

## **2020 Maine Chapter Annual Report**

Maine continues to have a largely abandoned, aging tower inventory. This year, there were no tower losses and the state replaced 3 cabs on towers in the Northern part of the state. This is the first time any cabs have been rebuilt or replaced since the 1980's. Although 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 continue to be 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. This year, they replaced 3 cabs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has slowed or put on hold many projects this year. It has also reduced some site visits. Despite this, we continued with research activities. 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 –

### **2020 Tower Survey**

Data as of 12/29/2020

#### ***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 – 22  
Standing Steel Converted to Observation – 6  
Standing Steel and Cab – 26  
Standing Wooden Enclosed – 1

#### ***Average Condition of the 26 standing towers with Cabs:***

Good Condition – 11  
Fair Condition – 4  
Poor Condition – 5  
Bad Condition – 6

#### ***Usage***

Rentals – 0  
Active Lookouts staffed - 0  
Active Lookouts staffed on a volunteer basis - 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>

### **Membership and Budget**

2020 membership – 39

2019 membership – 39

2020 end of year balance - \$840.79

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**

COVID-19 affected some of this effort. We continued research efforts on tower sites, largely remotely. We did no in-person oral histories, though we plan to schedule a few telephone interviews in 2021. Worked with various organizations and individuals to provide history and background data on towers and tower sites. We made no trips this year to the Maine State Library, Maine Forest Service or any other locations to retrieve archival information.

### **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 2020.

### **Facebook Presence**

The Maine Chapter Facebook Page continues to do well and has 8443+ followers as of this writing, up 1000 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

## Activities

### **Squaw Mountain Watchman's Camp project**

We continue to partner 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. The grand opening was scheduled for 2020 but was cancelled due to COVID-19. We plan to attempt a grand opening in the summer of 2021.



**The new camp at the Greenville Visitor's Center**

### **Northern Region Towers**

The Maine Public Lands Division successfully replaced 3 cabs in one week in the Northern Division. New cabs were flown to Allagash Mountain fire tower, Deboullie Mountain fire tower and Round Pond Mountain fire tower. This was a very complex project to coordinate, but it was pulled off despite the pandemic. Since all three towers are in remote locations with largely no roads to them, it was going to be the most efficient if the cabs could be air lifted to the towers. The Bureau of Parks and Lands went ahead and pre-built one of the cabs at their Ashland facility, while the other two were built by Shiretown Structures out of Houlton. The cab design was such that it was close to the original size and look of the old tower cabs. Helicopter Applicators out of Gettysburg, PA were hired to perform the air lifts of the new cabs and drop them onto the original steel. Originally scheduled for the fall of 2020, a window opened up in August and all three were able to be lifted and attached inside of about a week's worth of time. Much of the funding for the project was awarded by the Recreational Trails Program, an assistance program of the Federal Highway Administration. The project came together nicely, and the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands should be given lots of credit for taking on such a bold replacement project all at once. Their commitment to these historic structures is appreciated by all.



**The new cab being installed at Deboullie Mountain fire tower**



**The new cab at Round Pond Mountain fire tower**



**The new cab at Allagash Mountain fire tower**

### **Grand Lake Stream**

The Indian Hill fire tower restoration project was officially initiated by the Downeast Lakes Land Trust this year. Initial planning has started and largely administration tasks and preparation was conducted last year. The Maine Chapter is assisting, but the project has largely been on hold due to COVID-19.

### **Mount Agamenticus**

The tower still stands on the summit without a cab, but a restoration is still desired and was planned. Given COVID-19, planning for this restoration was put on hold as priorities quickly shifted. Discussions will begin again in 2021 to figure out where this project fits in priority.

### **Ossipee Hill**

All planned volunteer maintenance was cancelled except for some small tasks that were conducted by solo volunteers. The maintenance schedule will be re-evaluated in the spring to see what will be possible with volunteer groups.

### **Other Projects**

On the volunteer front, **Mount Hope** remains in good shape and is manned by volunteers when they are available. **Ossipee Hill** tower has had little activity in 2020 due to the lack of volunteers. We continued to perform trail maintenance on **Williams Mountain** and we also did a cleanup around and inside of the watchman's camp. Besides this, no other activity occurred due to COVID-19.

### **Other Activities**

We did make several tower site visits this past year, though less than previous years. Trips included Mount Kineo, Millinocket Hill, Number 4 mountain, Squaw Mountain, Trout Mountain, Williams Mountain, Number 5 mountain, and Whitecap mountain.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bill Cobb  
Maine Director