



**Forest Fire Lookout Association
New York State Chapter
Annual Report 2025**

Executive Committee Members: Fred Knauf, Debi Tebano, Pat Tebano, Adam Nichols, Michele Kaminsky, and Susan Kirk. Meetings are generally held on a quarterly basis, but due to several factors there were only 3 meetings last year.

Membership: We began 2024 with 117 members, but fell to 113 by years end. We had 10 new members and 14 that did not renew, losing 4 members overall.

Financials: We had an opening balance of \$161.44 and a closing balance of \$6547.75. Our expenses were \$827.93.

Donations: We benefited from several donations in 2024.

In Kind: \$14,812.40 of In Kind services were provided to fire towers across the state in 2024.

Fire Activity: NYS experienced a very dry year and conditions were perfect for wildfires. All total 150 wildfires were reported statewide, 147 were caused by humans. The Jennings Creek fire officially listed as burning 5304 acres across NY and NJ. The Whitehouse fire was 645 acres. These were the 2 largest fires. Smoke from fires in the Western US and Canada did come to NYS on a couple of occasions. Our Forest Rangers were deployed to some of those out of state fires.

Site Visits: Visits were completed to 18 different sites. Some visits to the same site for work projects, presentations, and stewarding occurred. 2 Lost Lookout sites were visited.

Stewardship: Stewardship programs were ongoing from Memorial Day through Columbus Day at Berry Hill, Dickinson Hill, Kane, and Stillwater fire towers. 2840 visitors were engaged at these programs. 68 volunteer stewards were trained and most participated in the programs.

Agreements with NYSDEC/NYSOPRHP: Berry Hill, Dickinson Hill, Kane, Stillwater, Spruce, Belfry, Vandewhacker, Wakely, Snowy, Owls Head, Blue, Lyon, Beebe Hill, Pillsbury are all towers that we hold VSA's with. We also continue to have VSA applications pending for Leonard Hill and Balsam Lake.

Meetings: I attended numerous meetings on behalf of the FFLA including the Annual Meeting and the Quarterly Catskill Park Advisory Meetings, as well as several local municipal meetings.

New Towers: Bramley Mountain Fire Tower was re-erected on its original site. I believe our current standing tower number is 79.

Monthly Newsletters: We continue to provide the news to all through this medium and it is well received. We provide the newsletters on our website and we circulate to just over 300 persons/organizations electronically and we provide this via snail mail to a few members too.

Lighting Event: This annual event which honors those who served in the fire towers and protected local communities provides a lot of press for the FFLA and its work. We had a bit of a weather glitch this year. Based on forecasts we moved to our rain date which as it turns out was still rather rainy in some locations. None the less, our dedicated Illuminators lit 31 towers state wide.

Outreach Events: Numerous outreach events occurred throughout the state in 2024. We did elementary school presentations, campground presentations and hikes, annual bird meetings, astronomy at the tower and more! We see each of these events as an opportunity to share our love of fire towers and community connections as well as the history of the towers. These events also provide us with an opportunity to recruit new persons who would like to get involved with the work we do.

Website: Our website continues to be updated routinely to keep the information accurate. 5552 new hits in 2024.

Social Media: We currently have 2100 members on our FFLA New York State Chapter Facebook group which is a nice increase from last year. We do a monthly photo contest, provide news of towers, visit reports and more with several new posts per week.

NHLR/FFLOS: No activity in 2024.

Tower Closures: We have several fire towers and Observer's cabins closed pending engineering inspections. Leonard Hill, Jackie Jones, Beebe Hill, Roosa Gap, Spruce, Loon Lake Mountain and Sterling fire towers are currently closed. Goodnow fire tower cab is currently closed. Balsam Lake Observer's cabin is currently closed. All of these closures await the results of engineering inspections. In some cases, the inspections have been done, but no reports have been done. In some cases these requests are more than 6 years old. During this time, any problems that have been identified continue to deteriorate as no action has been taken toward correcting those problems.

Looking Ahead: In 2025 we have begun a new recognition program, giving a patch to volunteers who have accrued 7 points while working with us in various ways. An additional 7 points earns a different patch, etc. In June of 2025 we will be hosting the Eastern Conference in Richmondville NY. In August we will be taking part in the centennial events for the Kane Fire Tower. We have been in discussions with several organizations about expanding our highly successful steward programs. We will need to do significant recruiting for volunteers and new members if we expand these programs.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Rankin, Director