



Forest Fire Lookout Association – New York Chapter

Laurie Rankin, Director

Forest Fire Lookout Association New York State Chapter Report 2015

The New York State chapter ended the year with 42 members. Of those, 17 are plus members. One member passed away in 2015, Helen Ellett longtime Observer at Dickinson Hill Fire Tower. 2 members did not renew. We had 5 new members.

There were no chapter sponsored activities in 2015.

Account balance: \$586.42

35 of the State's fire towers are on the NHLR (National Historic Lookout Register) list.

Restoration projects occurred on five towers: Sterling Forest Fire Tower work is currently underway and will continue in 2016. Spruce was completed and reopened, including a new trail. In accordance with the conservation easement that allowed for the completion of the new trail to the summit, the trail is closed to the public during hunting season. Stillwater fire tower restoration work was nearly completed in 2015. The friends group there expects to hold a grand reopening in the spring of 2016. St. Regis fire tower restoration work was done and currently awaits the arrival of some new pieces of steel to complete that project. It is anticipated that the tower will be reopened to the public in 2016. Hurricane Mountain fire tower project was completed and reopened to the public. A huge number of partnerships, collaborative efforts, and volunteer time went into these projects.

There were no tower losses in the state.

Fire Activity: The Roosa Gap fire occurred May 3rd through 7th, unusually hot, dry weather with gusty winds and no leaf out having occurred yet, nearly 3000 acres burned. On May 7th, a second fire began and was a working fire through May 10th, with 110 acres burned on the side of Hunter Mountain. Both were declared contained following the establishment of a perimeter fire line and following the use of a fixed wing Water Boss fire plane dropping several thousand gallons of water. Both fires were in areas of remote, steep terrain. The Hunter fire was also challenged by being in an area with a lack of communication. Hiking trails were closed in that area for about 2 weeks. Homes were threatened in both cases, and some evacuations were ordered. No homes were ever damaged. Of special note is that both of these areas have fire towers! While no longer active in their historical roles of spotting fires, both were utilized to some extent to monitor these fires. On September 26th, in the area of Schroon Lake in the eastern Adirondacks, just over 100 acres burned. Unusually dry conditions that had persisted for most of the late spring and summer were once again contributing factors.

Crews from New York State were sent west to California, Oregon and Washington throughout this difficult fire season to assist as needed.

David Thomas Train of the Friends of Poke O Moonshine Group once again offered classes in his local community and at the Adirondack History Museum in Elizabethtown.

A monthly newsletter was begun in May to share news among the members.

Research and archiving of collections was begun with a significant donation by Retired Forest Ranger, Paul Hartmann.

No major incidents of vandalism occurred during the year. However, there does continue to be small incidents that each individual tower group must deal with. The most often occurring event is attacks by sharpie pens that require constant painting over.

There have been a significant number of local promotions that have occurred. These include numerous press pieces both via print and electronic media. Individual Friends Groups have done a fabulous job of promoting their projects needs and successes. Several areas are promoting visitation through patch challenges, not limited to but including the ADK fire tower challenge, the Hamilton County Fire Tower Challenge and the Tupper Lake Triad.

Goals for 2016: hosting the Northeastern Conference in the Adirondacks September 17 & 18; beginning a state chapter Facebook page (perhaps a website); completing the work on Sterling, Stillwater, and St. Regis towers and reopening to the public; Lyon and Rock Rift to establish friends groups and restoration work; MDHCIC tower to be built; recruit new members; add more towers to the NHLR; meet with more DEC partners and other organizations; meet with local Friends Groups and visit more towers.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Rankin
New York State Director