

Pennsylvania Chapter report for 2018

We currently have 21 paying members, nine of which are “plus” members. Our current balance is: \$733.14. We utilize a Facebook Group versus the Page. Currently, in this group we have 139 members.

This past January, I represented the FFLA at Grey Towers in Milford to attend the inaugural meeting regarding the restoration of the former Big Pocono Fire Tower (22- foot Aermotor) which will be re-assembled and restored and erected on the grounds of Grey Towers as an Interpretive Display. Work is progressing slowly, mostly due to the above average rainfall this past year here in North-eastern PA. The cab is being worked on inside a large garage on the property, however, the tower itself may not fit inside to be restored. Hence, some of the work is weather-dependent. FFLA generously approved a grant to help with the initial costs of this project.

Currently, the Commonwealth is over-hauling many of the aging fire towers with new, modern structures. This will be accomplished in several phases over several years. The towers that were removed to be replaced, due to the Commonwealth contract for this phase, were not available to any groups for purchase. However, several were saved by individual Forest District’s and will be rebuilt (not at same height) and used as Interpretive Centers for educational purposes. In line with this project, I am aware of the following towers being used: Bear Springs, Keffer, Mauch Chunk.

Regarding preserving some of Pennsylvania’s towers, the Commonwealth, in cooperation with individual District Offices, will be offering some of the towers that are slated to be removed but NOT replaced up for “adoption.” This means that if the tower is not on private land and there is a local interest in refurbishing and maintaining them via volunteers, the District Office will work with interested parties to make this happen. I was assured by DCNR’s Harrisburg office that removing towers that are not to be replaced will NOT occur immediately and they are hoping many can be adopted and rehabilitated. If anyone is interested in a specific tower, they would need to get in contact with the District Office in which said tower is located. In this vein, I and any other interested party have been invited to a grassroots meeting on Saturday, March 23, 2019 at 10:00 am at Greenwood Furnace State Park Office regarding a group (Standing Stone Trail Club) interest in adopting and rehabilitating the former Greenwood and Little Flat Fire Towers. This is located in central PA, near State College. Please contact me if anyone is interested and I will put you in contact with the Trail Club. In speaking with DCNR, Big Flat near Fayetteville was also mentioned as a potential tower for adoption.

I was able to visit Snowy Mountain Fire Tower in the Michaux State Forest in May. The tower appears to be in overall good shape. However, the wooden stair treads/landings as well as the top cab appear to need replacement/work. The cab door is gone and the cab has been vandalized (window’s broken out). The tower is fenced, but can be accessed via a hole cut in the fence, hence, the vandalism. I also was able to visit High Knob Tower in Pike County (Delaware State

Forest) the end of October and the tower is in very good condition (22- foot Aermotor). I was hoping to continue east on I-84 to Milford to visit Buckhorn Ridge, but day was waning and spent more time at High Knob than I had anticipated as the gate was closed and I had to hike 1.5 miles up a steep hill.

Finally, at the invitation of Laurie Rankin, I will be attending this June's NY FFLA meeting and offering a presentation on why Pennsylvania decided to resurrect the Fire Towers as the Commonwealth's prime venue to detect forest fires.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Bubnis
FFLA Pennsylvania Chapter Chairman