



**Forest Fire Lookout Association
New York State Chapter
Annual Report for 2025
January 25, 2026**

Executive Committee Members: All committee members returned for the 2025 year; Fred Knauf, Debi Tebano, Pat Tebano, Adam Nichols, Michele Kaminsky, and Susan Kirk. We met during the first and fourth quarters last year on March 11th and December 3rd.

Membership: We began the year with 114 members and finished with 121 members. Our chapter membership is the 4th largest behind CA-South with 202, Washington with 191, ID-No. MT with 168. We had a net gain of 7 members and had 7 who did not renew.

Financials: We had an opening Balance of \$5777.47 and a closing balance of \$4707.15. We had expenses totaling \$3101.20.

Donations: We benefited from several donations totaling \$2030.88.

Fire Activity: We had a pretty active spring fire season from March through mid May when rains finally arrived. But after steady rainfall for about 6 weeks, it got dry again. From mid July through Mid October we had a smattering of small fires around the state with a significant number of them in October. Again, we were fortunate and rains finally arrived.

Site Visits: Site visits were something I tried to keep better track of in 2025, but my records only show 8 visits which extremely under reported how many times I was out in the field. I will try to do better in 2026.

Stewardship: Stewardship programs were ongoing from Memorial Day through Columbus Day at Berry Hill, Dickinson Hill, Kane and Stillwater fire Towers. 4316 visitors were engaged at these programs with an increase of 1476 from our 2025 numbers. We had 52 active volunteer stewards trained and most participated in the programs. Several volunteers were inactive in 2025.

Agreements with NYSDEC/NYSOPRHP and Municipalities: 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 have VSA applications pending for Leonard Hill and Balsam Lake towers. We worked with the Friends of Bramley Mt and the Town of Tompkins on Bramley and Rock Rift fire towers. An agreement is pending with the Village of Stamford for the Mt. Utsayantha Fire Tower.

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

Conferences: The NYS Chapter hosted the FFLA Eastern Conference in June of 2025. It was not well attended, but those who did attend did enjoy the 3 day event, the speakers, the tower visits, the food, and gathering time.

New Towers: None in 2025. Current standing is 79.

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

Lighting Event: The 12th annual event saw 35 towers participating in 2025. This event provides the organization with a great deal of exposure and honors those who served in the towers.

Outreach/Special Events: Numerous events and school presentations were done; Earth Day at the Watertown Zoo, Get Outdoors Day at the Lowville DEC office, presentations at the Fayetteville Library, Wheelerville, Northville, South Kortright elementary schools as well as Perth Broadalbin High School and the Valley Heights Christian School. 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 fire towers. Four days of centennial events to celebrate the 100th birthday of Kane Mt. Fire Tower were successful.

Website/Social Media presence: Our website continues to be updated routinely to keep the information accurate. Website hits were up from 5552 in 2024 to 6000 in 2025. Our Facebook page (FFLA New York State Chapter group) ended 2025 with 2625 members, up from 2100 in 2024.

NHLR/FFLOS: No activity in 2025.

Museum: Several years ago we assisted the NYSDEC and a private landowner, D. Randall to have the former Morgan Hill Fire Tower Observer's cabin placed at the Randall property to be utilized as a NYS Fire Tower Museum. Part of the agreement was to have FFLA Members staffing the museum on a regular basis. The cabin was successfully moved in 2025 by Mr. Randall. Plans to move this project forward will occur in 2026.

Tower and Observer Cabin Closures: Unfortunately we lost the Pillsbury Observer's cabin in 2025 when the NYSDEC deemed it surplus and burned it down in March. The Balsam Lake Observer's cabin museum remains closed to the public. The engineering assessment was finally completed in 2025, but no decisions have been made on how best to move forward with repairs that were noted on inspection in 2019. Leonard Hill, Jackie Jones, Roosa Gap, Spruce, Sterling, and Loon Lake fire towers all remain closed at this time pending engineering inspections. Beebe Hill and Goodnow Fire Towers were reopened in 2025.

Volunteer Recognition: We began our new volunteer recognition program complete with patches and a celebratory picnic. We are pleased to say that we had 11 volunteers who earned the initial 7 day patches. We are going to look ahead to how best to manage the data and to hold our picnic after the steward/project season in 2026.

Looking Ahead: Preparing the museum to be opened to the public, create and manage new steward programs at Beebe Hill and Mt. Utsayantha. We hope that restoration and reopening of Leonard Hill and Rock Rift fire towers will be completed in 2026.

Respectfully submitted,

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