



**Forest Fire Lookout Association
New York State Chapter
Annual Report 2022**

Membership: New York ended the year with 121 members. (66 in 2017, 78 in 2018, 89 in 2019, 99 in 2020, and 121 in 2021). Of those 121 members, 35 were plus members. The numbers reflect 15 new members and 15 who did not renew, keeping our numbers steady for the year.

Financials: Our chapter had an opening balance of \$2048.41 and a closing balance of \$1155.77. We received several donations, in large part due to a fund raising effort from Past NYS Director, Fred Knauf who designed and produced a one of a kind cutting board for any person who donated \$150 or more to the State Chapter. Uniforms and mailing costs for a significant mailing that celebrated 25 years of the Catskill Fire Tower Project were some of the major expenses for 2022.

Fire Activity: Dry weather contributed to numerous wildland fires and many high fire danger days. The largest was 370 acres in the Town of Jasper. The second largest was 221 acres. All others were extinguished without great loss. None of our towers actively participated in fire spotting activities. There were no rental towers in the state. Standing towers is currently 77.

Site visits: Visits were completed to at least 16 different locations, with multiple visits to several of these. Visits to Lost Lookout Sites – 3.

Stewardship: Steward programs continued at Stillwater and Berry Hill fire towers. We began a new pilot program at Kane Fire Tower. We provide training and uniforms for these programs as well as materials such as Smokey Bear give aways, LNT information, maps, etc for use in the stewards work. These highly visible programs give us an opportunity to educate the public on the history of fire towers and how to safely recreate in the outdoors.

New Agreements with NYSDEC: We signed agreements with the NYSDEC for 4 new fire towers, one was a first of its kind agreement that includes 10 fire towers in one district, the most ever included in a single agreement in the state. Belfry, Blue, Kane, Lyon, Owls Head, Pillsbury, Snowy, Spruce, Vandewhacker, and Wakely. We also have agreements for towers at Berry Hill, Stillwater, and Beebe Hill.

Makomis/Speculator Fire Tower: The historical Makomis Fire Tower was returned to a location in the Adirondacks in 2022! We had worked closely with the Village of Speculator throughout the planning process and were actually able to provide some volunteers for a work day as well. We attended the grand opening festivities on September 1st and also participated in a local PBS segment about the restoration of the fire tower.

Buck Mt Fire Tower: This formerly private fire tower is a project that has been underway for a few years now. We provided some technical assistance through the planning stages and this year were able to actually spend one day on site painting the tower. Everything is in order for this tower to be opened to the public in 2023. Stay tuned!

Monthly Newsletter: We continue to provide a monthly newsletter with not only our New York news, but also to connect our readers to other work in the Northeast and across the country. We circulate this electronically to over 200 recipients and provide a dozen snail mail newsletters too.

Annual Lighting Event: We had a record number of towers participating this year (34) and several local presentations were done leading up to the event as well. All promoted fire tower history and an opportunity for those involved to remember those who served in these towers. We partnered with 46Climbs, a group that climbs to shed the light on a suicide prevention on one of our towers this year.

Outreach Events: We did a Slide show presentation prior to the reopening of the Makomis/Speculator tower. We also attended the anniversary events for the Dickinson Hill Fire Tower and partnered with AARCH for a fire tower presentation with Friends of Poke O Moonshine Chair, David Thomas-Train.

Website: Our website continues to be very active around the lighting event and showed us 8390 hits for 2022. We have quite a bit of information on the site: www.nysffla.org

Social Media Presence: On Facebook we have 1430 members in our FFLA New York State Chapter group. We have a very popular monthly photo contest and weekly Throwback Tower Thursdays posted by Past NYS FFLA Director Fred Knauf.

NHLR: We submitted 7 applications in 2022 which were approved late in the year. We will submit more in 2023 in an effort to get all towers listed.

Tower Closures: We have had several fire tower closures pending engineering inspections. Leonard Hill, Jackie Jones, Sterling. It is unclear when these engineering inspections will be completed. Beebe Hill and Goodnow fire towers have been closed pending repairs to their roof tops. It is expected that any repairs will be made and all will be reopened to the public.

Looking ahead to 2023, we expect that Buck Mt Fire Tower will be reopened to the public. We will continue to work with the folks at the Bramley Mt Fire Tower and Rock Rift Fire Towers in hopes that they too will be reopened in 2023. The effort to continue to find a compromise at Cathead Mt Fire Tower continues and we hope that will move forward in 2023. We hope to explore some funding options, particularly the NYS Parks and Trails grant and position ourselves to be eligible to apply. We hope to continue to increase our membership and volunteer participation in 2023. We will be focusing on public outreach to schools/birding groups/ham radio operators who all benefit from having fire towers open to the public. We are also continuing to investigate having a patch for those who participate in projects as a way to encourage volunteerism.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Rankin, Director NYS Chapter