

New Hampshire Chapter Report 2011

During the past year two members did not renew leaving 19 members, eight of whom are PLUS members.

In December the Selectmen of the Town of Moultonborough voted to terminate the lease of the fire lookout tower and summit buildings on Red Hill and turn those facilities back to the Lakes Region Conservation Trust who is the land owner. Inspections in June and November indicated no work done on the tower and no attempt made to paint either the cab or steelwork. A Restoration Grant from the FFLA was received by the Town in 2009 to help repaint the tower. As no work has been done the first order of business for 2012 will be to request that the Grant money be returned to the FFLA. The LRCT seems interested in having a "greeter" on Red Hill and other local fire departments are interested in continuing lookout coverage. The Chapter will monitor the situation and assist if practical in supporting operation of the lookout and restoration efforts.

The State in the new two year budget which started July 1st maintained the fire lookout job positions but did NOT provide funding basically telling the Department of Forests and Lands to "find the money elsewhere." The State continued to operate the towers on Class 3 and higher fire dangers days. The financial burden may not have been too great as precipitation for the year was 25% more than normal. There were dry periods during part of May and late July into August however 136 fires burned ONLY 45 acres, low numbers not seen in decades. Rainfall proved a bigger problem with Hurricane Irene washing out many roads and trails. Seven inches of rain fell each month August through October.

The White Mountain National Forest in conjunction with many cooperators sponsored a number of events celebrating the Centennial of the Weeks Act. Chapter member Iris Baird authored an article which appeared in the Lookout Network and published a booklet: The Remarkable John Weeks.

At a celebration of the Centennial of the New Hampshire Timberland Owners Association as well as the Weeks Act, Brad Simpkins, New Hampshire State Forester, pointed out the continuing significance of the Weeks Act. In particular he called attention to Section 2, which provided for state-federal and public-private cooperation in planning for fire protection on all our forests.

Chris Haartz