

Ohio Chapter report for 2015

Officers, Members and guests:

Ohio Chapter membership grew by 2 members for 2015 which was nearly a 25% increase! We grew from 7 paid members to 9. Fire Tower count in Ohio remains the same as past years with eight standing, restored and un-staffed towers publicly owned by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and standing on current Ohio State Park and Forest lands, plus one US Forest Service tower restored and standing at the Wayne National Forest Headquarters in Nelsonville, Ohio (not this towers original location). They serve as communication towers and are restored at their original location(s) to give the public a nice reminder of the past when manned fire watch was necessary in the heavy forested areas of the Hocking Hills, Wayne National and numerous Ohio State Forests in Southeastern Ohio.

It is unknown as to the exact count of former Ohio fire towers that are currently standing; these once publicly owned towers now on private property have proved challenging research in Ohio. Forty steel fire towers was the total count when fire towers were necessary and manned in years past. One tower of particular interest is the Sugar Grove (Rockbridge) tower currently standing on Fire Tower Road in Sugar Grove, Ohio. This tower had a bit of a setback in 2015 when the Superintendent of the Lancaster Parks and Recreation Department, Ohio left his post for a position in Louisiana. It was hoped that the tower could get approval for a new location at Charles Alley Memorial Park, which is a 400 acre Lancaster City Park, 1.5 miles outside the Lancaster City limits sitting in the same township as Sugar Grove's current location and with an elevation almost exactly as it sits on its Fire Tower Road site. Unfortunately, with the Superintendent's departure approval was not possible in 2015. It is hoped that with a new superintendent in place in early 2016 approval can be obtained and the process of forming of an organization to aid in removal, restoration and moving of this tower can be accomplished. The Sugar Grove tower will need some minor stabilization to its lower cross members which is hoped to be accomplished in early 2016 to keep it stable in its current location before the restoration process, which is still months off begins. Another thought is keeping Sugar Grove in its original and current location and begin funding a restoration in place. The location is conducive for restoration and parking, but it would add such value and security by moving it to Alley Park. The Sugar Grove (Ohio) Fire Tower has a Facebook page called Sugar Grove Fire Tower - Ohio, take a look!

Respectfully Submitted,

David E. White
Director, Ohio Chapter