



FOREST FIRE LOOKOUT ASSOCIATION THE KEYSTONE CHAPTER

2533 Falling Spring Road
Chambersburg, PA 17201

ANNUAL REPORT

01/12/06

Dr. Keith Argow, Chairman, (&
Ladies & Gentlemen,
Greetings!

(Membership) This Chapter has twenty-four Members at this writing, two of whom are Ohio residents, and twenty-two who are residents of Pennsylvania. While we continue to lose Members each year from their passing, recruitment at a slightly higher rate through the internet and web site has allowed for a net gain, though small.

(Projects) An exhibit of some 700 cubic feet on Pennsylvania Fire Towers And Lookouts was installed in May of 2005 in the Pennsylvania National Fire Museum, in Harrisburg, PA. This exhibit, which seems to say as much about Forest Lookout personnel as it does about fixed fire detection, is a part of the Museum devoted to revolving displays which remain in place about a year, is scheduled to be removed in April of 2006. A cooperative effort, the exhibit was made possible by the Pennsylvania Forest Fire Museum Association and the Forest Fire Lookout Association working as one. Well known Pennsylvania Lookout personnel who are featured include William Hause, Dixon Miller and John Slipp. One of the artifacts on display is a section of steel ladder from the first 'state-built' steel fire tower in Pennsylvania, the Piney Mountain Fire Tower, of 1914.

(Projects) Edward Pollack proposed a project to the FFLA several years ago, which he called 'Adopt A Tower.' We took his proposal to the then Chief Forest Fire Warden of Pennsylvania, Mr. John Berst, who approved a pilot program in Ed's home forest district, subject to detail approval by the District Forester, Mr. Donald Oaks, (The Weiser Forest District, # 18,). Ed. and Don. worked out the details, and under the auspices of the Conservation Volunteer Program of Pennsylvania, Ed. was officially appointed. The Volunteers Program is sponsored by the Department of Conservation & Natural Resources. Ed. involved students from the High School where he taught, site improvements were made and maintained, and the Tower, Silver Creek Fire Tower, was nominated and accepted to be enrolled by the National Historic Lookout Register. While Ed. continues his work at Silver Creek, our Chapter Director met with Chief Warden John Berst, in the Spring of 2005, to now seek approval of expansion of the 'Adopt A Tower' concept throughout Pennsylvania. Adhering to the rule that all volunteer appointments and work planned are to be approved by the District Forester in each case, Chief Berst approved expansion. This approval was the direct result of how well the Program has done under the pilot project initiated by Ed. Pollack.

(Projects) Continued, following page.

(Projects) Three standing steel fire towers in Pennsylvania are known to be under consideration for nomination to the National Historic Lookout Register.

(Projects) While the planned Museum is not yet built, the Pennsylvania Forest Fire Museum Association receives many inquiries for information about Forest and Forestry History. Most frequent inquiries are in regard to fire towers and lookout personnel. Forest Fire Lookout Association personnel are frequently able to assist in obtaining the needed information. Prior to Spring of 2006, all Chapter FFLA Members will be asked to decide whether or not they wish to be automatically included in all such inquiries received. The Museum Association has a 'History Group' which presently receives inquiries and individuals respond to each if they have any data to contribute. The plan is to expand the mailing of inquiries regarding any aspect of fire towers, fixed detection, lookout personnel, etc., to all FFLA personnel in the Chapter who choose to be a part of the continuing effort. (The two organizations share an office and library facility in a private home known as the Contact & Research Station.)

(Projects) Removal of a fire tower in Pennsylvania requires approval of at least two State agencies, and then most often, after such approval, towers are sold on the basis of the highest sealed bid received by the local District Foresters Office. Frequently persons interested in buying a fire tower are unaware of the process, and have no way of knowing what tower or towers are available. In like manner, those charged with the work of soliciting bids and selling the structures, as well as supervising the removal according to set standards, have no way of knowing who would be interested, save for their local contacts. FFLA will meet with the new Chief Forest Fire Warden in an effort to find the best route to improve on this lack of communication/information. We have seen that some persons interested in saving a tower for alternative use as well as preservation are missing the very opportunities they aspire to.

(News) Former Chief Forest Fire Warden of Pennsylvania, Mr. John Berst, has retired, effective June 2005. Mr. John Miller, former District Forester for the Valley Forge Forest District #17, has been appointed as the new Chief. Many FFLA Members will remember John Miller as the host for the ten-year Anniversary FFLA Conference in 2000, which included visiting the Hopewell Fire Tower, site of the original formation Conference, in 1990.

(News) The Dunlop Tower, Franklin County, has been saved by purchase, by Washington Township. The Township uses the Tower for enforcement and emergency communications and was faced with building a new tower when the previous owners of the Dunlop Tower prepared to sell the property. A tower enthusiast in Township Government was successful in suggesting the Township buy the existing structure, rather than building another.

(Financing) Local operating expenses are currently carried by the Chapter Director. End-of-the-year figures for our Chapter balance held by the National Offices were not yet available at the time of this report being prepared.

Respectfully submitted,


Stephen J. Cummings, Director