

Forest Fire Lookout Association

New Hampshire Chapter Report for 2014

The FFLA New Hampshire Chapter ended 2013 with 21 paid members. Early in 2014 two new members joined, then three chose not to renew dropping the total to 20 members. One member died in February leaving 19 paid members at the end of the year. One regular member became a Plus member and one Plus member renewed as a regular member so of the 19 paid members 8 are Plus and 11 are regular. The Chapter continues to send the Lookout Network to the White Mountain National Forest and to NH Forests & Lands.

There were no Chapter activities during the year.

Fire activity was even less than in 2013, itself a quiet year. In 2014 there were 112 wildland fires (versus 137 in 2013) which burned 72 acres (83 in 2013.) The largest fire was 24 acres and fires impacted 10 structures.

The State continues to staff towers only during Class 3 and higher fire danger weather with the result that former lookouts are slowly leaving for more lucrative work. One NH Chapter FFLA member worked for Massachusetts Dept. of Conservation & Recreation Fire Control this year helping with prescribed burns and staffing a tower on Cape Cod for a few days. New Hampshire will be increasingly reliant on Deputy and Special Deputy Wardens for tower staffing in high fire danger. NH Forests and Lands is doing an assessment of maintenance work needed at the towers and have identified several towers which should have cabs replaced.

The White & Green Mountain National Forests sent a crew to help suppress the Chiwaukum Fire near Entiat, Washington and the State of New Hampshire sent a crew to Washington State during 2014.

This past year the White Mountain National Forest accomplished restoration work on the Fabyan Guard Station. This cabin, built in 1923 by Clifford Graham who later became the Forest Supervisor was one of the first structures built by the Forest. The restoration work included constructing stone foundation piers, replacement of sill logs, and restoration of the door and windows. The work was done by HistoriCorps, along with past and present Forest Service employees. N H Chapter FFLA member Dave Govatski, formerly a Forester on the Ammonoosuc District assisted with the project. He and former Forest Service Heritage Coordinator Terry Fifield, unearthed two large porcelain enamel metal signs used years ago to identify the facility. Fabyan is the last of at least 15 Guard Stations once used on the Forest. There is no known connection to a late 1950's pop singer with a similar name.

In other Forest news, in August the Forest announced that, "Smarts Mountain Firetower is currently closed to the public until critical repairs can be made for safe public access." Although I made inquiries as to the specific deficiencies causing the closure I received no answers. Aug 30th I visited the tower and found no reason for the closure other than the ongoing problem with three of the four guy cables which are not functional and have not been since the Forest acquired the tower as part of an Appalachian Trail land purchase. During 2015 the Forest expects to have an engineer assess the tower and make recommendations. It is to be hoped that the only problem he finds is the issue with the guy cables and this problem is corrected promptly.

chris haartz, director