

# Maine Chapter Report

## 2008

We continued to have an active year between events, research, field trips, and visits with members and state officials. We continued to keep the Maine tower inventory up to date as there were changes, new discoveries and updates. The findings are below –

### **Tower Survey**

Data as of 12/30/2008

Summary:

Total Known Tower Sites – 143

Total Towers Still Standing – 65

Total Towers Gone or Removed - 78

Of the 65 Standing Towers:

Standing Steel Only, No Cab – 22

Standing Steel Converted to Observation Deck - 6

Standing Steel and Cab – 37

Average Condition of the 37 Standing Towers with Cabs:

Good Condition – 18

Fair Condition – 6

Poor Condition – 8

Bad Condition – 5

The full tower summary list can be found on the FFLA Web Site on the Towers page under the Maine section. We will continue to update these lists as new information is found.

**Tower Losses** – We are not aware of any tower losses this year. Although we lost the *Washington Bald* tower in 2007, its watchman cabin was removed by the new landowners in early 2008.

**Planned Removals** – The following towers may be removed in 2009:

*Almanac Mountain* – The tower has deteriorated and has been badly vandalized. The Maine Forest Service would like to remove it for safety reasons.

*Priestly Mountain* – The current tower with no cab serves as a radio site for the Maine Forest Service and Parks and Lands. The tower is rusting badly and cannot support new antennas that are planned. The tower will be removed and a radio tower put in its place.

*Cooper Hill* – The current tower sits among many commercial radio antennas. New radio towers need to go up and the fire tower must be removed to make room.

### **Membership**

Current membership in ME is at 24 members. We saw some attrition and a few new members pushing the total up 2 from last year's total of 22.

Membership continues to be an issue with the Maine Chapter. Locating interested parties to

become members has been challenging.

### **NHLR**

11 Total Entries

We placed Mount Pisgah in Winthrop on the NHLR this past fall. On October 6th, FFLA Maine Director Bill Cobb presented the certificate to the Winthrop town council during their regular meeting. Jim Connors, the Kennebec Land Trust steward and Alan Johnston, the Maine Forest Service regional ranger for the area were in attendance.

All towers have caretakers except for Ross Mountain, which does not have any caretaker at this time. This tower is in an extreme remote section of Maine. There are 2 possibilities that will be investigated in 2009.

### **Research / Archives**

We continued this past year with significant research on tower sites. Specific focus was given to the Federal Towers on Mount Desert Island and towers in the down east section of Maine.

### **Activities**

#### **Allagash Mountain Lookout**

This restoration project continued in 2008 lead by FFLA member Roger Morneault. Significant work was done in late 2007 and that work was followed up this year by new paint, 2 new footings and other work. In August, FFLA members Bill Spach and Bill Cobb did a field visit. The tower looks in great shape and is very solid. The tower is getting a lot of visitor traffic now that it is open and safe to climb. The tower trail is well marked and is in good shape. Also during our visit, we located the position of the original Allagash Mountain Watchman's Cabin. The original 1916 log structure was removed in the late 40s, but with a little detective work, we were able to locate the rotted logs that made up the base of the structure along with other related artifacts.

#### **Peekaboo Mountain Project**

This past summer, the Aroostook Riders ATV Club, who are now the maintenance stewards for this tower, replaced all stairs and landings. With additional railing, grid work, and paint forthcoming, the tower is in great shape. This site is a popular hiking destination and provides great views from the tower.

#### **Squaw Mountain Project**

Coming off of the loss of support from the Greenville High School Industrial department in 2007, we began 2008 feeling good that we had overcome a large obstacle. We were working with the local Jail's Industrial department which was going to build the individual cab sections for the project. The Maine Forest Service had agreed to fly the sections to the summit where they would be placed on the steelwork. Later in the year we learned that due to the state budget crisis, we lost our Helicopter support. This setback has delayed the project again. We are looking at other possibilities to get materials to the summit in 2009.

#### **Caribou Parks and Recreation**

This summer, FFLA and the Caribou Parks and Recreation teamed up to put together a week long fire tower explorer program. During the week of June 23rd, a group of kids traveled throughout Aroostook County touring Maine Fire Towers. The goal of the program was to introduce participants to Maine Fire towers and forest fire detection history. FFLA provided detailed handouts for each tower visited complete with history and photos as well as a program handout on Maine Fire Detection history. Tower sites visited included Squa

Pan Mountain, Haystack Mountain, Debouille Mountain, Number 9 Mountain, Howe Brook Mountain, Oak Hill, and Three Brooks Mountain. A Maine Forest Service Ranger was on hand at Debouille Mountain and FFLA Maine Director Bill Cobb served as an interpretive guide for some of the other trips. The weather was great and a good time was had by all.

### **Delorme Gazetteer Project**

Earlier this year, FFLA teamed up with Delorme to update all of the Maine Fire Tower locations in its new Gazetteer scheduled for release sometime this year 2009. FFLA was able to provide updated information on where towers are currently standing and which ones have been removed.

### **Other Projects**

Rocky Mountain Tower – We did not have much luck locating a work crew to assist with repairs in 2008. We have had some discussions about a repair mission for this tower in 2009 using the same group that assisted with the Allagash repair to assist the stewards with some maintenance.

Carr Pond – This tower has been in a collapsed state for many years, though the tower itself is salvageable. A project is starting in the spring of 2009 to move the tower and re-erect it on private land up in Allagash Plantation. The survey work was completed in 2008.

Indian Hill – A local group in Grand Lake Stream continues to work on an effort to take on ownership of the wooden tower on Indian Hill. FFLA has been assisting with this effort, but this effort continues to be stalled until some land ownership issues are resolved. There will not likely be any movement until the summer timeframe.

### **Southern Maine Activities and Status**

All 3 volunteer towers in York County (Aggie, Ossipee, and Hope) have continued to operate during 2008. The towers were most active during the dry spring and the summer and fall were fairly inactive other than some sporadic dry periods.

**Mount Agamenticus** – For 2008, the tower is in good shape overall. No major damage over the winter. There are a few steps that need to be replaced. Mount A has not been manned nearly as much as last year as the primary lookout broke his leg. The Maine Forest Service continues to support this volunteer program and assists with materials for repairs when necessary. The intentions for 2009 are to keep manning this lookout on Class 3 days or higher.

**Ossipee Hill** – This tower opened in early April 2008 for the season. The tower made New England news when a fire was spotted by the watchman Jason L'Heureux in a town 20 miles away and New England Cable News made the trip up the tower to see how it was done. The tower worked in partnership with the Mt. Hope Tower in Sanford, Mt Aggie in York and Blue Job in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. The tower was manned during class 3, 4 and 5 days. Over 500 visitors made their way up to the tower and several school classes always make the trip during fire prevention week. Jason reported the snow on Mt. Washington in September. The tower closed in mid October. The stairs got fresh paint and next year, the watchman will work on the tower legs.

**Mount Hope** – Year 2008 was not a busy year because of the wet weather. There were a couple of significant spots in Lebanon this year, otherwise it was a routine season. As of right now there are three volunteers ready to work the 2009 season. That provides at least four days of coverage. The tower is in good shape. The outhouse should be replaced which is believed to date back to 1962. There is enough donated material to build a replacement

and the plan is to use a commercial camp toilet which will be paid for with money donated by the Sanford FD call force.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Bill Cobb, Maine Director