Founded in 1969 as a member-supported, nonprofit organization, The Catskill Center for Conservation & Development is a regionally-based advocate for the environmental and economic health of the Catskill Mountains.

Special thanks to all of the dedicated volunteers who have been instrumental in restoring the fire towers of the Catskills, and who continue to dedicate their time to ensure that these historic structures are available for the public to enjoy, as well as educating visitors about their importance.

Please visit our website at www.catskillcenter.org/towers for more detailed information about the fire towers of the Catskills, including directions, trail maps and profiles, photographs and history, or to purchase fire-tower merchandise to support restoration efforts.

Check out the Forest Fire Lookout Association’s website at www.ffla.org for more information on historic fire towers and lookouts across the country.
For nearly a century, observers watched the forests of New York State—including the Catskill and Adirondack forest preserves—from more than 100 fire towers perched atop the highest peaks, searching for the dangerous, telltale signs of forest fires. In the Catskill region alone, there were 19 towers.

Beginning in the 1980s, the State of New York began to phase out the use of fire towers for spotting forest fires, and in 1990, the last observer ended his watch in the Catskills at the Red Hill Fire Tower in Claryville. Over time, the towers and their associated observers’ cabins began to deteriorate, and those that were not dismantled were closed to the public for safety reasons.

Early in 1997, a grassroots, volunteer-based initiative formed to try to save the towers. Recognizing that the towers not only represent a piece of history and heritage of the Catskill Forest Preserve, but are an untapped resource with tremendous tourism potential, the Catskill Fire Tower Project was born as a joint initiative of The Catskill Center for Conservation & Development and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).

Through the dedication of countless volunteers, as well as assistance and support from DEC staff, the last of the five remaining Catskill towers was restored and reopened to the public in 2000. Since then, volunteer-based committees organized for each of the towers have continued to maintain the structures, and in many cases renovate the observers’ cabins as well. Today, a network of more than 100 volunteers also act as “summit stewards” by greeting visitors on weekends from May through October.

### Tower Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tower Name</th>
<th>Built</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Status</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overlook Mountain</td>
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<tr>
<td>Woodstock—Elevation 3,140 feet</td>
<td>This is the newest of the five towers left in the Catskill Park, having been at its present location since 1950. However, the tower itself is much older as it was originally constructed in 1927 on Gallis Hill, just west of Kingston. The Overlook tower reaches 60 feet in height, and offers incredible views of the Hudson River Valley, Ashokan Reservoir, and Devil’s Path. <strong>Directions:</strong> Take the red-marked Overlook Spur Trail from Mews Mountain Road, just outside of downtown Woodstock—a moderate, six-mile, round-trip hike.</td>
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| Hunter Mountain | | | |
| Town of Hunter—Elevation 4,040 feet | This tower has the unique distinction of being located at the highest elevation of any fire tower in New York State. The original tower on Hunter Mountain—constructed of logs—was built in 1909, and was the first of three fire towers constructed in the Catskills that year. The original tower was 40 feet tall, and was replaced with a steel tower 60 feet tall in 1917. That tower was originally placed at an elevation of 4,000 feet—a third of a mile from the true summit—but was removed and reset at its present site on the true summit in 1953. **Directions:** Take the Spucovation Trail, marked with blue disks, from Greene County Route 40 (Spucovation Hollow Road) in the hamlet of Spucovation. A seven-mile moderately-difficult round-trip hike. Or take the yellow-marked trail from the Hunter Mt. Sky Ride when it is open—a moderate four-mile round-trip hike. |

| Balsams Lake Mountain | | | |
| Hardenburgh—Elevation 3,723 feet | The first forest fire tower in New York State was erected on Balsams Lake Mountain in 1887. Built of wood by the Balsams Lake Club, it survived until 1901 and was replaced with another wooden tower in 1925. Telephone lines, a small observer’s cabin and a road to the summit were added in 1909 when the state took it over. The first steel tower was erected in 1919, and the present steel tower (47 feet tall) was built in 1930. **Directions:** Follow the blue-marked Dry Brook Ridge Trail located on Mill Brook Road outside the hamlet of Arkville—a moderate, six-mile, round-trip hike. |

| Red Hill | | | |
| Denning—Elevation 2,990 feet | The Red Hill Fire Tower stands 60 feet tall, has nine flights of stairs, and was constructed in 1921. This tower affords an unsurpassed view of the Catskill high peaks to the west and north, and the Rondout Reservoir to the southeast. It was the last fire tower staffed in the Catskills, closing in 1990. **Directions:** Follow the yellow-marked Red Hill Tower Trail from Coons Road (formerly Diny Road) just outside of Claryville—a moderate, three-mile, round-trip hike. |

| Tremper Mountain | | | |
| Shandaken—Elevation 2,740 feet | This fire tower is believed to be the original structure built circa 1917, and was used for fire observation until 1971. The 47-foot tower was placed in its present location because of the vast sections of forest preserve not visible from either the Hunter or Belleayre fire towers. **Directions:** Follow the red-marked Phoenixia Trail located on Ulster County Route 40 just outside of Phoenix—a moderate to difficult, six-mile, round-trip hike. |

### Tower Database

**Towers already restored and open to the public:**

- Red Hill
- Balsam Lake
- Hunter
- Tremper
- Overlook

**Towers being restored or open to the public:**

- Slide
- Roosa Gap
- Galis Hill
- Slide
- Hooker Hill
- Hunter
- High Point
- Mt. Utsayantha
- Gilbert Lake
- Chapin Hill

**Towers that have been closed:**

- Mt. Utsayantha
- Gilbert Lake
- Chapin Hill

**Towers that are closed to the public:**

- Slide
- Roosa Gap
- Galis Hill
- Slide
- Hooker Hill
- Hunter
- High Point
- Mt. Utsayantha
- Gilbert Lake
- Chapin Hill

**Towers that are closed to the public and are not visible from either the Hunter or Belleayre fire towers:**

- Slide
- Roosa Gap
- Galis Hill

**Towers that are removed and reset at their present site on the true summit:**

- Red Hill
- Balsam Lake
- Hunter
- Tremper

**Towers that have been replaced:**

- Red Hill
- Balsams Lake
- Hunter
- Tremper

**Towers that are removed and reset on different locations:**

- Red Hill
- Balsams Lake
- Hunter

**Towers that are relocated to other sites:**

- Red Hill
- Balsams Lake
- Hunter

**Towers that are relocated to other sites but are not open to the public:**

- Red Hill
- Balsams Lake
- Hunter

**Towers that are relocated to other sites and are open to the public:**

- Red Hill
- Balsams Lake
- Hunter

**Towers that are relocated to other sites and are closed to the public:**

- Red Hill
- Balsams Lake
- Hunter

**Towers that are relocated to other sites and are not visible from either the Hunter or Belleayre fire towers:**

- Red Hill
- Balsams Lake
- Hunter

**Towers that are relocated to other sites but are not visible from either the Hunter or Belleayre fire towers:**

- Red Hill
- Balsams Lake
- Hunter