

Town of Kent Conservation Advisory Committee
Restoration of the Mt. Nimham Fire Tower
2009 Special Project Award

This award is given to the Town of Kent Conservation Advisory Committee for the restoration of the fire tower on Mt. Nimham. The tower is a popular local destination, providing majestic views of the surrounding forests, lakes, reservoirs and several mountain chains.

There was a general movement during the mid 1990s in the Catskills and in the Adirondacks for local groups to take responsibility for abandoned fire towers. The Kent CAC also became interested in the restoration of the local tower on Mt. Nimham. The official height of the tower is 82 feet 6 inches and it is considered to be the highest tower in the region.

For many years the Kent CAC had led annual hikes to the tower and honored the earlier native American presence, especially the Wappinger Sechem Chief Daniel Nimham, who was a revolutionary war hero. The tower was long cherished for the magnificent views from the top but became inaccessible when the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) removed the lowest flight of steps. In 1995 the Kent CAC, then under the leadership of Tom Morgan and subsequently under James Baker, raised the funds and contracted for a preliminary engineering survey to determine the technical feasibility and the cost of a restoration project. When NYSDEC initiated the Adopt-a-Natural Resource Stewardship program to permit local groups to undertake conservation projects on state land, the Kent CAC applied and was approved for the tower restoration project in 1999. A fund raising program was launched with an annual music festival at the base of the tower.

The lowest flight of stairs was reattached and, in the course of a few years, all 102 wooden steps were replaced with steel to reduce the opportunity for fire damage by vandals. The scraping and repainting of the tower required the services of a professional contractor. Money was raised by selling donor name plates to be attached to each step. Additional funds came from a combination of a State grant, an anonymous donation and Town of Kent CAC allocations. Within a five year period the project was completed. In 2005 the tower was rededicated with a large music festival and was officially opened for public use. Since then the Kent CAC has continued the Stewardship agreement, cleared the area of litter and painted over graffiti. A fall foliage hike to the tower was held.

For further information, contact George Baum, Chairman at alchemist3@comcast.net.