

Rhode Island Chapter of the Forest Fire Lookout Association

2022 Annual Report

Southern New England Director Jack Kelley

New Director!

In September, we officially acquired a director after six years of vacancy: Jack Kelley, who has extensively researched and visited towers across the northeast since joining the FFLA in 2016.

Shannock Hill Goes Up in Smoke

On July 6, 2022, three teens launched fireworks at the abandoned Shannock Hill fire tower in Richmond, reportedly as part of an attempt to see if they could actually set it on fire. It turned out that yes, unfortunately, they could, and the cab of the tower was gutted by flames despite the best efforts of local firemen. Built in 1968, while not used for fire detection since the early 2000s, the cab contained radio equipment for municipal and state emergency networks. The RI Department of Environmental Management is now considering complete removal of the structure and replacement with a new communications tower, though discussions are ongoing. The teens that started the fire were facing first-degree arson charges as of July 8.

Restorations, restorations, restorations!

2022 saw the emergence of a small, but dedicated, group of HAM radio operators and former or current emergency personnel start what has become an incredibly successful effort to restore many of the state's remaining fire towers for both housing radio equipment and as potential interpretive sites. Since late spring, the group has amassed tens of thousands of dollars in funds and completed amazing work such as reroofing the tower on Chopmist Hill in Scituate, reconnecting power to Pine Hill in Exeter, and clearing trees around the Mowry tower, on Woonsocket Hill in North Smithfield. They are passionate, energized, and actively making great progress--and are looking for volunteers, so reach out!