



ON THE LOOKOUT

From the
National Chairman
Keith A. Argow

Vienna, Virginia
Spring 2011

**A BIG FINISH FOR 2010, A SUCCESSFUL ANNUAL MEETING, AND A
HUGE AGENDA FOR 2011**

ENCOURAGING VICTORIES IN NEW YORK AND MISSISSIPPI

The final days and hours of 2010 saw two big successes for the hard work of FFLA, and opened new opportunities for the permanent protection of fire lookouts. A tip of the FFLA hat goes to NY Director Bill Starr and the partner groups for their multi-year effort to educate the public, work with the media to build popular support, and participate with lengthy state DEC and Park planning procedures. Their goal, which they never lost sight of, was to permanently protect two fire towers: Hurricane and St. Regis, which stood on Adirondack Park land that has been designated as Wilderness.

As it turned out, love of these historic structures trumped a fierce defense of wilderness as the state authorities recommended the establishment of two historic zones on the mountain top sites. Final approval required the signature of Governor Patterson, who approved the action before leaving office on December 31.

The second success came in the holiday week between Christmas and New Years. A sharp-eyed FFLA member noticed that the USFS had placed the five remaining 7'x 7' Aermotor towers on the National Forests in Mississippi on a fast-track three-day GSA sale (similar to an Ebay posting) and notified me. By that time only one day and 16 hours remained. I called the Forest Supervisor's office in Jackson to find that most of the folks involved were on leave, which is not uncommon at year-end. Fortunately, those who were designated to act in their absence were very much on the job. Within hours of the close of bidding,

the Forest Service withdrew the sale.

In that short period of time, I made some commitments that impressed our partners in the Forest Service, and they gave us several months to get the job done. The proposals under discussion are innovative and should open new options for FFLA. They underscore how much, under the pressure of on-going staff and budget reductions, the Forest Service is reaching out to work with partners.

There is a footnote to this story. As the hours ticked by, and the bids were still low (probably from steel scrap dealers), I registered as a bidder at GSA. To their credit, GSA expedited my application and I was approved in the final hours. Fortunately, soon the towers were withdrawn and I didn't have to bid. But what if I had?

A few days later I shared this story with my lovely wife Lou... She looked at me evenly and said "you did what?" I quickly explained that I never really did bid because it was only an emergency back-up... Again, an even look, but with what I thought might be a slight smile: "And what would we have done with five fire towers in Mississippi?" (Note to happily married FFLAers: best to get spouse involved early on!) I am happy to say we worked it out, as we always have for 42 years.

2011 BOARD MEETING IN MACON, GEORGIA

If you haven't already, take a look at the minutes of the 2011 annual meeting of the Board which are posted on www.ffla.org. We really got a lot accomplished and I was proud to be your chairman.

Our host, the Georgia Forestry Commission could not have been more accommodating. Assistant State Forester and Fire Chief Alan Dozier gave an illustrated history on fire towers in Georgia, past, present, and future. He also secured a second program by retired USFS forester Jim Sorenson who had served in Syria as an advisor on fire detection and control. His pictures included unique Syrian fire lookouts. He also gave an interesting story on his experiences with fire towers in Missouri where he started his career.

Reports for the annual business meeting were well prepared, which enabled us to keep a full schedule. In deferring to the posted minutes, here are some highlights:

- Bula, Eells and Spear were unanimously re-elected as Western Deputy Chair, Secretary, and Historian.
- We completed 2010 within budget, and with a \$2,000 gain.
- The Endowment returns increased in value by \$2,743.

- For the first time in FFLA's 20-year history, membership declined (by 19).
- Chapter Reports are on the web. Some are really outstanding!
- Three restoration grants were made in 2010.
- Many stories and materials for LOOKOUT NETWORK Magazine are being submitted.
- Print copies are at 1,100. Directors are urged to email PDF copies to agency partners.
- NHLR is now over 900. The new Former Lookout Site register (www.fflos.com) is already at 800. All members are encouraged to nominate to both by email.
- FFLA is getting proposals for a Liability Insurance policy.
- A Resolution of Appreciation was approved for retiring FFLA legal counsel Joe Higgins. He was at the founding meeting in 1990 and produced the early newsletters.
- Approved email voting for elections.
- Established a By-laws Review Committee.
- Approved a Resolution in support of keeping historic Green Mountain Lookout on its permanent location in the Glacier Peak Wilderness in the Washington Cascades.
- Created a Website Review Committee to evaluate a proposal to update the website.
- Created an Endowment Investment Committee
- A \$24,438 budget was approved for 2011.

SOUTHERN GROWTH STRATEGY

The Board noted the sales of surplus fire towers in the south and FFLA's small membership in the region. We agreed to undertake a programmatic listing of Georgia towers to the NHLR in cooperation with the Georgia Forestry Commission.

There is also an immediate need to get the program moving in Mississippi. In addition, fire tower sales in South Carolina and Florida are increasing. In order to continue focus in the south, the 2012 annual Board meeting will be held near New Orleans (yes, Louisiana is in the western region!) The site is to be determined, possibly in Mississippi.

In follow up, a few weeks later I met with our Florida Director and one of his members (both retired State Foresters), to launch a programmatic listing of fire towers on the NHLR.

FIELD TRIPS TO FIRE TOWERS

Assistant State Forester Alan Dozier led a tour of eleven state fire towers in central Georgia on Sunday. He also hosted a tour to the historic Chenocetah Lookout (CCC) on the Chattahoochee National Forest, plus the unique Sawnee Mountain fire tower, a single pole tower constructed to blend with an

adjacent residence, on Monday.

Treasurer Gary Weber took the award for number of towers visited. He traveled to Macon via Tampa, FL, which enabled him to visit and photograph 73 fire towers!

All in all, this has been a busy quarter for FFLA, and we are looking for more opportunity and challenge in 2011.

Keith A. Argow
CEO/Chairman of the Board
argow@cs.net