

2018 Maine Chapter Annual Report

This year, we got through another year without any tower losses. Maine continues to have a largely abandoned, aging tower inventory. We actively seek out candidates in the inventory to attempt restoration projects, but we are often challenged by the lack of liability insurance and other resources. As such, we at a minimum keep track of the inventory on a yearly basis. In that effort, we continue to have a large number of members and friends of the chapter do site visits all over the state. We had another year where all standing towers were visited, yielding a complete 2018 survey. We are also encouraged with the commitment of the Northern District of the Maine Public Lands department to repairing many of the fire towers in their district, enabling them to be recreational destinations.

We continued with research and archive collection, including important donations and oral histories. We continue to maintain and grow our chapter Facebook presence and collected a variety of new information from it.

We continued to keep the Maine tower inventory up to date as there were changes, new discoveries and updates. The findings are below –

2018 Tower Survey

Data as of 12/29/2018

Summary:

Total Known Tower Sites – 144

Total Towers Still Standing – 55

Total Towers Gone or Removed – 89

Of the 55 Standing Towers:

Standing Steel Only, No Cab – 21

Standing Steel Converted to Observation – 7

Standing Steel and Cab – 26

Standing Wooden Enclosed – 1

Average Condition of the 26 standing towers with Cabs:

Good Condition – 10

Fair Condition – 6

Poor Condition – 8

Bad Condition – 2

The full tower summary list can be found on the FFLA Web Site on the Lookout Library page under the Maine section. See link below. We will continue to update these lists as new information is found.

<http://ffla.org/lookouts/me/me.htm>

Planned Removals – No concrete plans to remove anything, but the below continue to be at-risk towers: **Johnston Hill, Pleasant Mountain, and Almanac Mountain.**

Membership and Budget

Current membership in ME is at 39 members, up 1 from last year. We also have over 100 other Facebook friends or folks that help out occasionally with research, trip reports, or tower reports. As in past years, no chapter funds were requested from the FFLA accounts. All expenses were covered by the director as a donation to the chapter.

NHLR

12 Total Entries

Research / Archives

We continued with significant research on tower sites. We received many new leads and information through Facebook and have worked with these folks to gather the information for the archives. We did several oral histories of past watchman as well. Worked with various organizations and individuals to provide history and background data on towers and tower sites. Also made several trips to the Maine State Library and other locations to retrieve archival information and old photos of lookout sites.

Liability Challenges in Maine

We continue to hold on a few restoration projects on state owned/leased land until we can understand if / how we can use the FFLA National liability insurance. We have made no progress getting these answers in 2018.

Facebook Presence

The Maine Chapter Facebook Page continues to do well and has 5653+ followers as of this writing, up 950 since last year. We continue to keep fresh content on the page, which is a key to keeping interest. We continue to see the below benefits -

- Connecting with many former watchman, yielding a wealth of info
- Connecting with the families of former watchman, yielding a wealth of info
- Provides a good mechanism for communication and outreach
- Is a good research tool
- Has created more exposure for the chapter
- Provides a mechanism to socialize our online membership

We continued to regularly create Facebook advertising campaigns on a quarterly basis to advertise our Newsletter with our online membership link.

Activities

Squaw Mountain Watchman's Camp project

We have been partnering with The Natural Resource Education Center (NREC) based in Greenville Maine, on a project to add a watchman's camp replica at the Greenville Maine Visitors Center. In 2016, the restoration of the Squaw Mountain Fire tower was completed on this site. This year, the camp was built next to the fire tower, creating a "fire lookout complex". The camp is the same size and style as the last standing watchman's camp on Squaw Mountain, build to the same measurements and rough materials. The camp is to be dual-purpose; in the warm months when the fire tower is open, the camp will serve as an interpretive site showing elements of watchman life around 1960. In the winter months, the camp will be used as a warming shelter for the local cross-country ski group. The camp is ready for the 2019 cross-country ski season. We will resume work in the spring to paint the camp and work toward the completion of the interior.

An all-volunteer team led by NREC Board Member Ed Jewett did a fantastic job at building a replica based on diagrams and photos FFLA members had put together of the original camp. Local and regional businesses also stepped up and provided discounted materials and assistance with the build out.



The new camp at the Greenville Visitor's Center

Northern Region Towers

The Maine Public Lands Division continued planning for, and implementation of, maintenance on the Round Pond Mountain tower site, including footing and guy line work. The state built a new cab for the tower in the Ashland shop and will be transported to the tower in 2019 for installation. This tower is in the middle of the popular and remote Allagash region, and overlooks much beautiful country.

Additionally, repair work is planned for Allagash Mountain in 2019 to fix a leaking roof.



The new Round Pond Mountain Cab

Presentations

Due to having to cancel several other presentations due to scheduling conflicts, we only gave 1 fire tower presentation in 2018. We gave a short talk on Maine Fire Tower history at the 2018 winter reception of the Forest Society of Maine. The meeting was a success with about 65 attendees.

Other Projects

The **Mount Agamenticus** restoration project saw some movement in 2018. The tower engineering study is complete with a report of recommended adjustments to be made. Since much radio equipment must be relocated during the repairs, it is taking time to complete this before repairs can start. We expect some work to begin in 2019.

With respect to the Indian Hill fire lookout project in **Grand Lake Stream**, the Downeast Lakes Land Trust continues to work on completing ownership paperwork hopefully opening the start of a restoration effort in 2019. FFLA will assist where possible.

On the volunteer front, **Mount Hope** remains in good shape and is manned by volunteers when they are available. **Mount Agamenticus** continues to be closed for restoration and **Ossipee Hill** tower has had little activity in 2018 due to the lack of volunteers. In addition, FFLA member Jack Kelley discovered and reported a break in at the Ossipee Hill tower this past summer. Repairs have been made by the local FD.

Other Activities

Made several tower site visits this past year. Trips included Green Mountain, Moxie Bald Mountain, Tumbledown Mountain, Wadleigh Mountain, Baker Mountain, Squaw Mountain, Sally Mountain, Barren Mountain, 4th Mountain, Kibby Mountain, Soubunge Mountain, Kibby Mountain, and Williams Mountain.

A small group of FFLA members bushwacked over **Tumbledown mountain** to the south side and located the site of the second watchman's camp. Although gone, the site revealed many artifacts. We also climbed **Kibby mountain** in the remote boundary mountain region to measure and diagram the rotting observation deck. The deck is in poor shape and we will be researching if this can be replaced.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bill Cobb
Maine Director