

2025 Maine Chapter Annual Report

Maine continues to maintain an inventory of towers that is largely aging and, in many cases, abandoned. This year, the chapter recorded one additional tower loss. At a minimum, the inventory is reviewed annually, supported by the ongoing efforts of numerous chapter members, followers, and friends who conduct site visits across the state. Alongside these field efforts, research and archival work remained active throughout the year. The Maine tower archival database was consistently updated to reflect new findings, structural changes, and other relevant developments. The survey findings are below –

2025 Tower Survey

Data as of 12/31/2025

Summary:

Total Known Tower Sites – 144
Total Towers Still Standing – 54
Total Towers Gone or Removed – 90

Of the 54 Standing Towers:

Standing Steel Only, No Cab – 21
Standing Steel Converted to Observation – 6
Standing Steel and Cab – 26
Standing Wooden Enclosed – 1

Average Condition of the 26 standing towers with Cabs:

Good Condition – 11
Fair Condition – 4
Poor Condition – 5
Bad Condition – 6

Usage

Rentals – 0
Lookouts eligible to be used on a volunteer basis - 2

NOTE: There are several standing towers with cabs that are extremely deteriorated and are expected to collapse or blow off the steel at any time. These cabs are not classified as salvageable.

Membership and Budget

2025 membership – 31 (increase of 3 over 2024)
2025 end of year balance - \$996.33

As in past years, no chapter funds were requested from the FFLA accounts. All expenses were covered by the director as a donation to the chapter.

NHLR

12 Total Entries

Research / Archives

We continued research efforts on tower sites, largely remotely. Worked with various organizations and individuals to provide history and background data on towers and tower sites. We made 1 trip to a regional historical society but no trips this year to the Maine State Library or Maine Forest Service to retrieve archival information. One notable interview we conducted was with the granddaughter of William Hilton, Maine's first watchman from Squaw Mountain in 1905.

Facebook Presence

Our Facebook following is as follows:

- 4188 Page Followers (up 565 from 2024)

We continue to see the below benefits -

- Connecting with many former watchmen, yielding a wealth of info
- Connecting with the families of former watchman, yielding a wealth of info
- Provides a good mechanism for communication and outreach
- Is a good research tool
- Has created more exposure for the chapter
- Provides a mechanism to socialize our online membership

Activities

Squaw Mountain Watchman's Camp and Tower

We remain in a maintenance-focused steady state for the camp and tower at the Greenville Visitor Center. The site receives our attention at least three times each year to ensure it stays in good condition. We received a few donations of period items for the camp in 2025, and these have been integrated. Looking ahead to 2026, anticipated tasks may include repainting the tower's steel structure and cab.

Ossipee Hill

Our tower steward, Ken Kennedy, continued to open and close the tower in 2025 as well as continuing planning for new timber replacements. Little by little, areas of need are being addressed. The tower did not see any official lookout use in 2025, but is ready when needed.

Mount Hope

The tower continues to be available for volunteers on high fire days.

Williams Mountain

We continue to discuss with the state and other organizations possibilities to preserve the tower camp. The tower cab is nearly lost due to many years of exposure. The steel work would be looked at for a possible restoration. The main camp structure is still solid and weather tight and could be saved. The rear porch no longer viable and could be removed as well as an attached woodshed which is in poor shape.

FFLA members continued to maintain the trail to the site and perform basic cleanup of the camp interior. The state has almost completed the construction of the new trailhead at mile 4 on the Williams Mountain Road. The trail needs more work and blazing, but is passable.

Mount Agamenticus

A project to restore the tower began in 2014 and has seen a roller coaster of ups and downs since. The cab was removed in 2019 as it was in very poor shape. In December 2025, the steel was removed. The footings and steel had deteriorated to the point that it is no longer safe, requiring it to be removed. The future will then be uncertain about where the project will go. A steering committee has been formed to explore if another tower would be erected, what the function would be, or some other course of action. Since the beginning, donations and grants have been collected and remain in a fund for possible use for any restoration or preservation efforts. None of these funds were used for steel removal, so they remain available for any future efforts. The FFLA Maine Chapter Director is a member of the steering committee.

Indian Hill

There was disappointing news around the Grand Lake Stream Fire Tower. After years of various efforts by numerous groups to try and restore the fire tower on Indian Hill, the tower has been deemed non-salvageable. FFLA efforts to discuss restoration stem back around 20 years. The removal was planned for late fall of 2025, but has not yet occurred. We have worked with DLLT on the removal, emphasizing preservation of important artifacts from the tower before its removal.

We will also work with them after the removal on historical signage for the site. The official news release from the Downeast Lakes Land Trust (DLLT) follows:

DLLT News Release

Built in 1934, the Grand Lake Stream Fire Tower is the last remaining enclosed wooden fire tower in New England. Located on DLLT property, an effort to preserve this landmark involved bringing in structural architects, as well as

contractors from Maine Cabin Masters, to assess the current condition of the tower. To everyone's disappointment, the tower was deemed non-salvageable. It has now become a danger and must be taken down. GLS community members were informed of this decision at their March town meeting. Suggestions were made to erect a display sign on the site with historical pictures and a brief history of the tower. This plan also includes placing a picnic table in the area. DLLT will work with the GLS Historical Society and the town to determine if a replica should be funded and erected in the future.

Other Projects

- We performed trail maintenance on the **Number 4 Mountain** watchman's trail. The steel tower still stands and is accessible on the summit. The state built a new trailhead parking lot for this mountain in 2025.
- We performed trail maintenance on the **White Cap Mountain** watchman's trail to the third watchman's camp site and down the north side of the mountain. This is a historical route and is also used as a maintainer's trail for the Maine Appalachian Trail Club.
- We cleared out the footings of the **Mount Kineo** fire tower. These footings contain important carvings of early watchman, including Alice Henderson, Maine's first lady lookout. Additionally, cleared the old watchman's trail on the summit out to the first watchman's camp site to maintain access to this historical site.
- We visited **Coburn Mountain** again in 2025 and discovered a weather event that destroyed a portion of the access trail to the summit. We cleared it and also discovered that last year's work to open up the old watchman's trail had been destroyed. We will consider restarting the effort again in 2026.

Other Activities

We made several tower and camp site visits this past year. Trips included Mount Kineo, Coburn mountain, Squaw mountain, Williams mountain and camp, Big Spencer mountain, Borestone mountain, White Cap mountain, and Boundary Bald mountain.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bill Cobb
Maine Director