

Forest Fire Lookout Association Eastern Meeting Minutes Asheville, NC July 24 - 26, 2009

The Summer Eastern conference was held at the REI store in Asheville, NC. Our host for the conference was Peter Barr NC director. The conference had 21 people from 7 state NJ , PA , VA , KY , TN , NC , GA in attendance for Saturdays seminars . Directors from state chapters present were Chairman/ SE, NJ co director, NC and GA directors.

Friday was just an informal gathering of anyone who was in the Asheville area that could stop by at the REI store.

Saturday kicked off with a round robin of introduction of people at the conference. After wards chairman Keith Argow gave a brief summary of the FFLA and what was our mission statement do to the fact majority of the people in attendance of the conference were hikers that liked to hike up to fire towers.

Peter Barr gave a power point presentation on hiking and history of Fire towers on the western part of North Carolina and how he got interested on fire towers and how he started his book.

Keith Argow gave a power point presentation of the fire towers and fire lookouts around the US and some of the towers he was involved with when he worked for the US Forest Service.

Lunch break from noon to 1 pm

The first speaker after lunch was Tom Speaks Cherokee NF forest supervisor from TN. Tom gave a brief over view of the Cherokee NF. He advised at one time the Cherokee had 18 towers that were marked by a C and a number indicating the tower. Today there only 4 ¼ towers left and were the other towers stand are just the markers still are visible. When Tom said 4 ¼ towers on the Cherokee the ¼ is that one of the towers Camp Creek Bald tower is in the Pisgah NF well 3 legs are and one leg is in the Cherokee NF. After Tom spoke he introduced Sam Brocato who is the executive director of Partners of the Cherokee NF. This group is a partner with the Cherokee NF to restore the Pinnacle mountain fire tower that is located in the Cherokee. Sam did a power point presentation on Pinnacle Mountain tower and the different types of projects are going on to the tower. One thing Sam mentioned was the town below the tower is planning to make a hiking trail to the tower from an information kiosk, the town has banners on their light posts and the tower is

located on the banner. In Oct the partners of the Cherokee NF and the town will be holding a fund raiser to raise money for the tower restoration work.

Peter gave a presentation on NC FFLA chapter and what he would like to see on the fire towers in the state and like to see down the road. Peter would like to see was preservation, restoration, access to towers and research. Peter took each one and gave an example of each one. Peter then spoke about the Carolina Mtn Club lookout tower challenge. Peter mentioned that anyone who wants to do the challenge must hike the towers in the book send in an award application with date and route taken to the tower and they must join the FFLA to get the reward. Those were a few of the requirements for the hiking challenge a full list can be found on the NC FFLA web site.

The last presentation for the day was Keith Argow who did a power point presentation of western North Carolina towers from yrs ago. After Keith's presentation every one car pooled to Frying pan Mountain Fire tower. Fryingpan mountain tower is located along the Blue Ridge parkway about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile hike from the parking area. The tower is alive in tower 70' high 89 steps and is a steel tower with a full 360 degree view. After Frying pan Mtn tower everyone headed to Ryan's grill and buffet were Peter Barr had set up to have a separate room for us so we could enjoy our dinner and talk about fire towers. Peter also brought a lap top that had photos of towers going from NC, Keith's photos from his presentations during the day and Michael Spanjer from southern Kentucky of photos of KY and TN fire towers it was a nice evening.

Sunday started at 0730 at REI to car pool to the 4 fire towers we were going to that day. First stop was Little Snow Ball tower which is located at the Big Ivy Historical Society grounds which is the old F-8 Big Ivy CCC camp which were the ones that built Little Snow Ball Fire Tower in 1934. The tower was decommissioned by the Forest Service in the late 70's it went out to bid for anyone who was interested in the tower. Lloyd Allen had lived in the area all his life and did not want the tower destroyed so he put a bid in, after everything was done Lloyd was the only bid and the price was \$300. It took Lloyd a year to dismantle and take the tower off the mountain. The tower sat in a garage for 25 yrs before Lloyd and his friend Bill Hensley reerected at the Big Ivy Historical Society Campus where it sits today. Some facts are it is steel live in tower 21' high with 28 steps to the cat walk. Lloyd was at the Tower on Sunday morning and gave the group a tour of the tower and old school building that is on the grounds. He also gave a talk about the tower and taking it down and erecting it 25 yrs later.

The next stop was to Green Knob Fire tower it is an exact duplicate of Little Snow Ball 21 'tall 28 steps it is a live in steel tower in and it was still standing were it was erected in 1931. The tower can be reached by the Blue Ridge

Parkway at the Green Knob over look. The trail to the tower is ½ mile pretty steep with switch backs. It was a clear say so views were spectacular from the cab.

The third stop was to Mt Mitchell were there was a fire tower yrs ago but has been remove to put up a handicapped access able tower. The tower sits 10' high with a ramp to the observation deck with 360 degree view. Mt Mitchell is located in Mt Mitchell State Park and is the highest point in NC at 6,684'; In fact it is the highest point on the East coast.

After Mt Mitchell our last stop was to Chamber Mt Fire Tower were it is one of two towers that are still staffed for fire detection for 4 months of the yr. The operator of Chambers Mt tower is Orvale Banks. He lives below the tower in the NC forest Resources building yr round as a care taker works 4 months as a fire tower observer. When he is not working as a tower observer he keeps himself busy as a K-9 handler in a search and rescue unit nearby. Chamber Mt tower is a 7'x7' Aermotor tower sits at 45' 3" high and has 60 steps to the top. After going to the top of Chamber's Mt tower we took a few group photos on the porch of the house we said our good buys and then we headed off the mt for home.

It was a nice summer conference