted Forest Ranger McCartney to report a lean-to on fire. Ranger McCartney, Lieutenant Hoag, and the Old Forge Fire Department responded. Half an hour later, the fire was under control, but the lean-to was a total loss. Fire crews knocked the remaining structure to the ground and surrounded it with caution tape and fencing. The following afternoon, the fire was declared out. The fire began as an unattended fire that spread to the lean-to. Rangers remind all campers to never leave a fire unattended. It doesn't take heavy winds to spread fire quickly. When finished with a fire, it should be drowned with water to ensure there are no remaining hot spots.

**Town of North Hudson/Essex County/Wildland Fire:** On Aug. 7 at 5:55 PM, Forest Rangers Donegan and St. Claire responded to a wildland fire report east of Pharaoh Lake in the Pharaoh Lake Wilderness Area. With Ranger Nally serving as hoist operator, New York State Police (NYSP) Aviation dropped Rangers Donegan and St. Claire to the fire location. The fire includes areas with steep ledges and measures approximately five to six acres. Four more Rangers arrived by boat and by foot the next day. The fire is not threatening the public or any buildings but is currently not fully contained.

**8-16: Towns of Haverstraw and Highlands/Orange and Rockland Counties/Wildland Fires:** On Aug. 8, Forest Rangers responded to two wildland fire calls at Harriman State Park, the first at 4:25 PM in the town of Highlands, Orange County, and the second at 4:47 PM in the town of Haverstraw, Rockland County. Rangers Pries and Rusher worked with the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) to secure a perimeter around the 2.6-acre Rockland County fire. Thiells, Tallman, Hillcrest, Hillburn, Sloatsburg, Stony Point, Pearl River, Blauvelt, Congers, Munsey, and New County fire departments also assisted. Ranger Pries then responded to the Highlands fire, where he assisted Ranger Jahn in constructing a fire line. State Parks, Stony Point Fire, West Point Fire, and Fort Montgomery Fire helped get the six-acre fire under control. On Aug. 10, both fires were put in patrol status. [Video of the fire in Highlands](#) can be found on DEC's website.

**Town of Brookhaven/Suffolk County/Wildland Fire:** On Aug. 9 at 3 PM, Forest Ranger Gagne responded to a fire at the Yaphank Landfill. By 9 PM, the 1.9-acre fire was put in patrol status. The next day, Rangers Gagne and Scott assisted the Pine Barrens Commission in extinguishing hot spots. Responders also bulldozed a fire line to prevent the fire from spreading. On Aug. 14, the fire was declared out.

**Town of North Hudson/Essex County/Wildland Fire Update:** The Pharaoh Lake Wilderness Area wildland fire that began Aug. 7, is currently in patrol status. Twelve Forest Rangers and four DEC-trained firefighters continued with suppression efforts throughout the week. The fire is suspected to have started as an unattended campfire before spreading to at least five acres. When weather permitted, Rangers worked with New York State Police Aviation to fly to a safe landing zone approximately one-quarter mile from the fire. Rangers also arrived by boat and hiked approximately three miles in to the fire, which was on a cliff, approximately 300 feet in elevation.

**Town of Putnam Valley/Putnam County/Wildland Fire:** On Aug. 10 at 4 PM, Forest Ranger Pries responded to a wildland fire at Fahnestock State Park. The fire began as an unextinguished campfire that burned into the ground. Ranger Pries, State Parks staff, and Putnam Valley Fire brought the fire under control. DEC reminds campers to never leave a campfire unattended; even a small breeze could cause the fire to spread quickly. When finished, campers are advised to drown the fire with water. Make sure all embers, coals, and sticks are wet. Move rocks as there may be burning embers underneath.

**8-24:Town of Ramapo/Rockland County/Wildland Fire:** On Aug. 15 at 6:40 PM, Forest Rangers and members of the OPRHP responded to the Wanoksink Fire in Harriman State Park. By 11 PM, the fire had spread to 12 acres. Rangers started burning a control line to keep the fire contained to a 34-acre area. By Aug. 17, the fire was put into patrol status. [Drone video of the fire is available for download](#) at DEC's website. The fire is believed to have started as an unattended campfire. DEC continues to urge New Yorkers to [practice the utmost safety when building campfires this summer](#).

**Town of Wawarsing/Ulster County/Wildland Fire:** On Aug. 21 at 4:30 PM, Forest Rangers responded to the Losees Hill Fire behind Laurel Mountain Road in Wawarsing. Rangers worked on bulldozer lines to contain the fire to 2.5 acres. Rangers were assisted by multiple volunteer fire departments and the OPRHP. By 10:40 PM, the fire was 75 percent contained. [Drone video of the fire is available for download](#) at DEC's website.

**8-30: Town of Harrietstown/Franklin County/Wildland Fire:** On Aug. 26 at 5:50 PM, Forest Rangers responded to a fire in the area of Lonesome Bay, Lower Saranac Lake. Caused by a lightning strike, the fire was considered a single-tree torch that burned 10 feet of ground around the tree. Rangers declared the fire out at 2:30 PM the following day.

**Town of Mamakating/Sullivan County/Wildland Fire:** On Aug. 27 at 1:25 PM, Sullivan County 911 requested Ranger assistance with a fire in the town of Mamakating. The Wurstsboro fire was originally estimated at 20 to 25 acres in a thick and steep ridge line, making it difficult for Rangers to approach. With the help of NYSP Aviation, Rangers began bucket drops to attack the fire from above. Rangers also worked with multiple fire departments to install a fire line with a bulldozer. On Aug. 29 the fire grew to 70 acres, but five Rangers and 57 volunteers contained the fire with the bulldozer line. The fire is believed to have been started with debris burning.

**Town of Wawarsing/Ulster County/Wildland Fire:** On Aug. 27 at 4:55 PM, The OPRHP requested Ranger assistance with a 15-acre fire at Naponach Point in Minnewaska State Park. Due to the remote and rugged terrain, NYSP Aviation was called in to help with bucket drops. At 5:28 PM, with Ranger Gullen serving as crew chief, bucket drops began. On Aug. 28 at 9:54 PM, dozens of firefighters joined eight Rangers, including DEC volunteer firefighters, two NYSP helicopters, and OPRHP staff. On Aug. 30 at 10 AM, the fire was estimated at approximately 130 to 150 acres.

[Video of both the Mamakating and Napanoch fires is available to download](#) at DEC's website.

There was also a rescue at a fire tower trail in one of the Ranger Reports: Knowing this isolated area well, this was handled very well by the campers and their counselors.

**7-26: Town of Hardenburgh/Ulster County/Wilderness Rescue:** On July 19 at 11:45 AM, Ray Brook Dispatch transferred a call from a 15-year-old camper to Ranger Ashida. The camper reported that their 19-year-old counselor had slipped and hurt her ankle on the red trail coming down from Balsam Lake Mountain. Ranger Martin reached the subject and worked with Beaverkill Fire to carry out the patient to a waiting ambulance. Beaverkill Ambulance transported the subject for further medical attention. Resources were clear at 3 PM.

In last month's reports, we listed the Black Brook fire in Clinton County. We got some additional information about that one: From Hurricane Fire Tower Steward Kayla W: *"I was actually the first one to spot the fire while on Hurricane and called it into DEC Dispatch. I went up in the tower and tried to triangulate it the best I could. The Forest Ranger for the area started driving around to try and see it when it was called into Clinton County. If only I had the instruments to properly triangulate it! I felt like an Observer for the day!"*

### AROUND THE NORTHEAST

**New Hampshire:** Our friends in New Hampshire have a great article about their fire towers that is well worth the read and that photo – love it! <https://www.nhmagazine.com/fire-towers/>

**Massachusetts:** Just like in New York, we ask everyone to be thoughtful about having any fires during these dry times. <https://whdh.com/news/atop-fire-towers-crews-working-to-stop-fires-before-they-begin/>

### AROUND THE STATE

**Alma Hill Fire Tower:** This tower is on private land and one of the few opportunities to get to see it is to participate in a local fund raiser. This event was canceled the last 2 years due to Covid, but it looks like it will be back on this year. You can choose what fits your style the best. <https://runsignup.com/Race/NY/Wellsville/Ridgewalkandrun>

**Sterling Forest:** Unfortunately since the fire tower itself remains closed, the Friends of Sterling Forest has decided that they will not be able to hold the Centennial event as planned in September. The good news is that the engineer inspection of the fire tower has been done. Now it is just a matter of waiting for the report so that they can determine that all is well with the fire tower and reopen it to the public. Considering construction on the tower began in 1922 and the tower first became operational in 1923, it seems perfectly ok to celebrate next year.

**Swede:** Please remember that Swede Mt Fire Tower will close on September 10<sup>th</sup> and will not reopen until December 16<sup>th</sup>. Thank you for respecting this closure.

**Lyon:** Fall trailwork will be happening the weekend of September 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> on whichever is the best weather day. Would you please consider joining us?

**Speculator/Makomis:** Last month we shared the fabulous news about the Makomis fire tower being put back up in the Village of Speculator. The official opening and ribbon cutting will take place September 1<sup>st</sup> at 2 PM. We look forward to actually climbing up in the tower and enjoying the view and hope you will plan to visit soon!

**Buck:** <https://www.hamiltoncountyexpress.com/news/52696> this article contains some of the information regarding the progress on Buck Mt Fire Tower. An excerpt lists both accomplishments and challenges. At this time, the FFLA has been cleared to assist with painting of the fire tower. If you are interested in helping out, please let me know ASAP. “Mr. Arsenault thanked Ms. Stewart for all the work Soil & Water has done on Buck Mountain. There is work getting done on the tower. He thinks that everything is replaced up to the actual top of the tower. They have discussed doing wood for the top. They also have to wait for the APA to do a site visit on the 15th. The visit is to distinguish if there is over one acre of wetland being disturbed. There is also a need for a couple of bridges to be built. Mr. Farber asked about the parking lot design. Mr. Arsenault stated that they are still up in the air regarding this. Supposedly Paul Smiths is designing it. Mr. Farber stated that the class that worked on it didn’t get it done so they have turned the work product they had over to the Finch team for them to finish up.”

The FFLA finally has permission to work with the Town on this project. We have been asked to please consider assisting them in painting the fire tower. All new stairs, landings and a roof have been done already. In addition to the painting, there may be some scraping of rust that will need to be done too.

We are looking at 9/6 - 9/16 to do this work, based on availability of volunteers and the weather as well as the Town. If you have any availability during this time frame, it would be greatly appreciated. A fair size crew with just two good weather days could get this tower one step closer to being open! Thank you for considering.

**Dickinson Hill:** On Saturday, August 27<sup>th</sup> we had the pleasure of attending a gathering and presentation at the Grafton Lakes State Park. The event was to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the restoration of the Dickinson Hill Fire Tower. Tamara Beals, Environmental Educator at the Park, did a fantastic job of making sure all of the details happened. There were brochures, stickers, Smokey tats, carabiners, coloring pages, photos from the restoration work and photos of Observer Helen Ellett all around the Visitors Center. Additionally there were photographs of the tower and its history, including photos of the restoration work scrolling through on the main screen. We gathered early for a picnic then were treated to a fabulous Slide Show put together by Friends of Grafton Lakes member Dick Gibbs, who led the restoration project. Dick eloquently described the challenges and the fun of the restoration. That was followed by a discussion with Linda, the granddaughter of Observer Helen Ellet and Randy Kneer who wrote a book about Helen. Their fond memories of Helen and her personality as well as her dedication to the job were wonderful to hear! Lastly there was a gathering outside by the fire tower replica for kids. We ducked away at this point as we had been told there was significant graffiti in the fire tower. We wanted to be certain to get all of that painted over prior to the holiday weekend, which we did.



**State Fair:** Some things are so similar from state to state – this from Dave Quam is an excellent presentation of fire towers, their history and a tower that is in the fairgrounds in Minnesota, just like ours in New York State <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Olxq1X6dHTE&t=128s>

**Kane:** We are in the first year of a pilot Steward Program at Kane fire tower. I have had several people ask me what a steward does. Basically, a steward meets and greets the public. At Kane, Steward Jim H recently posted about his experience as a Steward. “Renewing the Faith. It's easy to fall into a spirit of negativity. Watch television news, skim social media, read a newspaper...and you come away with a grim and depressing outlook...a hollow view for our world. But wait a minute. Watch, interact, and talk with others. I did so as a volunteer steward on Kane Mountain...and had my faith...renewed.” Thank you Jim – you said it so well – steward days do renew our faith. Thank you and all of the other towers stewards!

**Corrosion Study Continues:** An article has been submitted for publication in the national FFLA magazine based on the recent research and experiments by NYS FFLA member Ed Engelman.

Corrosion from four types of lumber were studied in the first year of the study. The second year focused on comparing the use of stainless-steel vs hot dipped galvanized hardware used to attach wooden stair treads.

Going into the second year of the study the following were considerations:

1. Dissimilar metals in contact with each other in the presence of moisture are likely to participate in galvanic corrosion.
2. Galvanized hardware in contact with oak lumber exposed to moisture and weathering will corrode.

The same corrosion principles explain the results of the first and second year of the study.

Look for the article in an upcoming issue of the *Lookout Network*, the quarterly publication of the Forest Fire Lookout Association. Thank you Ed! I look forward to reading this.

**Fire Tower Presentation September 1<sup>st</sup> at 7:00 PM:** *Forest Fires of the Adirondacks*, a lecture by Sharp Swan. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, fires raged out of control in many of New York State's vast wooded areas. Two "great fires" in 1903 and 1908 and charred almost 1 million acres of Adirondack forest, and because of public outcry for protection from the devastation, measures were established to prevent and detect fires, eliminating the scale of destruction that occurred in the Adirondacks a hundred years ago. Location: Adirondack History Museum in Elizabethtown.

Lastly – During my vacation I did not visit any other fire towers, however I did drive through areas with extensive fire damage, more than 30,000 acres, and hiked through areas with fire damage. It was a reminder that we must always remain vigilant.

Laurie

