



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

While the FFLA is tasked with the protection, enjoyment, and understanding of towers both past and present, we have a tendency to focus a great deal of our efforts on the present, standing towers in these newsletters. But this month we have had some focus on past fire towers that is worth writing about.

To begin with our monthly photo contest is of a past fire tower site, Crane Mt in the southern Adirondacks. R.J. Reakes, a fabulous volunteer with the FFLA, submitted the winning photo of Crane Mt. taken in June of 2018. Congratulations to R.J. and many thanks to all who entered photos and all who played along.



Another past fire tower that we have had come to the forefront, was Fort Noble fire tower. At our Fire Tower History presentation in Speculator on June 4th, I was asked about preservation of old fire tower maps. Follow up conversations and discussions with our historians; Paul, Fred, and John made an identification of the old map as that of Fort Noble. Discussions with the keeper of the map about possible sources for preservation led to an amount that seemed a bit much, but the local Town Board approved an authorization for the funds to preserve this special piece of fire tower history! Thank you to our historians, Melonie and the Town of Morehouse this will be saved!

Last month we talked about the numerous wildfires around the state. For the first few weeks after the last newsletter those frequent fires continued. Finally, leaf out and some moisture have made a difference.

Ranger Report 5-17: Village of Suffern, Rockland County, Wildfire:

On May 10, Forest Rangers responded to a wildfire in Harriman State Park. Working with Palisades Interstate Park Commission Park Rangers and volunteer firefighters, Rangers successfully brought the fire under control. The fire was in steep, rocky terrain and burned 62 acres of land, making it the largest wildfire in Region 3 this year. [Drone video of the fire is available on the DEC website.](#)

Towns of Hamden, Hancock, Deposit, Maryland, Delaware and Otsego Counties Wildfires:

From May 10th to 16th Forest Rangers responded to multiple wildfires in Delaware and Otsego counties. Rangers assisted local fire departments with suppression and enforcement actions, along with periodic patrols during the week to check each fire's status. The size of wildfires ranged from 1.9 to 11.1 acres. The fires were caused by illegal debris burning and utility work on power lines.

Towns of Burns and Grove, Allegany County, Wildfires: On May 11 at 1 p.m., Forest Rangers Krulish and Thaine responded to a fire in the town of Burns. The homeowner was burning debris when the fire escaped his control and burned his home. When Rangers arrived, the fire was already suppressed and the American Red Cross, local resources, Canaseraga Fire Chief, and Allegany County Emergency Services Coordinator assisting the displaced homeowner.

Many of the same fire department volunteers were dispatched to a second wildfire in the nearby town of Grove. This fire was burning a wooded hillside in a steep and rugged location and Ranger assistance was requested. Rangers worked with local fire departments to contain the fire at 2.6 acres. A resident burning debris behind their home was ticketed for lighting a fire that endangers property of another. Volunteers from Canaseraga, Arkport, Nunda, Dansville, Birdsall, and Short Tract fire departments and Canaseraga and Nunda Ambulance also assisted.

Town of Moreau, Saratoga County Wildfire: From May 13 to 16, Forest Rangers responded to a fire that burned more than 16 acres at Moreau State Park. Rangers were joined by more than 100 firefighters from 16 fire departments. Among the techniques to help control the blaze was the use of a bulldozer driven by a State Parks employee to create a fire line.

On Saturday, June 4th I was very pleased to present about Fire Tower History at the Lake Pleasant Library. We had not only a standing room only, but a sitting room only crowd too! We had folks who came from several states away, including our own FFLA Eastern Deputy Chair Mark Haughwout from



North Carolina! We were very happy to see so many folks who were interested in fire towers, shared great stories and asked some wonderful questions too! Photos of the audience provided by Speculator Mayor Jeannette Barrett.

Around the State

Stillwater Fire Tower: Orientation and trail work occurred as part of the National Trails Day events on Saturday, June 4th at this restored fire tower. We had 4 new volunteers stepping up and a couple more who joined us for trail work too! Thanks to Harry, Doug, Laurel, Sue, and Rebecca! We could still use some more volunteers to cover all summer weekends, so if you would like to meet and greet visitors and spend part of your day at the tower, please let me know.

Roosa Gap: From the 5-26-22 ECO Report: Sign Steal Solve - Sullivan County The Roosa Gap State Forest sign is back where it belongs after it was stolen on April 21. Forest Ranger Franke first received the complaint and referred it to Investigator Conway in the Division of Law Enforcement's Bureau of Environmental Crime Investigations Unit. The sign was stolen from the signpost on Firetower Road in Mamakating and information obtained from photos posted online led investigators to a residence in the town. Investigator Conway executed a search warrant and found the sign in the subject's garage. After initially claiming they found the sign on the side of the road, the subject eventually admitted he and a friend had taken it. Investigator Conway contacted the second subject, who admitted the theft and bragged he didn't need a ladder to take it down. Both men are charged with petit larceny and criminal possession of stolen property. The pair are scheduled to appear in the Town of Mamakating Court on June 15.

Summit Fire Tower: Summit Fire Tower in Allegheny State Park will have Tours throughout the summer until September! These tours will be on Saturdays from 11am to 1pm. Take advantage of the chance to visit this fire tower!

Kane Fire Tower: We had a great orientation training on the mountain on Sunday, June 5th with a dozen volunteers in attendance. We shared a ton of information about the new steward program, got acquainted and strengthened partnerships with the Canada Lake Conservation Association and the Canada Lake Store and Marina while doing so. This pilot program will place volunteers on the summit at least once a month throughout the summer and fall. More information can be found here. Take a look at the smiling faces in the photo; Jim H, Joe, Mary, Nancy, Tom, Sarah, Lori Ann, Laurie, Marcus, Pat, Debi, and Jim C.



<http://www.canadalakesconservation.com/uncategorized/kane-mountain-steward-program-underway/>

Cathead: Unfortunately despite the efforts of many to reach a compromise, the planned agreement was not approved. <https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/stories/cathead-mountain-constitutional-amendment-falls-through-for-now>

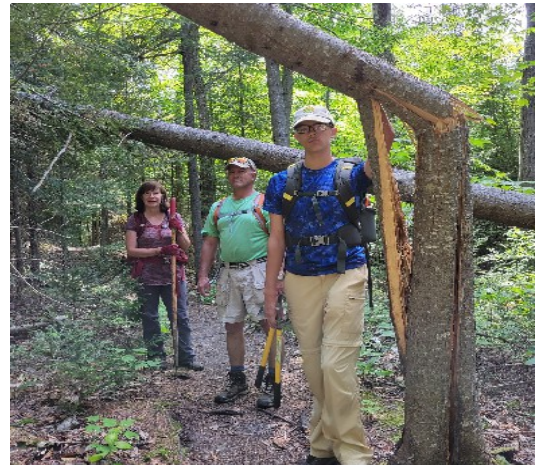
Poke O Moonshine: The Friends group is looking at their 24th year of having a steward and Bianca Lynch is returning! Rocks that were flown in last fall will be turned into trail work between the old Observer's cabin and the summit. The Friends have hired the ADK Pro Crew to complete the work this summer. They are also updating their brochure since it no longer matches the new trail sections.

Rock Rift: In another great example of partnerships, The Town of Tompkins Fire Tower Committee and FFLA Member Ed Engelman connected with the local BOCES for a fire tower patch contest. The students and their Instructor, Kerry Mack in the visual communications class worked on the project during this spring semester at school. The students were tasked with coming up with a design for the Rock Rift Fire Tower patch and climbing card. The contest winner was Elliana Rodriguez! Congratulations to Elliana and to all for this unique partnership! https://www.the-reporter.net/browse.html?search_filter=Rock+Rift

Bramley: The day after the Speculator presentation I had the pleasure of a hike to Bramley mountain with Mark, our Eastern Deputy Chair. Mark was able to spot the tower on Balsam Lake Mt from near the tower site. The Friends group is working diligently with the NYCDEP to see the tower is placed this summer or fall. https://www.the-reporter.net/browse.html?search_filter=Bramley



Lyon: We had just 4 of us to complete the spring trail work at Lyon Mt on the 12th. And there was a lot of it too! We have never seen the trail as wet as it was with water running and standing in places we had not previously seen. We spent a lot of time on drainage! When we were not doing that we were cutting blowdowns out of the trail and admiring the wildflowers. We moved as quickly as we could, but still had to deal with swarms of bugs! Thanks to Dawn, Shawn and Josh for lending a hand!



Ranger Academy: On May 22, 40 new Forest Ranger recruits began their six-month training at the first Rangers-only academy in nearly 30 years. DEC is working in partnership with the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY-ESF) at their campuses in Wanakena and Newcomb. The campuses provide thousands of acres of varying terrain adjacent to additional DEC wilderness and wild forest lands, similar to what the recruits will encounter once they begin their official duties. The recruits were selected from an eligible list of candidates who took a Civil Service exam and upon graduation, recruits will be assigned patrol public lands across the State.

Fund Raising: Fred's donation strategy has to be the most successful fund raising we have seen to date! In just one month, Fred's offer to provide a unique and beautiful cutting board to anyone who donates \$150 to the State Chapter has turned into a huge success! We thank Sue K, Michelle D, Ken H, Elaine D, Mary Jean B, and Laurel F for their donations! We thank Fred for spending so much time in the garage too!

In Memorium

Pete Rossi: We do apologize that we missed the passing of Forest Ranger Pete Rossi last November. This coming Saturday, June 18th there will be a celebration of life service at the Gilboa United Methodist Church, 211 State Route 30, Gilboa. Please join the Rossi family at a gathering at the Prattsville Fire Department following the service. Peter was born 81 years ago on April 17, 1940 and after graduating Gilboa-Conesville Central School, proudly served in the United States Navy. Through the years, Peter worked as a surveyor for Harrington, drove trucks for the Blenheim Creamery, was a part-time Deputy for the Schoharie County Sheriff's Department, owned Peter Tee's Diner in North Blenheim and owned his own hot dog wagon for a time. He started as a surveyor with DEC and eventually retired after 30 years as a Forest Ranger from DEC's Stamford location.

You knew Peter was in the room, especially if there was music playing. He never missed a step and loved twirling his beautiful partner across the dance floor. He loved model airplanes and his artistic side painted beautiful pictures. You also knew he was around and having fun if you caught a glimpse of his infamous Honda Scooter and one of his many, many attachments, out for a ride or on display. He was a kid at heart and that heart loved his family, his friends and his community deeply. Peter gave his time and talents to many organizations and causes including the Delaware County Shields, the Gilboa United Methodist Church, Grand Gorge Fire Department and the American Legion. He was a past member of the Community Action Group, Lion's Club, Blenheim Hose Company and served as a Boy Scout Leader.

Herb Lepke: On May 27, Forest Rangers paid their final respects to Herbert Paul Lepke Jr. Herb served as a Forest Ranger in Sullivan County for 34 years before retiring in 1992. Herb proudly served Our Country in the US Army; he was a member of the First Methodist Church of Ulster Heights and had been a Mason. He was a retired NY State Forest Ranger; a dedicated volunteer fireman for the Neversink Fire Department; he loved to fish, hunt and trap - driven by his passion for the outdoors. Woodworking also provided Herb with great satisfaction and joy. In his younger years, he often lent his carpentry skills to others in need. In his later years, Karen Ulrich Hess introduced Herb to carving, winning several ribbons in competitions. When a tool was not in his hand, you could find him at Sebring Golf Links playing in the scramble. Herb would present one of his eagle carvings to his fellow golfers who hit a "Hole in One". Herb was a wonderful husband, father, grandfather and friend to many. He will be dearly missed.

Chris Kostoss: On Tuesday, May 31, 2022, Captain Christopher Kostoss died by suicide. Chris was born on Oct. 16, 1972. At the time of his death, he had been a New York State Forest Ranger for 23 years. Chris was also a dedicated member of the Wilmington Fire Department for over 10 years. He loved living and working in the Adirondacks. In his spare time, he enjoyed many outdoor pursuits such as gravel bike riding, swimming, hunting, skiing, and playing with his dog. Chris was an introspective minimalist who could often be found shelling and eating peanuts at the kitchen counter. Never fond of grocery shopping, he was known for his creative culinary efforts. His house was decorated with an eclectic mix of objects he found while hiking and his doodles. He was actively involved in suicide prevention among law enforcement. Chris was a loving father, a loyal and caring friend, a dedicated Ranger, and a good person. His manner of death does not change that. He believed in destigmatizing talk about mental health and believed that seeking help for mental health should be a routine part of health care. He will be deeply missed by his family and friends.

Lighting Event 2022: Get those plans underway and sign up now! September 3rd is the date for the 9th Annual Lighting of the Fire Tower Event. We are grateful for a nice article in the Catskill 3500 Club's Canister: <http://catskill-3500-club.org/#canister> the article contains some suggestions for locations for viewing the lighting. We have some towers confirming already with Azure, Mt Arab, Balsam Lake, and Woodhull already making plans. Harry P from out at Stillwater had a good light suggestion – check them out - <https://maxxeon.com/> These are magnetic, so stick well. Keep up to date with plans by checking our website frequently. <http://nysffla.org/>

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

Calendar

Poke O Moonshine: Saturday, July 9th is a trail work day. Cleaning water bars, brush-in herd paths, do minor rock work. 9:30AM at the Route 9 parking area a mile south of the campground. Call or email Mark Robinson, our Trails Coordinator, at 518-578-1480/peterson12996@yahoo.com

Poke O Moonshine: Tuesday, July 12th is a trail work day. Cleaning water bars, brush-in herd paths, do minor rock work. 9:30AM at the Route 9 parking area a mile south of the campground. Call or email Mark Robinson, our Trails Coordinator, at 518-578-1480/peterson12996@yahoo.com

Speculator Tower Work: July 28th through July 3rd

Pillsbury Tower Work: Tentatively 7/30 and 7/31

Lyon Mt Trailwork: 9/17 or 9/18 (best weather day)

Stillwater: Trail Work and closure 10/10

Are you a member? If not, there is not better time to join this organization! Your membership dues and your volunteer time can make a huge difference out there! <http://ffla.org/learn-more--join.html>

Laurie Rankin, Director
New York State Chapter
Forest Fire Lookout Association
www.nysffa.org