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Subject: NY State FFLA Report From Marty Podskoch for Winter Meeting in PA
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January 10, 2004

Dear FFLA Directors, President and friends,

This past year was a busy year for the FFLA members and I in New York State. The beginning of the year saw me frantically working to finish my book, Adirondack Fire Towers: Their History and Lore, The Southern Divisions. It was released in June. I then traveled 15,000 miles giving 70 slide and story telling presentations throughout the Adirondack region and the Albany area. Thousands of people learned about the importance and history of the fire towers.

A summer conference, "Celebrating Adirondack Fire Tower Restoration Projects,"

was held on Aug. 8, 9, & 10 at Huntington Forest, in Newcomb, NY. Most of the restoration committees in the Adirondacks met at the Saturday dinner. They shared their successes, failures and plans for the future. The participants enjoyed hiking to many of the nearby towers such as Goodnow, Adams, and Owl's Head mountains.

In the Adirondack Mountains eight towers have been restored: Mount Arab, Hadley, Azure, Blue, Poke-O-Moonshine, Snowy, Kane, Number Four (moved to Lowville DEC Office), and Cathedral Rock (Tooley Pond) mountains. Hadley, Mount Arab and Poke-O-Moonshine mountains are the only towers that have paid guides who are there for four days a week in the summer and talk with the tourists.

Azure Mountain was restored this summer and a grand opening was held in August 2003. Members of the Friends of Azure Mountain volunteer each weekend as guides. This was one of the first towers to receive the FFLA grant.

A Friends of Bald (Rondaxe) Mountain was founded in Old Forge. They started restoration by painting the tower this summer. FFLA member Ann Spaziano helped paint the tower. She is also working on the Wakely Mt. project.

Owl's Head Mt. near Long Lake is about half finished. Most of the work is being done by the local forest ranger, Jim Waters.

In the Town of Minerva, a local group is working along with the state in restoring Vanderwacker Mountain fire tower. This summer work was done on the trail and the tower was painted. The AmeriCorp students near Long Lake did a lot of

the work.

Bob Eichler, FFLA member from Herkimer, is working to restore the Pillsbury Mt, fire tower near Speculator.

The Thompson Park Zoo in Watertown restored the New Boston tower on its grounds. The tower is closed to the public until the park secures liability insurance to cover those who climb the tower.

Many organizations are fighting to save towers that are in Wilderness classified areas. Wakely Mountain fire tower is waiting to see if the tower will be placed in Wild Forest classification.

A group led by David Petrelli is trying to save St. Regis Mountain fire tower near Paul Smith's College. It is in a Canoe area.

Bill Starr, my new deputy, is working to get Mt. Adams near Newcomb classified on the National Historic Register. He got the Associated Press to rewrite a previously one-sided article about the tower changed to show the positive effects of saving the tower. It was sent out nationwide for the AP. (attached)

In the Catskill Mountains the five restored towers are open to the public. Overlook Mountain and Red Hill fire towers have weekend volunteer guides that talk with the tourists.

In the western part of the state, the tower in Allegany State Park has been restored.

Local groups have adopted two towers in the northwestern Catskill Mountains. Leonard Hill tower near Gilboa has an avid forest ranger working for its restoration. It is awaiting an engineers report before work can commence.

In Stamford, the village will purchase the tower from the state and work on the restoration. Work will begin this summer and a grand opening will be held this summer or fall.

This summer a writer from American Profile Magazine, a color supplement like Parade Magazine with a circulation of 2 million, visited me. I took her to

Kane Mountain fire tower and showed her the restored tower. Her story is scheduled to come out this June. The story will focus on fire towers and their restoration throughout the nation.

Bob Spear continues to be the only paid fire tower observer in NY State, He operates the Sterling Mountain Forest fire tower near New York City.

Paul Laskey, a NYFFLA member from Balston Spa, just released his book, The Fire Observation Towers of New York State. It contains the history of the towers in NY State. It also describes his adventure with his two children when the hiked to 58 towers in the state.

I am now working on my third book, Adirondack Fire Towers: Their History and Lore, The Northern Divisions which will be out in June 2005. This will include 25 towers.

The word about the importance of saving these historic structures is out there and I think that the FFLA members and I have made an impact on saving the stories of the observers and rangers who worked at the fire towers. There is, however, a lot more to do and I'll continue to spread the word about the importance of these towers in the history of New York State.

Your tower friend,

Marty Podskoch

P. S. I would like to welcome any members who would like to help with any of the restoration projects at Mt. Utsayantha or Leonard Hill this summer. I would be happy to host a working conference for the organization. The one we held at Mt. Tremper was a memorable event.