

More Woods Fires Already

Protecting Penn's Woods from fire, particularly during the Spring and Fall fire seasons, is a time consuming task for the Department of Forests and Waters' Division of Forest Protection.

Already this year there have been more fires than during the entire year of 1967.

When the danger of fire is extremely prevalent there are no "days off" for personnel involved in forest protection. They are on the alert 24 hours a day until the danger subsides.

To cope with this state-wide problem, the Division of Forest Protection has at its disposal various modern pieces of equipment designed for the suppression of forest fires. This includes aircraft for surveillance and water drops on going fires.

In addition to salaried personnel, there are about 3,000 volunteer fire wardens who are trained and equipped to assist in fire fighting. Not included are the lonely ones, both men and women, who operate the network of fire towers which span the Commonwealth.

It was in 1905 that the first fire tower, a wooden structure, was erected in Franklin County by what was then known as the Department of Forestry. This replaced the old tree tower, one of which was erected by students of the State Forest Academy at Mont Alto about 1903.

As early as 1884, fire was a big problem and a Luzerne County man who owned 40,000 acres of woodland maintained a lookout station on the roof of a building overlooking his property. At the first sign of smoke the watchman using a megaphone, would call to a waiting fire brigade in a nearby settlement and the men would spring into action.

Today there are 130 radio equipped towers in the state each manned by trained observers who are on duty from sunrise to sunset during the two fire seasons whenever the fire danger demands their observations.

During those early years when a fire tower was just a platform

attached to the top of a tree, observers had no modern communication systems as are in use today.

When they spotted smoke it was necessary to ride several miles on horseback to report the blaze to the forester. By then, if fanned by high winds or fed by dry underbrush, the fire had a good chance to spread out of control over thousands of acres.

Years after the first telephone made its appearance, lines were built to the towers and telephones were installed to make the matter of reporting fires a matter of minutes.

Unfortunately most of these early day towers provided no protection for the observer. They were open top structures, about 50 feet high, equipped with a ladder for climbing.

Although they are not designed to provide all the comforts of home, today's modern fire towers furnish the operator with a roof over his or her head, an electric heater to take the chill out of the air, and a two-way radio which is used in conjunction with the telephone.

Four new towers, constructed during 1967, are in use today at the following locations:

Stoney Mountain, on State Game lands northeast of Dauphin; Kinton Knob, southwest of Bedford; the Prospect tower, east of Smethport in McKean Co.; and the Mauch Chunk tow-

Meetings Set

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Individual farmers are expected to attend.

Meetings and dates tentatively scheduled are as follows:

May 1—Knoxville, Tennessee; Denver, Colorado; Amarillos, Texas; and Fargo, N. Dakota.
May 2—Lincoln, Nebraska and

east of Jim Thorp in Carbon Co.

A far cry from those used during the early 1900s, the new towers rise to a height of 82.5 feet. There is a seven by seven foot crow's nest perched on top, surrounded by a four foot wide catwalk. The latter was installed for the convenience of the observer although it may be used by visitors at their own risk.

Billings, Montana.

May 3—Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; Hutchinson, Kansas; Fort Wayne, Indiana; and Spokane, Washington.

Informal hearings will begin at 10 a.m. at locations in respective cities to be announced by State ASC Committees responsible for arrangement.

The meeting scheduled for Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, will be held on Friday, May 3rd, at the Capitol Motel. This meeting will include representatives from the States of Pennsylvania, New York and Maryland. The meeting is open to the general public and all interested parties are welcome to attend. Persons attending the meeting are invited to express their views on the size and direction of the 1969 national wheat allotment.

MEET... CHARLES E. BAIR

OF WRIGHTSVILLE
(YORK CO., PA.)



This outstanding poultryman, student and FFA member is holding the dozen eggs that won him "best of the show" honors at the 1968 PA. FARM SHOW for the Vo-Ag Division. Charles is president of the Eastern High School FFA Chapter and a member of the National Honor Society. Recently he was honored as one of the two outstanding FFA poultry boys in the state.

CONGRATULATIONS... CHARLES



for you're outstanding record. Keep up the good work. The Agricultural Industry needs young men like yourself.



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