

From: "podskoch" <podskoch@dmcom.net>
To: "Keith A. Argow" <argow@cs.net>
Cc: "FFLAWebMaster Bill Cobb" <cobbw@charter.net>; "FFLAHistorian Smoke Pfeiffer" <mpfeiffer@fs.fed.us>; "Paul Hartmann" <ranger@telenet.net>; "Bill Starr" <pillsbury_mtn@yahoo.com>; "Warren Enthusiast Johnsen" <wjohansen@stny.rr.com>; "BobEchler Herkimer" <HikerBob61@aol.com>; "Ray FFLA Grimes" <vze2nj4g@verizon.net>; "Bob Spear" <smokerangerbob@earthlink.net>; "Gary Weber" <weblookout@imbris.net>; "henry isenberg" <ffla001@yahoo.com>
Subject: NYS FFLA Director's Report from Marty Podskoch
Date: Wednesday, January 19, 2005 6:33 PM

Keith & FFLA Members,
Here is my final report as New York State Director.

January 1, 2005

Dear FFLA Directors, President, members and friends,

This past year was a busy year for the FFLA members and I in New York State. I gave 35 talks throughout the Adirondacks and Catskill mts. During this year I have been collecting pictures and stories for my new book, /Adirondack Fire Towers: Their History and Lore, The Northern Districts, /that will be published in June 2005. That is why I am unable to attend the conference in Virginia since I must have 27 chapters done by the end of February.

This summer I will be moving to Connecticut where my daughter and son-in-law live and they will be having our first grand child in May. This past year I've been busy cleaning, packing, painting etc. in preparation for the sale of our house.

I have recommended my deputy, Bill Starr, to take my position as NY State FFLA Director. He has been a fire tower observer, has collected information on the history of the towers, has volunteered as a guide for the restored Kane Mt. fire tower and has helped to save many towers.

During the year I asked two fire tower enthusiasts, Bob Echler from Herkimer and Warren Johnsen from New Berlin, to be my FFLA deputies. They have always been there to give a hand. One such project was the restoration of the Mt. Utsayantha fire tower in Stamford, NY in the northwestern Catskill Mountains. This was the only tower to apply for and receive a \$ 200 restoration grant from the FFLA.

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 about four days a week in the summer and talk with the tourists.

A Friends of Bald (Rondaxe) Mountain has done a lot of restoration work on the tower. FFLA member, Ann Spaziano from Rochester, helped paint the tower. She is also working on the Wakely Mt. project.

Owl's Head Mt. fire tower group near Long Lake has completed their restoration work and is open to the public. 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. Most of the work was done by the DEC and AmeriCorp workers. The group received a \$15,000 from the DEC.

Bob Echler from Herkimer, a FFLA member and one of my deputies, is working to restore the Pillsbury Mt, fire tower near Speculator. He has been put on hold by the DEC stating they have other work to do concerning the unit management plans.

The Thompson Park Zoo in Watertown restored the New Boston tower on its zoo grounds. They had a grand opening this summer and the tower is now open to the public.

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. So far he has gathered over 800 signatures of people wishing to preserve the St. Regis fire tower.

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.

So far David Petrelli and his group have collected over 800 signatures to save the St Regis fire tower. They have presented them to the local state senators, and the DEC commissioner, Erin Crotty.

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 purchased the tower from the state and began working on the restoration of the fire tower. Work began this summer and a grand opening will be held in 2005.

Kevin Prior and FFLA Deputy, Bob Echler, are working on the cab of Mt. Utsayantha fire tower. Warren Johnsen photo

AmeriCorp workers from Delhi & FFLA members painting the Mt. Utsayantha tower in October 2004. Small rollers made the work go fast.

In the summer of 2003 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 came out in the August issue. The story focused on fire towers and their restoration projects throughout the nation. Go to this site or the bottom of this report for the story and pictures:

http://www.americanprofile.com/issues/20040905/20040905_4155.asp

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.

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 26 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. I'm sorry to leave New York State but I look forward to doing research in CT and RI for a possible future book. I will continue to give talks throughout the northeast and the Adirondacks and Catskill regions promoting the towers and by three books.

There is, however, a lot more to do and I am confident that Bill Starr and his two deputies, Bob and Warren will continue to spread the word about the importance of these towers in the history of New York State and work to restore and maintain the towers that are still standing.

Your tower friend,

Marty Podskoch