



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

It is with great pleasure that this newsletter begins with a new tower in Speculator, NY, but not any new tower, it is an historical Adirondack tower that was moved from storage near Plattsburgh NY. To read more about the former Makomis Fire Tower, please check out our website listing: <http://nysffla.org/alphalist.html>. Included in our listing are a couple of links about the original tower, where it has been since it was taken down, and how it got to be in Speculator, NY.

The local Chapter was pleased to be a part of the actual work that took place around the July 4th weekend. Excelsior towers did the work with Mike V leading the team of Mark H and Jesse R. We had several volunteers who stopped to lend a hand including myself, Tom R, Lori S, Adam N, Francis F, Craig, Steve, and J.R. Also working alongside us was Speculator Mayor, Jeannette Barrett, who has been spearheading the effort to have a tower in Speculator for a number of years. Her perseverance and enthusiasm has seen this project to fruition! Thank you all! A news article about the journey to get this tower can be seen [here](#), and an article about the progress [here](#).

A wonderful piece that is worth the 9 minutes of your time was done by Thom Hallock of PBS's Mountain Lake Journal: https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=Jq_wljOepIM, I was blessed to be part of the group on hand on a very rainy July 5th when the interviews were being done for this piece. The group that gathered included the family of George Barber and his children, Eileen and Dave. It was such a pleasure to meet them both and to hear how proud George would be to see his dream come true. Thom captured this well in his PBS episode.



AROUND THE FFLA

Conference: We have some more great news – the FFLA will once again be holding conferences, with a Western Conference scheduled for this September 16th through 18th 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 you travel to several lookouts during the weekend as well.

Birthday: Continuing with some good news around the FFLA, our neighbors have been very busy at neighboring Catfish Fire Tower in New Jersey. Catfish celebrated its 100th birthday on July 4th! Located in the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area on the Appalachian Trail in Hardwick Township at elevation 1555 feet, the tower is a 60 foot Aeromotor LS40. As you can imagine, it sees a lot of visitors since it is right on the AT, but it is also used as an active fire spotting tower too. Currently there are 21 towers in active service in New Jersey. The tower was erected in 1922 by the New Jersey Forest Service. A fresh coat of paint had it looking great for its birthday! NJ State Co-Director, Bob Wolff, tells me that on a clear day, one can see 70 miles into the Catskills of New York. Happy Birthday Catfish!

Tower Investment: A fabulous piece of good news comes from our friends in New Hampshire, where Chapter Director Chris Hartz keeps an eye on the fire tower needs - both the active towers and the ones that no longer continue to be part of the fire spotting system. A hiker friend told us that the Observer on duty at Mt. Cardigan told him to take a selfie while he can as the 100 year old tower is expected to be replaced in 1923 with a totally new tower! He said a totally new tower will be brought in as a single unit, flown in by helicopter. They are also bringing in a new cabin. Further investigation led to this [document](#), which show an investment of over \$2 million dollars to replace tower cabs and to provide cabin restoration too! Hats off to the State of N.H. for this investment, with work to begin in 2023! Details can be found on pages 4 and 5 of the document.

Maine Facebook Page: Bill Cobb tells us that sadly the Maine Facebook page got hacked. “The Maine FFLA chapter Facebook page is currently down and unavailable. It was hacked and was taken down. We are doing everything we can to get it back, but it is an arduous process as Facebook does not have traditional customer service, and largely only supports automated web forms which have not been helpful to deal with the situation. We continue to work on this with hopes that we can bring it back. Feel free to contact us at maine@firelookout.org for any chapter info and/or requests”.

AROUND THE COUNTRY

Yosemite: In Central California the Sequoia Fire continues to threaten not only the historic, ancient trees but other areas of Yosemite National Park as well. Growing to nearly 5,000 acres, the firefighters have done a great job of saving the trees to date. Stay safe! <https://abcnews.go.com/US/yosemites-washburn-fire-rages-threatening-sequoia-trees/story?id=86885495>

Fire fighting tools: Trail maintenance needs to be done. Grab that chain saw and go – wait a minute. A great article about the continued use of what many may consider a historical or even antique piece of equipment: <https://denver.cbslocal.com/2022/06/10/two-person-saw-forest-service-crews-colorado-wilderness-cross-cut-trails/> What do you think? Does the cross cut saw still have a role to play?

AROUND THE STATE

The winner of this month's Facebook photo contest is Jack Kelley with his photograph of Hunter Mountain fire tower and Observer's cabin. Jack took this photo in July of 2017, and received the most votes in our monthly photo contest. An excellent photo – we greatly appreciate your entering it in to the contest Jack, and we also appreciate all who entered and/or voted. We see some really great photos each and every month with this contest!



Town of Black Brook, Clinton County, Wildland Fire, from the Ranger Report on 6-21-22: On June 19 at 5:20 P.M., Clinton County requested Forest Ranger assistance with a wildfire off of Guideboard Road in the town of Black Brook. Rangers Black and Russell responded to the seven-acre fire along with Saranac and Au Sable Forks fire departments. Additional Rangers responded the following morning, and by 12:15 P.M., the fire was contained.

Town of Waverly, Franklin County, Wilderness Rescue, from the Forest Ranger Report: on 7-5-22: On July 2 at 4 P.M., Franklin County 911 requested Forest Ranger assistance with a hiker who had suffered a broken ankle on Azure Mountain. Rangers DiCintio and O'Connor responded along with St. Regis Falls Ambulance and St. Regis Falls and Dickinson Fire Departments. Rangers helped splint the injury and packaged the 42-year-old from Canada in a litter to carry them out to the parking area. Resources were clear at 6:30 P.M.

NYS Fire Danger: The majority of the state is in the high fire danger zone as I type this. We have had below average rainfall for the month of July. Please remind your neighbors and friends to be careful with fire or avoid it all together until we get some substantial soaking rains. <https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/68329.html>

St. Regis: The Friends of St. Regis board met this week to plan for the continued stewardship of the tower. Three of the members were recognized for their outstanding dedication to getting the tower painted. In honor of their service they were bestowed with the Order of the Silver Paint Brush. Rich LaBombard, Royal High Commissioner; Bob Brand, Exalted Noble; and Tom Hirshblond, Duke Extraordinaire. Thank you all for your work – well deserved Silver Paint Brush honors!

Mount Tremper: From the June 2022 Catskill Bulletin: DEC Operations Staff recently completed some routine maintenance work at the Mount Tremper Fire Tower including replacing worn out steps, landings, and replacing broken windows. Operations staff has been working diligently to keep the fire towers open and safe for the visiting public. The tower cab remains closed at this time.

Berry Hill: Don't forget that Berry Hill fire tower is now open to the public! Along with that, the Observer's cabin is open most weekends from Memorial Day through Columbus Day as well when stewards are present. The site is accessible, has a handicap port-a-john, two picnic tables, and some lovely shade trees. It would be a wonderful place for a family picnic, particularly for those who cannot manage a long hike to a back country fire tower.

Spongy Caterpillars: Retired Forest Ranger Gary Lee tells us there were enough mosquitoes around they could have held up his binoculars as he discussed birding and the spongy caterpillar problem in his [column](#). Why do we care? We care because after 2 straight years of defoliation, the trees are extremely stressed. After 3, they may no longer recover. <https://www.nhpr.org/show/something-wild/2022-07-01/something-wild-spongy-moth-outbreaks-plague-nh-again> A forest that has standing dead trees that are dry and close together is much more prone to wild fire than a forest with green, moist trees. As I drove north on the Northway recently, it looked like fall from Lake George all the way up to Schroon Lake with many trees completely barren of leaves. It could create quite a dangerous situation next year.

Kane: Our new Steward program at Kane is averaging nearly 100 visitors a day! We are very, very thankful to the volunteer stewards who are giving up their time to meet and greet this large number of visitors. What a difference you are making out there! Here are Debi and Pat Tebano busy at volunteering – photos courtesy of the Tebanos.



Catskill Towers: The Catskill Fire Tower Project was begun in 1997 with the goal of restoring the 5 Catskill Fire Towers and placing stewards at the 5 towers to interpret fire tower history and educate visitors. That program has had literally hundreds of volunteers in those last 25 years. Lost in all of the hoopla of the NYSDEC Fire Tower Challenge are the hundreds of volunteers who are actively volunteering at Balsam Lake, Hunter, Overlook and Red Hill Fire Towers. We know you are out there, dedicated to covering every weekend from Memorial Day to Columbus Day, and we thank you for your time, energy and dedication to this program!



Fund Raising: Fred has several more cutting boards ready to go, but he also reminds us that these are unique 'one of an 18 kind' – so act now! More on just how Fred makes these special cutting boards is on the website: <http://nysffla.org>.

Follow Up: Several people have inquired about the link for the Lake Pleasant Library presentation. They are working on it. “The video hit a snag when adding the 3 slides at the end. Should be up early next week on 2 Facebook pages - Lake Pleasant Public Library, and Speculator Lake Pleasant Historical Society. Keep checking back and we will share on our Facebook pages when available.

Buck: No update yet from Long Lake. We trust that work is continuing at the site.

Tower Closures

Goodnow – cab is closed pending repairs

Mt Tremper - cab is closed pending repairs

Sterling Forest – tower is closed pending inspection

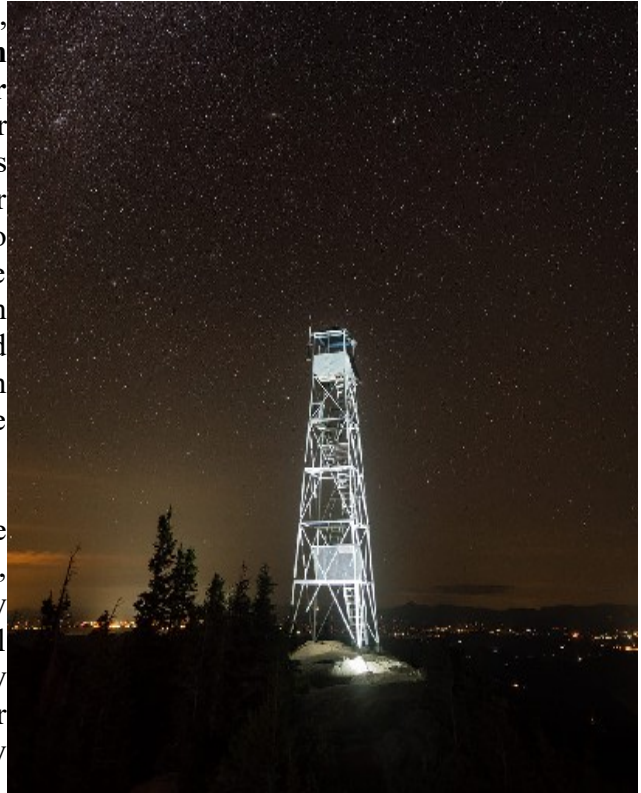
Jackie Jones – tower is closed pending inspection

Beebe Hill – tower is closed pending repairs

9th Annual Lighting of the Towers Event is coming up soon!

The event will take place on Saturday, September 3rd, when the towers will be lit from 9 to 9:30 P.M. **In order to participate, you must register no later than August 24th.** All of the details are on our website: <http://nysffla.org/light.html>. The details include step by step guidelines on the expectations for the event, press releases for the event, deadlines to meet, etc. If you want to know a little more about the event, please take a look at our newsletter from August of 2020 on the website. Past Director Fred Knauf wrote a great article about his participation in the event. If you have other questions, please feel free to let me know. Photo by Brad Wenskowski

We do this event annually to honor and remember the men and women who served in these fire towers, protecting our communities and our forests for many years. We hope the event is one that you will participate in by either being an Illuminator or by being a business or location where people can gather to look up and see the light come on shining brightly in remembrance.



CALENDAR

Sunday, July 17th: 11:00 A.M.: Friends of Sterling Forest will be hosting a hike to the tower. Sterling Fire Tower was erected in 1922. In observance of the tower's centennial, guided hikes to the tower will be held in June, July, August, and September. Join the F.S.F. for a moderately-paced hike to Sterling Fire Tower. We will be stopping along the way to enjoy a snack and the picturesque views. Total hiking distance is approximately 5 miles. Be sure to bring plenty of water/snack/lunch and wear hiking boots or sturdy shoes. Registration is required. Please call 845-351-5907 to register.

Saturday and Sunday, July 30th and 31st: Tentative dates for Pillsbury Tower Work.

Wednesday, August 17th, 7 P.M. at the Lake Pleasant library. Author Martin Podskoch, Adirondack Fire Towers: Their History and Lore: The Southern District.

Thursday, August 18, 7 P.M., at the Adirondack History museum in Elizabethtown: Adirondack Fire Towers: Their History and Lore, by Author Martin Podskoch. *“New York State lost tens of thousands of acres of woodland to devastating forest fires in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In response, the state placed fire observers on prominent peaks. The first stations were crudely-built log platforms, but these were eventually replaced by high steel towers. Podskoch highlights the history and stories of the towers, as well as the observers who supervised them.”*

Saturday, September 10th: Swede Mountain Fire Tower closed this date through December 16th for hunting season.

Saturday or Sunday, September 17th or 18th: Lyon Mt trailwork – best weather day

Monday, October 10th: Stillwater Trail Work and closure.

October: Tentative work on Vandewhacker Fire Tower trail.

*****PLEASE NOTE***** The August newsletter will be delayed due to vacation time. An abbreviated version will be sent out later in August with all of the updated news around the state.

Laurie Rankin, Director
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Forest Fire Lookout Association
www.nysffla.org