

FFLA 2016 New Hampshire Chapter Report

During 2016 the Chapter lost Bill Baird who passed away in February, then his wife Iris died unexpectedly in early July. We will miss them both!

The year started and ended with 19 paid members as a new member joined late in the year who, in his youth helped Red Hill lookout watchman Charlie Howe in the late 1960's. Presently we have seven Plus members, twelve regular members, two complimentary mailings to government agencies and Iris Baird's daughter wishes to continue receiving the Lookout Network.

The State continued to staff its fire towers during Class 3 and higher, fire danger days which occur mostly during April and May although there was some late summer and autumn coverage this year.

At Mt. Pawtuckaway a new cab was installed and the tower was painted. FFLA member Audra Klumb spent a week on Smarts Mountain helping Historicorps repair and do restoration work on the watchman's cabin and the tower. After Audra's stint, John and Eric the Historicorps workers, replaced the roof on the tower and installed a lightning protection system. One other FFLA member was responsible for transport of repair materials, equipment and supplies to and from the site. The Forest Service reopened the tower to the public. Both the State and the White Mountain National Forest sent fire crews and individuals to other states to help with fire suppression in other areas. A type six White Mountain National Forest fire engine traveled to Missouri in the spring and to Ohio this autumn to assist other National Forests conduct prescribed burns.

During 2016 90 fires burned 467 acres on private land compared to 98 fires and 595 acres during 2015. The largest fire outside the White Mountain National Forest was a 190 acres fire in southwestern New Hampshire which was one of two set by a local firefighter who was subsequently charged and convicted. He is serving time in jail and has a sizable amount of restitution to pay. Most of the fire activity in the southern and central parts of the State occurred during April and May. Summer and autumn seasons were dryer than normal so fires were a problem at times until December. Autumn was particularly bad for the White Mountain National Forest which until October had very little fire activity but during that month firefighters responded to at least four remote locations to suppress improperly extinguished camp fires, some of which had started to spread. Then came November 12 when a human caused fire was discovered near the Covered Bridge Campground just north of the Kancamagus Highway. Local firefighters worked until dark when suppression activities were halted. That night westerly winds spread the fire eastward across the mountainside. Sunday, November 13th local and Forest Service firefighters continued suppression activities. By Wednesday the fire was well contained however several days were spent patrolling and suppressing hot spots near the fire line and felling hazard trees along a popular trail overrun by the fire. When it was all done the Covered Bridge Fire had burned 329 acres making it the largest fire on the White Mountain National Forest in the last fifty years or more. This makes a grand total of 796 acres burned in New Hampshire during the year.