

Forest Fire Lookout Association

New York State Annual Report for 2017

New York State ended the year with 66 members an increase of 13 from last year. Of those, 22 are plus members. The Chapter invested in safety kits and a slide projector, purchased centennial patches for tower volunteers, provided refreshments at slide shows, and hosted a picnic. Total expenses for the year were \$1414.48. As a fund raiser, centennial patches were once again produced and are currently for sale at various locations and on the FFLA web page. The Chapter has an account balance of \$500.04. Forty two (42) NYS towers are on the NHLR list, with 7 having been added in 2017.

A \$500.00 grant was awarded to the Friends of Sterling Forest. That project included several visits and working days over 2017. Partnering organizations on the project included the State Chapter, Sterling Forest Park, Friends of Sterling Forest, Team Rubicon, and Share with a Teen. Major work days occurred in July and November. All of the tower steps and landings were replaced. The cab was protected from the elements for the winter and well secured. The exterior of the ground cabin was stained, the interior cleaned, old wind generator equipment was removed. This project will continue into next year to complete the interior of the fire tower cab and a few other minor items. The goal is to return the tower to its historical state, be able to utilize the tower for fire spotting and to provide a volunteer steward to greet and educate the public.

Fire Activity was nil as it was a wet year in New York State.

The new Journey to the Fire Tower Interpretive Trail opened at Dickinson Hill. Done entirely by the Friends of Grafton Lakes State Park from the initial grant proposal to completion, this interpretive trail includes signage with text and photos from the trailhead to the summit. The State Chapter worked with the Park on the panels regarding both text and photos. Several panels include photos from the Chapter collection, so noted on the panels. In addition, the Grafton Lakes State Park is working on a new Visitors Center and Children's Natural Playscape that includes a brand new fire tower. The fire tower was erected in early December 2017 and will be a focal point of entry into the park.

Under an amendment to the Blue Mt Wild Forest, the Blue Mt Fire Tower has been restored to a condition approximate to its historical appearance and in keeping with NHLR guidelines. Removal of communications equipment and a building that was once placed under the tower occurred in the fall.

Hunter Fire Tower was the recipient of a \$48,000 Adventure NY Grant. A new roof and a coat of paint was done and completed in time for the centennial celebration there.

Our monthly newsletter continues and provides a nice platform for news and communication. The monthly newsletter is sent to 169 persons electronically and 11 via postal mail. Features include a trivia question, book of the month, help wanted, individual tower updates, upcoming events and plenty of photos. Some changes are planned for 2018 including a lost lookouts section.

Slide shows were done in Glens Falls, Pine Hill, and Livingston Manor. Each presentation includes a segment regarding Federal History, State History and a local focus depending on the group and location. Numerous historical items are also brought along for display at the slide shows. Plans are to continue this in 2018.

Based on feedback from membership following the Fall 2016 conference, we held the First Annual Picnic in September. Unfortunately, it was poorly attended.

11 Fire Towers across the state turned 100 in 2017. Centennial celebrations occurred at Hadley, Poke O Moonshine, Tremper, and Hunter. The State Director was able to attend 2 of those events and sent declarations that were read at the other two.

Visits were conducted to 41 different towers, several were done multiple times for purposes of restoration, centennial celebrations, planning, painting, and volunteering for an additional 30 visits. 4 Lost Lookout Sites were also visited.

No towers were lost/removed in 2017. However, Wakely fire tower which was closed in December of 2016 was found to require emergency stabilization repairs in May of 2017. Those repairs were made but additional repairs were not able to be completed for a variety of reason. Those repairs are scheduled for a spring 2018 completion. One new tower was brought to our attention that is still standing. It is believed to be the original Moose River Fire Tower.

Painting of the interior of cabs was done repeatedly to try to curb a major graffiti problem.

Number of towers staffed with paid or volunteer interpreters was 13. With a marked increase in hiker numbers, their role in providing historical information and user education is more important than ever.

The State Chapter has a very active FB Page. It is a closed group and permission must be obtained to join. To date we have 199 members. Sharing of old photos, documents, experiences, and questions occurs.

Numerous local publications featured fire towers.

Goals for 2018: Getting more members actively involved in individual projects, getting our Chapter website up and running, promoting affiliate chapter status and other perks for our members, providing assistance with projects at Bramley, Jackie Jones, MDHCIC tower, Leonard Hill, Berry Hill, Rock Rift, Swede, and Pillsbury fire towers, expand Lighting of the Fire Tower event to a State wide event on Labor Day weekend, possible Flags on the 48 style annual event, partnering with other organizations, and promotion of more collaborative events such as first day hikes (many were scheduled this year, but had to be canceled or rescheduled due to brutally cold weather), National Trails Day events, and Hudson Valley River Ramble.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Rankin, New York State Director