



**Forest Fire Lookout Association
New York State Chapter
April 2024**

“The beautiful spring came; and when nature resumes her loveliness, the human soul is apt to revive too.” Harriet Ann Jacobs. Spring is such a lovely time of year in the mountains, often only seen at lower elevations while winter retains her hold higher up. As one moves along the trail to their favorite fire tower, you can watch the changing of the season. The Observer in the tower cab, (if he or she has been returned to duty), can watch the “green line” proceed up the hillsides, then the mountain sides as leaves pop out and help to lessen fire danger. Bird songs flourish around the tower as resident birds return from their winter vacation. Yes, these changes certainly revive our souls too.



Spring also revives our need for volunteers to help us out with work that we have planned for the summer ahead. If you could give us just one day of assistance with a project, we would be very grateful. Subject to change due to weather, we do have some items on the calendar that we are seeking help for. Please see all options in the calendar section of this newsletter and send me a note if you can help out.

AROUND THE STATE

Our monthly photo contest winner was Sonja Augusta Rossi's April 2020 photo of Hadley Mountain Fire Tower. Sonja's photograph gathered the most likes on our Facebook page and is now the cover photo there for the last month. We are very grateful to all who enter such beautiful photographs each and every month and who like them. Congratulations Sonja!



Great news from the Northville office of the NYS DEC: We had discussed the need for trail work during our annual meetings with the DEC and it is wonderful to see it coming to fruition. We maintain both the Kane and Snowy towers and trails through our agreement with the NYS DEC. The future starts with finding funding for the plans.

DEC writes: “Beginning in 2023, DEC has been improving trails, campsites, access roads, and trailhead parking lots to make state lands more welcoming and safe for visitors. Small projects that enhance public safety and convenience are not only important for ensuring access to state lands—they also help reduce harmful impacts to our wild places. Below are two upcoming trail projects in the Adirondack Park, managed by DEC’s Region 5 Northville Office, that will improve trail safety and sustainability by planning new trail designs, layout, and mapping potential reroutes of two popular hiking trails. This planning is anticipated to be completed in 2024 and is the first step towards these trail improvements. The projects are funded by the [Environmental Protection Fund](#).

Kane Mountain Trail, [Shaker Mountain Wild Forest, Fulton County](#)

Currently, [Kane Mountain has two trails \(PDF\)](#) that lead to a fire tower and scenic views. The current routes follow former Jeep trails that climb straight up the mountain and have become eroded with deep gullies. This leads to not only a very challenging hike but also excessive trail widening, increased soil erosion, and loss of surrounding vegetation. The goal of this project is to relocate a private land crossing onto State land and identify sustainable trail reroutes on both the East and North Trails that lead to the fire tower. These reroutes will help improve the visitor experience as well as prevent soil erosion and protect trailside habitat. The contract for planning the trail design and layout improvements was awarded to Tahawus Trails.

Snowy Mountain Trail, [Jessup River Wild Forest, Hamilton County](#)

Located on State Route 30, the [Snowy Mountain trail \(PDF\)](#) is known for its sweeping summit views, fire tower, and elevation of nearly 4,000’. It is a popular hiking destination that people often hike while pursuing the 46 High Peaks. Because of its popularity, the Snowy Mountain trails have been experiencing impacts from overuse including trail widening, soil erosion, and damage to trailside vegetation. This project will help develop a sustainable, all-encompassing trail system that improves the visitor experience while protecting our wild lands. The contract was awarded to the Adirondack Mountain Club who will either design and layout a new sustainable trail or create a plan to rebuild the current trail system to sustainable standards.”

Smokey: Prepping for the 2024 Steward Season includes ordering our "mascot" items to give to visitors young and old at fire towers where we steward. Smokey items are always a big hit and we just placed our order for over 6,000 pieces to help spread the word about fire prevention. If you have wondered where your FFLA dues go to, this is part of what they go to. Stop and see an FFLA steward or other volunteer steward at a tower this coming season and get your Smokey tattoo, sticker, flyer or other items.



Lyon Mt: A very interesting piece here about the original naming of the mountain and the first woman to climb the mountain. Thanks for this excellent article John!

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PGUIgInPe24zdVXJeq6Q1EZA82ESk-mh/view>

Spring Fire Season: Wildfires have been popping up on and off in different areas of the state. Thus far, all have been kept to a minimum amount of damage.

From the Forest Ranger report 3-20-24, Village of Goshen, Orange County - Wildland Fire: On March 14 at 3:35 p.m., Orange County 911 requested Forest Ranger assistance with a wildfire that had been seen from Owens Road in Goshen. At 4:25 p.m., Forest Ranger Jahn determined the fire was 9.5 acres in size. By 5:30 p.m., five Rangers and other firefighters had the fire contained. Rangers declared the fire out at 7:15 p.m. The suspected cause of the fire was logging machinery that struck rocks, resulting in a spark.

From the Forest Ranger report 3-27, Town of Greenwich, Washington County, Wildfire: On March 18 at 2:45 p.m., Ray Brook Dispatch received a call for Forest Ranger assistance for a wildland fire on Lick Springs Road. The fire had started in a garage and spread into the woods. By 4:20 p.m., Rangers contained the fire to half an acre.

From the Forest Ranger report 4-2, Town of Monroe, Orange County, Wildland Fire: On March 30 at 7 p.m., the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and the Monroe Fire Department requested Forest Ranger assistance with a wildfire that had spread from private to State land. Rangers Parlier, Quinones, Rusher, and Schweider created a perimeter line around the 32-acre fire. At 12:30 a.m., Rangers had the fire under control. At 1:30 p.m., Rangers declared the fire in patrol status and determined the cause was a campfire that had grown out of control.

Town of Islip, Suffolk County, Wildfire: On March 21 at 2:15 p.m., Forest Ranger Hicks responded to a brush fire on the Sunrise Highway Service Road. Ranger Hicks, working with local fire departments, got the .4-acre fire under control within the hour. While patrolling the fire the next day, Ranger Hicks located a subject with a bright orange bed roll looking for a place to sleep. Ranger Hicks interviewed the subject who admitted he was burning garbage and started the fire for warmth. Ranger Hicks educated the subject about the dangers of starting fires in the wilderness, especially during the spring brush burning ban.

From the Environmental Conservation Reports 4-1-14 Open Burning Issues – Greene/Erie/Sullivan/Orange Counties. On March 13, 2 days before the ban, ECOs Smith and Palmateer discovered two illegal burns while on patrol in the town of Athens. The Officers discovered the first illegal burn while responding to an unrelated brush fire called in by Greene County 911. After supporting the local fire department in their quick suppression of the brush fire, the Officers observed a small fire pit that contained burning construction and demolition debris. The ECOs encountered a similar situation a few hours later in the town of Catskill. They issued warnings to both property owners and reminded them it is unlawful to burn anything other than clean wood in New York State.

On March 16, the first day of New York's two-month-long burn ban, ECO Damrath ticketed a property owner in Erie County for burning the remains of a barn, something the property owner admitted to doing for years.

It was a similar story for Officers in Sullivan and Orange counties -- ECOs Doroski, Parker, Wood and Lieutenant Buckley issued tickets to multiple New Yorkers for illegally burning brush and other debris during the burn ban, including for a large brush fire in the town of Thompson that required the response of several local fire companies.

Bramley: We continue to see great progress and good news from the Friends of Bramley Mountain Fire Tower. From the Walton Reporter - “Delaware County Economic Development Committee members met to discuss updates on ongoing projects, including the rebuild of Bramley Mountain Fire Tower, Wednesday, April 3.

The county received a land access permit from New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to reconstruct the tower on New York City-owned land, Nealis said. The county also received governmental immunity from the town of Delhi to avoid site plan approval and begin construction this spring. More can be found here: <https://www.the-reporter.net/stories/bramley-mtn-fire-tower-use-permit-received-project-progresses,140012?newsletter=140622>

Northeastern FFLA Conference: Due to some unforeseen circumstances, we are not going to be able to host a conference in NYS this year. The National office is working on an alternative location as we type and I will let you know details as they are worked out.

AROUND THE COUNTRY

A feel good story from our friends at National Woodland Owners Association Word Wednesday: <https://www.woodworkingnetwork.com/news/woodworking-industry-news/washaba-man-cuts-down-tree-10k-profit>

Will it be better than the human brain and eye? Cheaper, more efficient? “Scientists harness power of artificial intelligence to battle wildfires.” Machines that think like humans, the dream of artificial intelligence, is becoming a reality. It brings concerns that AI will displace jobs, fuel online bias, supercharge deep fake videos and slip from human control. But it is not as grim as it seems. AI may create new tools to address complex problems and the climate emergency is at the top of the list. Miles O’Brien reports. Read in PBS News Hour: <https://apple.news/AiNhx6xnxS-irmmz7EUgIxA>

As we continue to think of how to prevent large wildfires in the future, we need to consider how they are started. A very detailed study here with a lot of facts is worth the read: <https://wildfiretoday.com/2024/04/14/humans-are-by-far-the-main-cause-of-wildfires/>

Also from our friends at National Woodland Owners Association Word Wednesday is an article about aviation and wildland firefighting. Many strides have been made since the early days when “The first known attempt at extinguishing fire from an aircraft was in 1930, when the Forest Service used a Ford Tri-Motor airplane to drop a wooden beer keg filled with water over a fire.” More on the history and future of aviation can be found in this interesting article: https://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001fDcQjE-QSRnGcywQP4jc8SZVZ7ThfP2uyvutkS0xoncVxMfJMsC8scA1COr7GTvItX980vP0C_qv1D-yCCatM5gAn0FGPV5w9yRFilCpCsbxy1UJOOKDdDJwAHem6Tb0woSJkS_QFXseOBuv_EJkuHhjr pQS-JFWCoWzpzHL5CBayTJDUGQbIxmLavYhfW501iAYnw_KUcf-KOotcbFS0Kr6iK5FNjwOvi-FHc7jE38=&c=_XDRXW6-O-bo9oIGebS9H0QNCAMTLRn4pqU5IYb_13pZsILPz2z8Q==&ch=T5qsTxeYXC4ORVTkxw-D0wJKRzUbbqJmxuKL3xGLdQyf7E70kSN3IA==

AROUND THE NORTHEAST

Always a treat to hear from our friends in Vermont, Hugh and Jeanne from Stratton Fire Tower:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XoelJudJqAc>

Radio information continued from last month. An article dated Tuesday April 21, 1935, from an unknown source. "*Farm Buildings Lost in Sweep of Forest Fires. Two Way Radio System Aids Ranger Force.* Three Sullivan County farm buildings were destroyed yesterday in one of a group of forest fires which climaxed probably a record number of blazes for a three week period in this region. Rain today provided temporary relief from danger of further conflagration.

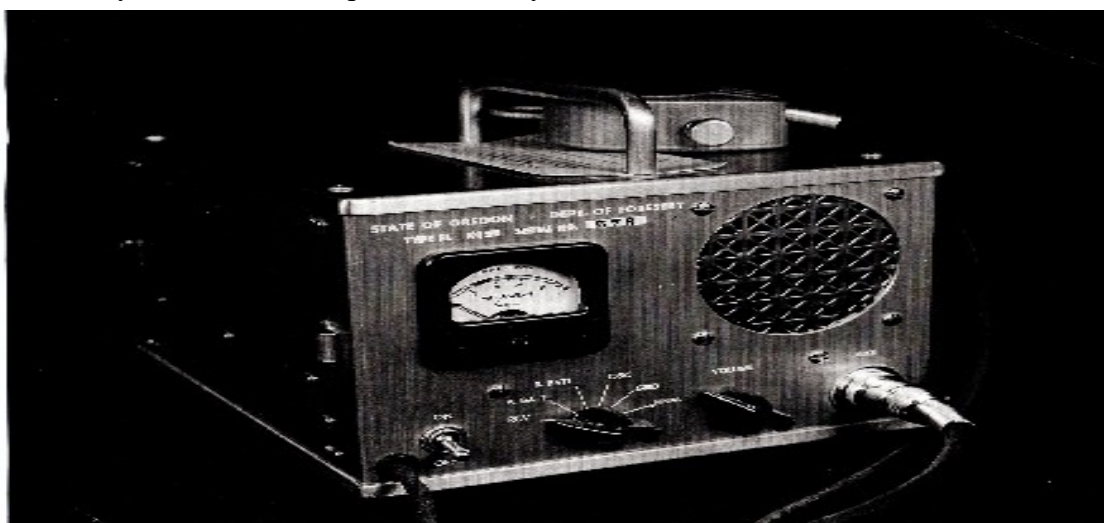
Property loss on the buildings that were on the farm of Lottie Wagner near Jeffersonville was estimated at \$4,000. In addition the Wagner farmhouse was damaged and fire ran through six acres of maple grove before it was extinguished by warden and residents.

During the three week period in which the number of forest fires in Rockland-Sullivan is said to have exceeded the total of 231 for the entire year of 1934, one man died of burns and another man died of exposure after having been rescued from a fire.

Two way radio service. Announcement of successful tests of a new radio communication system in combating such fires which is heralded as an important development and may be adopted by the Conservation Department was made today. Through apparatus developed by John Behrens of Otisville, fire warden and radio expert, two way radio communication is now possible between airplane, fire tower, ranger headquarters and the actual fire fighting force in the forest.

The system was operated last night in a successful fight against a 25 acre fire in the Shawangunk Range. Albert Leo-Wolf, Conservation Department airplane pilot carrying on a conversation directly with Behrens on the ground at the fire and also with Middletown headquarters in the Chamber of Commerce building and the Lake Pocatello Fire Tower Observer, Leon Custer. Rangers Brewer and Reagan directed the fire fighting.

The portable two way radio was also operated Sunday on a 125 acre fire near Otisville."



Fire Tower Radio Model 1400

CALENDAR

Contact us <http://nysffla.org/calendar.html> for all dates unless otherwise noted.

May 11, 2024: Folks from the Adirondack High Peaks Foundation will be hauling a new Interpretive sign to the summit of Mt. Adams to be installed on the first landing. The sign is a very high quality, graffiti resistant type utilized at National Parks and in the same design as the other signs recently installed by the Open Space Institute around the Upper Work area. Departure time is 7:30 am. If you can lend a hand please reach out to admin@adkhighpeaks.org For more information on their work visit: <https://adkhighpeaksfoundation.org/volunteer-sign-up/>

June 1, 2024: Join us as we celebrate National Trails Day by doing our annual Trail Work at Stillwater Fire Tower trail.

June 15 or 16: We will be doing our annual trail work at Lyon Mt. Fire Tower trail, perfectly timed for the lady slipper bloom! We will choose the best weather day.

July 13 and 14: We will be doing some repairs at Snowy Mt. Fire Tower which will require not only a long hike, but we will need to carry fencing materials and tools to repair the safety fencing on the fire tower. Can you lend us a hand please?

July 15 -18: Pillsbury Fire Tower has one small detail left in our work, stapling the fencing. Would you be willing to take a hike up with a hammer and help us finish this work please? We will choose the best weather day and the least buggy day from these dates.

September 21 or 22: Lyon Mt. Knowing that snow comes early to this spectacular mountain, we will try to get our fall trail work done before its arrival. We will choose the best weather day with the best views from these two days.

Our 2024 Steward Programs will begin on Memorial Day weekend in most locations. If you have any interest in being a steward at Stillwater Fire Tower, Kane Mt. Fire Tower, Berry Hill Fire Tower or Dickinson Hill Fire Tower, please let me know.

Marty Podskoch is making some plans. The celebration of the 115th Anniversary of Fire Towers in the Adirondacks & Catskills will be held throughout 2024. The public is encouraged to celebrate the Anniversary by visiting one or more of the restored towers to see the positive effect they have had in helping to preserve our beautiful Adirondack and Catskill forests. Thus far, no dates have been announced.

To learn more about the history of the Adirondack and Catskill fire towers, read one or more of the following books: *Adirondack Fire Towers: Their History and Lore, The Southern Districts*; *Adirondack Fire Towers: Their History and Lore the Northern Districts*; and *Fire Towers of the Catskills: Their History and Lore* by Martin Podskoch <https://martinpodskoch.com>

Enjoy your spring!

Laurie Rankin/Director/NYS Chapter FFLA/ <http://www.nysffla.org>

