



**Forest Fire Lookout Association
New York State Chapter
December 2018**

This is the time of year when I begin to gather information for our year end report. Each year in January the FFLA holds its annual meeting. As I have begun to put together some of the information for the report, I am reminded of all that has been accomplished across NYS this year. Our members have been generous with a variety of contributions. I am grateful to report that our membership continues to grow, merchandise continues to sell, we have received some generous donations, and people continue to show an interest in helping out the organization and therefore fire towers across the state. In the most recent issue of the Lookout Network, the National Newsletter of the FFLA, NY was featured on many pages!

California, The Camp Fire: There were many news reports and videos about this tragic fire just coming into the forefront of the news at the writing of last month's newsletter. This month, it was difficult to find one article that would succinctly describe this horrific fire. A photo is often worth a thousand words. Here are a series of images from cameras mounted on monitoring sites in remote California State Park lands near Oroville, CA. These scenes captured the rapid development of the Camp Fire on November 8, 2018 in just a short 35 minutes. Image credits: Nevada Seismological Laboratory



Here is the most updated link of the fires history from Cal Fire :
http://www.fire.ca.gov/current_incidents/incidentdetails/Index/2277

There is an interesting discussion from the NYS perspective of the Camp Fire here by NCPR reporter Brian Mann who visited the area: Can the Adirondacks burn again?

<https://www.northcountrypublicradio.org/news/story/37536/20181129/could-the-adirondacks-burn-like-those-big-california-forest-fires>

News From Around the State

While many can pause for a moment at this time of year from our fire tower work because of the weather, there is much that still goes on behind the scenes. In some cases, bad weather created some problems, and in some cases, vandalism but they were taken care of quickly.

Stillwater Fire Tower reopens this Friday, December 21st. Thank you to everyone for respecting the trail closure. We took advantage of the reopening last year with a hike in the pristine winter woods. Check the calendar below for dates on the upcoming centennial celebration.

Spruce Mt Fire Tower has reopened following their hunting season closure. Thank you to all for respecting that closure.

Hadley Mt. Fire Tower: Volunteers closed up the cabin for the season in mid November. Unfortunately, Hadley was the victim of some vandalism at some point after that. Stalwart volunteers made the trek to the summit in some deep early season snows to make repairs. They also made repairs to the outhouse floor.



Friends of Grafton Lakes State Park: These folks care for not one, but 2 fire towers; Dickinson Hill and the Visitor Center Playground Fire Tower. They are planning a big Winterfest Celebration on January 26th. They are looking for persons who are interested in volunteering that day. Perhaps you could help out at one of the fire towers that day? <https://www.meetup.com/Friends-of-Grafton-Lakes-State-Park/events/256871316/>

Hurricane Mt Fire Tower: On December 10th several volunteers did a significant amount of trail work from Crow Clearing to the Gulf Brook junction. The early snowfalls had made the trail impassable. Trail clearing was accomplished by Don Pachner, Chris and Charlie McGuire, Ann Sayers and Pam Gothner. Thank you all for that tremendous amount of work!

Rock Rift: The Rock Rift Fire Observation Tower is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. If you scroll down to NY, there it is! <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/weekly-list-20181207.html>

Fort Montgomery Slide Show: About 35 people turned out for Marty Podskoch's slide show on Fire Towers and the CCC in the Hudson Valley. In attendance were Dave from Friends of Mount Beacon, several members of Friends of Sterling Forest and Retired Ranger Jerry from our Jackie Jones project to provide some additional information. We spent some time talking about Sterling Forest, Jackie Jones, and Mount Beacon Fire Tower restoration projects and Marty had some very interesting CCC items and information to share. Thanks to all for turning out! It was a fun and informative evening.

Still lacking that one gift for someone? Our NYS Centennial patches are on sale now: <http://ffla.org/lookout-store---patches.html>

I wrote a piece for the most recent issue of the Catskill Canister, the 3500 Club quarterly newsletter. In it I try to enlighten the hiking public about the reasons for our annual Lighting of the Fire Tower Event. It was not originally intended to be a hiking event, but rather an educational, community connection.
<http://catskill-3500-club.org/#canister>

Winter Trailhead Parking and Road Closures

Please be sure to check your guide books, on line resources, even ask on our facebook page for the most up to date information. Some of the fire tower roads are not accessible in winter. If you do visit, please follow all posted parking regulations and DO NOT park in a posted snowplow turn arounds.

Restoration Grants: If any of our membership are well versed in grant writing, we would love to hear from you. I try to compile a list of some grant opportunities and share them here. When we get the state web page up and running this winter, we will also have them listed there. Some grant applications are rather simple and straightforward. Some are amazingly complicated and lengthy and require some pre-planning. Rather than avoiding those grants, it is wise to take a look at them now and see what you may need to do to prepare to apply next year. A criteria of many grants is that they are matching grants. One that comes to mind is the Parks and Trails Partnership Grant. The application period for this year just ended on 11-30, but I would expect to see them again next year.
<https://www.ptny.org/our-work/support/park-trail-partnership-program> If you were to receive a grant, it may be a substantial amount and thus worth the time to research and prepare for. In 2019 the FFLA will once again be offering restoration grants. Other grants that may be available to your group may be through Adventure NY, Smart Growth Grants, Watershed Grants, ADKHP Grants, and others. Check in your local area too. Some local options may include but are not limited to Stewart's Shops, the Glenn and Carol Pearsall Adirondack Foundation, and The Adirondack 46ers Conservation Trust, to name a few. Local tourism grants may be a good option to look into. Partnering with other organizations rather than a grant could be considered. Organizations such as the Champlain Area Trails and Lake George Land Conservancy are a few that come to mind. Or think outside of the box about a special interest group that would benefit from your fire tower plans. At a recent meeting regarding Bramley Mt. Fire Tower, there was support from an audience member who is involved with birding. She believes the site would be ideal for raptor counts. Could it also net the local group working on this project some funds from an Audubon group or simply some boots on the ground? Both would be beneficial.

Christmas Fire Sale: Yes – you read that correctly. Bidding ends today (12/17) so act fast!
<https://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/state/south-carolina/article223104000.html>

In Memoriam

Andy Liddle: Andy passed away on November 14th at the age of 78. He was an FFLA member who was a vocal advocate for fire tower restoration. He was familiar with the inner workings of Albany and was always willing to encourage others to support fire tower restoration. Andy will be missed.
<http://obituaries.thedailystar.com/obituary/andrew-liddle-1940-2018-1071447932>

Charlie O'Neill: Retired Forest Ranger Charlie O'Neill passed away on December 1st. He was 94. His wife, Former Chapin Hill Observer Marge (known to many as Madge) predeceased him in November of 2017. Charlie continued to enjoy receiving this newsletter. He and Madge can stand watch together once again.
<https://grayparkerfuneralhome.com/tribute/details/1907/Charles-O-Neill-Sr/obituary.html#tribute-start>

Trivia: Our November trivia question, “How many fire towers blew down in NYS during The Big Blow of 1950?”, was enhanced a bit by an excerpt from our book of the month that stated, “many observation towers were blown down”. In reality, none blew down in The Big Blow of 1950. Sometimes journalism exaggerates a bit. Paul Hartmann is the only one to venture a guess and it was correct. Perhaps Paul is wallpapering a room with all those FFLA stickers he is winning? Perhaps you will consider giving him some competition?



December Trivia: Who was this dapper fellow? What tower was he associated with? Is it still standing? Why did he carry a clock? This gives you 4 opportunities to win an FFLA sticker!

Calendar

Tuesday, January 1, 2019, First Day hikes, <https://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/112174.html>. Hikes to Balsam Lake and Poke O Moonshine as well as a former fire tower site, Prospect Mt are scheduled.

Saturday, January 26, 2019, The Friends of Poke O Moonshine will be hosting Mammal Tracking with Elizabeth Lee. Meet at 9:30 at the Observer's trailhead. Held in cooperation with CATS (Champlain Area Trails).

Saturday, February 2, 2019, Friends of Poke O Moonshine will be hosting a back country ski trip. Meet at the Observer's trailhead at 9:30 to explore.

Friday, June 7 through Sunday, June 9 will be the Northeastern Conference of the FFLA.

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

Another contributor to fire towers in NYS is the SCA. This organization provides work on fire towers in the Adirondacks through a NYS DEC partnership. You may wish to support their work through this page: <https://www.thesca.org/connect/blog/gift-ideas-outdoor-enthusiast-your-life> The SCA is also currently hiring for next year: If you have a passion for the outdoors, they are seeking motivated candidates, ages 18-25. This 10-month program includes housing, stipend, and hands-on training. Apply by Jan. 25th. <http://ow.ly/E1Yf30mREWr>

I am putting together plans for 2019. In addition to supporting the numerous Friends Groups that currently exist around the state, we have been working with some new ones in support of their efforts. Multiple parties have gotten together to discuss the possibility of restoring Swede Mountain Fire Tower and we have had discussions with the NYSDEC regarding restoring Leonard Hill Fire Tower. We have been assisting the Catskill Mountain Club in their efforts toward returning Bramley Mt. Fire Tower to its original location. We will be getting a State Chapter website up and running. We will be working on several maintenance projects. I wonder if as you wrap up this year would you be willing to pledge just one thing to the FFLA in the coming year? It could be your membership, your membership renewal,

your willingness to share an old photo or a memory, your carpentry skills on a project, your suggestions for ways to improve the Chapter, your organizational skills on a project, your computer skills with your favorite group, your trail work expertise, your writing skills with a contribution to this newsletter, your grant writing skills, your time to volunteer for a day at a fire tower with your favorite group, your cooking skills to support work day volunteers, your experience with working with the media, and many more ways. Together we could make 2019 a very productive and special year!

In lieu of the usual Book of the Month, I thought I would share a poem written by Balsam Lake Mountain Fire Tower Observer, Augustus (Gus) Stewart in 1943. Gus's words seem very appropriate at this time of year.

You might like Slide, Balsam or Graham.
For me they are all the same.
Beautiful summits of the
Catskill Range.
From the highest peak to the
Lowest knoll.
They seem to fill your
Heart and soul.
From the babbling brooks
To the rivers wide.
You don't have to hire a guide.
Now scientists try to tell
how the mountains
Were built with ice so well.
But as I view them,
From my lofty tower
I can't help thinking
of One Divine Power.

May each of you have a very Merry Christmas.

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Photo courtesy of Warren Johnsen