



**Forest Fire Lookout Association
New York State Chapter
Annual Report for 2018**

New York State ended the year with 79 Members (66 in 2018). Of those, 23 were Plus Members (22 in 2018). We have 2 Affiliate Members (Friends of Grafton Lake State Park and Town of Kent). Our expenses totaled \$760.17. Generally the expenses covered the cost of postage and printing for the monthly newsletter and refreshments for restoration work projects. We received \$667.26 in patch sales and donations. We have an account balance of \$407.13. We added 4 towers to the NHLR list, giving NYS a total of 46. One tower was added to the National Register of Historic Places (Rock Rift). There are currently 72 standing towers in NYS.

Fires activity around the state occurred mostly during the months of June and July when it was quite dry. There was one major fire, the Altona Fire which burned 547 acres. There were several smaller fires in those months that were put out quickly.

I visited 23 different fire towers, some multiple times, plus 4 lost lookout sites. Visits were done for inspections, painting, restoration work, centennial events, and volunteering.

Major restoration projects occurred on Wakely Fire Tower (work done by the NYSDEC and a private contractor) and Jackie Jones Fire Tower (work done by FFLA and Team Rubicon).

A 5 year agreement was signed between the State Chapter and the NYSDEC to restore and maintain all of the fire towers associated with the Northville office (Blue, Owls Head, Wakely, Pillsbury, Kane and Snowy). Work plans are in place and we hope work projects will begin in the late Spring of 2019.

The NYS Chapter of the FFLA and their partners, Team Rubicon were recognized by the Pallisades Interstate Park Commission for their restoration work on Sterling Forest and Jackie Jones fire towers. A plaque was presented to us at a luncheon. Following the work on these 2 projects, an interpretation and educational program was begun at both towers. The program at Sterling will be expanded in 2019. We will be working with Team Rubicon again in 2019 on more fire tower projects.

I continued to do Slide Shows around the State. These programs give us an opportunity to provide education in the community about fire towers, but also provide us a forum for recruitment. We did presentations at the Adirondack Experience in Blue Mountain, the Thompson Park Zoo, Town of Horicon, and at Fort Montgomery. At Fort Montgomery we partnered with Author, Marty Podskoch. At Town of Horicon we presented with the NYS Forest Rangers and held a centennial party for Swede Mountain Fire Tower as well.

A significant exhibit entitled Eyes in the Sky opened in the Town of Webb museum. While unable to attend the opening, other FFLA representatives did (thank you Mark and Bob) and I did get there later in the year.

FFLA sponsored two group hikes, one for the Lark in the Park and one First Day hike. Both were lightly attended, but again they gave us an opportunity to educate and recruit.

I attended a number of community meetings and held several meetings with the NYS DEC to discuss new fire tower projects.

On social media our Facebook page remains active with 323 members and lively discussions on a daily basis.

Centennial celebrations were held around the state for St. Regis, Azure, Arab and Swede Fire Towers. I was able to attend 3 of the 4.

In September we encouraged a Statewide Lighting Event, an opportunity to have a volunteer in a fire tower cab shining a light for a half hour while members of the local community would look up, wonder at the strange light and be reminded of the important role the fire tower once held in protecting the community. A significant part of this process was informing the community about the process ahead of time. I wrote a piece in The Catskill Canister about this.

Our monthly newsletter continues. It offers an opportunity for news, historical items, announcements, and communication. It is distributed electronically to about 200 and by postal mail to 12.

We have several goals for 2019. We expect to get a chapter web page up and running using Retired Forest Ranger Paul Hartman's great historical work as a base. We hope to increase our social media presence with more facebook postings and will consider adding Instagram. I hope to improve connections with local media; magazines, newspapers, etc at the very least develop a list for this. I hope to add more towers to the NHLR and the Lost Lookouts lists. I hope to continue to increase our membership, to work with our partners at NYSDEC and Team Rubicon and possibly assist in getting 2 more fire towers now closed, restored and reopened to the public and perhaps 2 more put up!

The NYS Chapter will host the Northeastern Conference for the FFLA on the weekend of June 8th and 9th 2019. The conference will take place at the Mount Tremper Fire Hall in Mount Tremper. We are still lining up our speakers, but at this time our neighbors in both Pennsylvania and New Jersey will be speaking along with a presentation on listing a fire tower on the National Register of Historic Places, how to pick the pieces of a tower out of a field and put it up in your backyard and more. The weekend will include several options to visit fire towers.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Rankin, Director
New York State Chapter
Forest Fire Lookout Association