



Forest Service
Grey Towers National Historic Site
Milford, PA 18337
<http://www.fs.usda.gov/greytowers>

News Release

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Input Sought on Educational Fire Tower at Grey Towers

MILFORD, PA – A forest fire tower that was used as a lookout in the Pocono Mountains area from the 1920's until 2017 is getting a facelift and a new life as a proposed educational exhibit at Grey Towers National Historic Site, Milford, PA, former home of Gifford Pinchot. Pinchot initiated the fire tower lookout programs in the country as first chief of the USDA Forest Service and in Pennsylvania as Commissioner of Forestry and later Governor.

The USDA Forest Service is seeking public input and comments about placement and future use of the fire tower. Volunteers have already contributed several hundred hours of labor to clean and scrape the metal cab, rebuild the floor, replace the roof and clean, glaze and install windows removed from a similar historic fire tower cab. Paint testing and engineering studies have been completed and metal pieces have been purchased to replace the damaged tower scaffolding and stairs. The proposal for next steps include rebuilding the tower scaffolding and stairs, pouring concrete footings, attaching the cab to the tower structure, placing the tower and developing the educational materials. Donations and grants have matched Forest Service funding for the project. Additional funding is sought for the next phases.

When the Forest Service at Grey Towers agreed to accept the Big Pocono Fire Tower from Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, it was with the intent of using it to educate the public about Gifford Pinchot's forest fire prevention initiatives. As the Pennsylvania Forestry Commissioner of Forestry in 1922, Pinchot obtained \$1 million, the largest appropriation for forest protection at the time, to buy and install 50 fire lookout towers, among other forest protection initiatives. Most, including the Big Pocono tower, were installed in 1923 when Pinchot became Governor. The towers were often referred to as "Pinchot Towers" because he signed the order.

While it could be installed at Grey Towers at the original 37-foot height, it is feasible to provide the education and experience of climbing into a tower at a lower height.

The proposal falls in a category of actions excluded from analysis in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement, as proposals of this type individually and cumulatively do not have a significant effect on the environment.

Because the historic fire lookout tower was not an original part of the Grey Towers landscape, but contributes to the historical interpretation of Gifford Pinchot's contributions to forest management and conservation in Pennsylvania and the nation, the proposed locations for installation are outside of the historic core but within the 102 acres that are managed by the US Forest Service. The proposed locations are situated along the Forest Discovery Trail, located behind the historic mansion, in close proximity to existing educational exhibits and waysides.

The Forest Service is interested in hearing any concerns, issues or suggestions regarding the proposed placement and use of the fire tower as an educational opportunity. Please share written comments by June 1, 2019 to William Dauer, Director, PO Box 188, Milford, PA, 18337; or by email at greytowers@fs.fed.us. For more information or to view the fire tower and proposed locations, please contact us.