



ON THE LOOKOUT

From the
National Chairman
Keith A. Argow

Vienna, Virginia
Winter 2007

COMPLETING A "VERY GOOD YEAR" WITH BIG PLANS APPROVED FOR 2007

Annual meetings are rather boring events, unless you happen to be a "policy wonk." Members of FFLA are hands-on people. They are usually searching the highest mountain or tower, and when they get there they want to do something constructive to save the place! That's a very good thing. This year we were hosted by the Forest History Society in Durham, NC. The FHS is the official repository of FFLA's Historic Archives. This excellent alliance traces back to the earliest days of FFLA's founding. For a summary of the meeting see [this link](#).

WHY AN ANNUAL MEETING IN JANUARY?

The Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Forest Fire Lookout Association is required by our by-laws as the time we officially conduct the business of the Association. It is held every year in January, and is not to be confused with the two popular Summer Meetings of the General Membership (one in the east, one in the west). January was selected as the most likely month of the year when Directors who were also active lookouts or fire managers would not have a conflict with their fire control duties. Even that precaution doesn't always work. This year our Virginia Director was on a fire assignment in Australia and could not attend. The 3-day Martin Luther King holiday weekend is chosen so members can take advantage of a vacation day and not use annual leave. The early January date also facilitates the annual election of three officers (half of the ExComm) for the coming two years.

The National Board of Directors is made up of the 26 Chapter Directors plus the elected Officers of the Association. This is the primary time when FFLA business is officially conducted. During the other 51 weeks of the year business decisions are made by the Executive Committee (the six elected officers of the Association). Their actions are confirmed by a vote of the Board at the annual meeting.

In practice, this works well. It allows FFLA to respond to opportunities, take prompt action, and leave an accountable decision trail. Fortunately, the ExComm is well distributed geographically: Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Virginia. We are all active in the Association and known to a majority of the Directors.

HOW ARE THE MEETING SITES SELECTED?

Annual Meetings were originally held in the Northeast, to keep the travel costs as low as possible. As the association grew, they moved south as far as South Carolina, and then to the mid-west (Arkansas) and finally west coast (Oregon) as the Association became national in scope. With association membership now evenly balanced, these winter meetings now alternate between a western location and an eastern site. In practice, because of travel expense, the Annual Meetings are attended by at least four members of the ExComm and between seven to twelve directors. While FFLA is sound financially, our directors have voluntarily chosen to use available funds on lookout restoration projects with limited money to be used to cover travel expenses.

In addition to a one-day business meeting, these gatherings also include presentations from local organizations with programs of interest (see related story on Annual Meeting), as well as a day of tours to lookouts. This year the title of "most lookouts visited" went to Treasurer Gary Weber with 53 fire towers (it took five days for him to do it, not the allotted one!).

The biggest item of business is the approval of the upcoming annual budget, which follows our review of the previous budget. Take a look at this on Page 3. You will see that we did very well in 2006, and have adopted our most ambitious program ever for 2007. We also confirmed the results of the ballots for the Western Deputy Director, National Secretary, and National Historian. Dave Bula, Rob Hoeye, and Bob Spear were re-elected and we thank them for their willingness to serve.

ARE THE ANNUAL MEETINGS OPEN TO THE GENERAL MEMBERSHIP?

Yes they are open meetings! This is an opportunity to meet our national leaders and your presence is always welcomed. Remember, you don't have to be a "policy wonk" to have a good time! Every year we have between two to five visitors who have traveled at least 1000 miles, and often have additional attendees from the host state. There is no registration fee for the annual meeting. Upcoming annual meetings are planned for the west (Oregon) in 2008, and the east (Georgia) in 2009.

I am excited about the opportunities - even the challenges - that 2007 will bring. I hope you share my enthusiasm. We are making good things happen for lookouts!

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