

2016 Maine Annual Report

This past year the Squaw Mountain fire tower project, which was our most active project, kept us quite busy. Since the last report, there were no tower losses, one status change, and one new site found. We had a large amount of members and friends of the chapter do site visits all over the state. We had another year where nearly all towers with the exception of just a few were visited.

We continued with research and archive collection, including several important donations. We continue to maintain and grow our chapter Facebook presence and collected a variety of new information from it.

We continued to keep the Maine tower inventory up to date as there were changes, new discoveries and updates. The findings are below –

2016 Tower Survey

Data as of 12/30/2016

There were no tower losses this year. There were 2 notable changes. **Hardwood Mountain**, which is a very remote tower on the Canadian border, had long been thought to not be standing. This year, a trip in by a friend of the chapter found that it was indeed standing. Additionally, **Simmons Hill** in Greenfield was verified as a former tower site by an FFLA member. Conditions continue to deteriorate for much of the abandoned inventory.

Summary:

Total Known Tower Sites – 144

Total Towers Still Standing – 57

Total Towers Gone or Removed – 87

Of the 57 Standing Towers:

Standing Steel Only, No Cab – 20

Standing Steel Converted to Observation – 6

Standing Steel and Cab – 30

Standing Wooden Enclosed – 1

Average Condition of the 30 Standing

Towers with Cabs:

Good Condition – 11

Fair Condition – 6

Poor Condition – 10

Bad Condition – 4

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

Tower Losses – None

Tower Changes – Hardwood Mountain is now known to be standing

New Tower Sites – Simmons Hill in Greenfield.

Planned Removals – No concrete plans to remove anything, but at-risk towers are below:

1. **Johnston Hill**
2. **Pleasant Mountain**
3. **Almanac Mountain**

Membership

Current membership in ME is at 30 members, up 6 from last year. A combination of Facebook and our new online membership capability has helped drive this up.

We also have close to 100 other Facebook friends or folks that help out occasionally with research, trip reports, or tower reports.

NHLR

11 Total Entries

There were no new completed NHLR nominations for 2016. There are a number of towers under consideration and will be placed on the register as time permits.

Research / Archives

We continued this past year with significant research on tower sites. We received many new leads and information through Facebook and have worked with these folks to gather the information for the archives. Worked with various organizations and individuals to provide history and background data on towers and tower sites. Also made several trips to the Maine Forest Service and other locations to retrieve archival information and old photos of lookout sites.

Liability Challenges in Maine

We continue to hold on a few restoration projects on state owned/leased land until we can understand if / how we can use the FFLA National liability insurance. This will need to be a topic for the January 2017 board meeting.

Facebook Presence

The Maine Chapter Facebook Page continues to do well and has 3625+ followers as of this writing, up 1,103 since last year. We continue to keep fresh content on the page, which is a key to keeping interest. We continue to see the below benefits -

- Connecting with many former watchman, 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

We regularly create Facebook advertising campaigns on a quarterly basis to advertise our Newsletter with our online membership link.

Activities

Squaw Mountain Project

The Natural Resource Education Center (NREC) based in Greenville Maine, began a project to re-locate the Big Squaw Mountain fire tower to the Greenville Visitors Center back in 2011. In the fall of 2011, the Maine Forest Service disassembled the tower and flew it off the mountain for later delivery to the Department of Corrections where the 1919 steel was restored and a cab replica built. The replica cab was built to the original 1958 specs. MaineDOT transported both back to the visitor's center in 2015 where it was assembled and erected. The Maine Chapter of FFLA was involved every step of the way, from planning, providing grant money, to interior construction, assembly, and decoration. The items in the cab were selected to represent a circa 1960 representation of the lookout. Its intention is to provide public access to a fire tower experience as well as a rich and hands-on understanding of Maine's fire detection history.

As a part of Forest Heritage Days in Greenville, the Big Squaw Mountain fire tower was dedicated on Saturday, August 13, 2016 at 9AM at the Greenville Visitors Center. The ceremony opened with NREC President Tim Obrey discussing NREC and how the project got where it did. FFLA Maine Chapter Director Bill Cobb then spoke about Maine's lookout history and Big Squaw Mountain history. Tim Obrey then closed the ceremony and the tower was opened to the public.

Also part of Forest Heritage Days in Greenville, FFLA member Bill Spach led a fire tower interpretive hike with a group of kids from NREC up Big Squaw Mountain. This occurred on August 12.

This project is officially complete!



The finished product - The former Squaw Mountain fire tower is now erected at the Greenville visitor center.

Wadleigh Mountain

This project is officially on hold until the state can complete their structural analysis. There is no ETA at this time.

Northern Region Towers

The Maine Public Lands Division worked on 2 existing lookout sites this year. They renovated the Deboullie Mountain watchman's camp in T15 R9. They worked this project saving this historic camp so that it can be used as a shelter and picnic area. The Maine Forest Service also assisted with helicopter support. Additionally, the Round Pond Mountain tower site was cleared and road work completed to provide better access to it. In 2017, the Round Pond Mountain will see some maintenance including footings and deck work.

Other Projects

The Squaw Mountain project consumed most of our resources in 2016, so progress on other projects was minimal. The **Mount Agamenticus** restoration project did see any movement in 2016, but will likely see movement in 2017. FFLA will assist where possible. There was no progress on Indian Hill in **Grand Lake Stream**, but we will be restarting this effort in 2017. A group of FFLA members spent multiple days opening up the nearly obliterated watchman's trail on **Green Mountain** in Dolebrook so that a path to this 1920 lookout will not be lost.

Southern Maine Activities and Status

Volunteer towers Mount Agamenticus, Ossipee Hill, and Mount Hope have seen little use in 2016.

Aggie

The tower was closed for the entire 2016 fire season due to its poor condition. Progress was slow getting the restoration project off the ground, but it is hoped there will be more progress in 2017. A Go Fund Me campaign was run by the York Fire Department and it earned more than \$10,000. We also applied and were approved for a \$500 restoration grant. A structural analysis still needs to be completed before the repair effort can proceed.

Mount Hope

The Sanford Call department continues to maintain and staff the tower. It was staffed on and off in 2016, but there is still a shortage of volunteers. The tower is in good shape. Plans call to continue to staff it in 2017 as well as several maintenance projects including painting the tower.

Ossipee Hill

The tower was closed for the entire 2016 fire season due to the lack of volunteers. One long time watchman has had health issues for a few years and finding volunteers has been challenging since then. Attempts will be made to locate volunteers for the 2017 season. The tower is still in fairly good shape and the department is keeping regular tabs on its condition. The department also gave a few tower tours for groups of kids over this past summer.

Other Activities

Made several tower site visits this past year. Trips included Big Spencer Mountain, Green Mountain, Squaw Mountain, Little Russell, Trout Mountain, Number 4, Mount Katahdin, Ragged Mountain, Black Cat Mountain, Williams Mountain, Borestone Mountain, Mount Hope, and Ossipee Hill.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bill Cobb
Maine Director