

# North Carolina Chapter Report 2007

My hiking and historical guidebook on western NC lookouts (titled "Hiking North Carolina's Lookout Towers") will feature 26 towers, 23 of which are fire towers, and will be released in April 2008. My biggest goal for the book is to develop a significant membership base for a NC chapter of FFLA and organize enough people and funding to proceed with numerous restoration projects described below. With the release of this book, I believe the increased interest in western NC lookouts will make the future of fire towers in the mountainous part of the very favorable for the future.

I have interested the Landscape Architect of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in restoration efforts for the Shuckstack and Mt. Sterling towers, both remote Aermotor towers in poor condition but popular with hikers and reached only by trails. I will soon be working with her to develop a cost share program where the NPS will match the value of funding, labor, and materials generated by the NC chapter of FFLA to complete these projects.

I plan to team with Ron Carnes, the brain and muscle behind the Yellow Mountain tower restoration in the 1980s, who is now the FMO of BIA Foresty on the Cherokee Indian Reservation, to restore the Mt. Noble lookout, an Aermotor tower, and maintain its access for hikers. Its cab is in extremely poor condition.

I have also been working with the USFS to allow hiker access to several currently restricted towers a few Saturdays each year with the provision of a volunteer to staff the tower for the day to answer questions, guard it, and lock it at day's end. These towers include Joanna Bald, Panther Top, Cowee Bald, Albert Mountain, and Camp Creek Bald, the latter two prominent towers on the Appalachian Trail.

The Green Knob and Rich Mountain lookouts in the Appalachian Ranger District of the Pisgah National Forest are now being maintained as open towers for hikers. While this is a success for hikers since these towers have been locked for nearly a decade, they will be in constant need of maintenance and upkeep due to exposure to severe high elevation weather and vandalism. A routine, coordinated volunteer effort needs to be established for this effort.

NC should see about 10 new listings in the NHLR by Spring of 2008.

Best regards,  
Peter