



# BURNING ISSUES

4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2011  
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[www.paforestfiremuseum.org](http://www.paforestfiremuseum.org)

## CORNER

## SEASONS GREETINGS

### UPDATE

The PAFFMA held its annual meeting on November 5<sup>th</sup> this year at Caledonia State Park. We were invited join the Chambersburg Chamber of Commerce by its president, Doug Harman. Our organization will be listed in their directory on their web site. It will be a good way to get the word out about our Forest Heritage and Discovery Center. Peter Linehan will be our representative on their board. Steve Cunningham reported that we have been averaging over 200 visitors a month at the FH&DC since our grand opening. It is open to visitors Fridays, Saturdays and Sunday and admission is free. The park staff has been very helpful with our maintenance needs.

Vince Phillips of Phillips Associates is working on closing out our grant of \$15,400 with the DCED with the help of Paul Sebasovich. PAFFMA is very grateful and wishes to extend our thanks to the DCED for the grant, which was most instrumental in opening our FH&DC so we can tell the story of how forestry has impacted Pennsylvania. The video about the center, wildlife and conservation, which was prepared by Vince's daughter, is now available free.

Treasurer John Bitzer, presented his report showing income for the last quarter of \$745.25 and disbursements of \$1,092.77. The FH&DC has \$1,683.07 in its account. We also have a total of \$26,643.62 in dedicated funds. John also reported our current membership at 202. Seventy members had to be removed from membership because of non-payment of dues for the last two year. A complimentary membership was approved for Representative John Payne who is also a fire warden in the Weiser Forest District. President Jack Graham suggested that we make all state representatives who are fire wardens complimentary members. John also recommend that we give Dustin Wirt who is George Wirt's great grandson a free one-year student membership. This action was approved and Dustin expressed his appreciation.

Three board members, Rick Flowers, Roy Siefert and Jim Foose were reelected for another term. John Berst, former DCNR Chief Forest Fire Warden was also elected to the board. Peter Linehan recommended to the board that we obtain a computer hookup and wireless Internet service for the center as this tool could be very useful for doing research.

John Bitzer prepared a list of PAFFMA milestones dating back to the first meeting on December 21, 1994, when a committee was formed to create the organization. This monumental list of accomplishments represents a lot of work by many dedicated people to create an organization that would "preserve and showcase the heritage of forest fire protection as it relates to forestry and to inform the public of the importance of preserving the Commonwealth's forest legacy." The opening of the FH&DC this year is a landmark accomplishment on the road to eventually having the monumental forest fire museum that is deserved. A tour of the FH&DC completed the morning session and was followed by a delicious lunch prepared by John Bitzer and his wife.

## 2011 Annual Meeting

This year's annual meeting was held at Caledonia State Park and the Discovery Center on Saturday, November 5. About 25 members gathered to look back on the first season of operation of the Discovery Center at Caledonia and plan for future developments.



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PA FOREST FIRE MUSEUM  
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# From the President...

2011 was a banner year for the Association, in that we officially opened our interim "Forest Heritage and Discovery Center" in May, and managed to keep it open to public visitation almost every weekend right through into the fall. The energies of many members made this happen. It will take the concerted efforts of many more of us to continue to keep this facility open and available to the public in 2012 and beyond.

All members are urged to take a turn or two visiting and staffing the Center—it simply won't happen without more help from more members.

It is, of course, almost time for membership renewal. We greatly need the continued support of all if we are to continue on our path beyond the interim "Discovery Center" facility to our long term goal of a permanent and first-class museum facility. I urge each member to bring one new member into the fold.

As with any organization, internal communication with our membership is not an easy project. In this electronic age, we simply must begin to use "email" to send out things such as this Newsletter, as well as notification of events, and other issues efficiently and at minimal cost. So please, if you have an email address, we ask that you share it with us. Send a brief note to the address on this newsletter, or send your email address to the editor: normlacasse@verizon.net.

On behalf of your Board of Directors, 'd like to wish you and yours a wonderful holiday season.

John T. (Jack) Graham  
President

## GEORGE H. WIRT AWARD

The 2011 George H. Wirt Award was presented to Joseph Devilbiss at the PAFFMA annual meeting November 5 by President John T. (Jack) Graham for *OUTSTANDING DEDICATION IN GETTING THE FORMER STATE PARK BUILDING CONVERTED TO THE PRESENT FOREST HERITAGE AND DISCOVERY CENTER*. Joseph contributed an enormous amount of time and dedication to repairing, cleaning, painting and converting what was a park office into the facility that it is now. His efforts are deeply appreciated.



After a hard day's work the meeting adjourned to the Chambersburg Country Club for a banquet, awards ceremony and stories by "Pennsylvania Jack". Dustin Wirt (left) presents the George H. Wirt award to Joe Devilbiss (right) at the Pennsylvania Forest Fire Museum Association annual meeting on November, 5, 2011. Past recipient of the service award, Steve Cummings, looks on. Dustin is the great grandson of George Wirt, Pennsylvania's first professional forester and state fire warden.



Special annual meeting guests! Dustin H. Wirt, great grandson of George H. Wirt, (left) and Joseph T. Rothrock III, great grandson of Joseph Trimble Rothrock. George Wirt was the first American-trained forester in Pennsylvania and was hired by Joseph T. Rothrock to run the state forestry school at Mont Alto. Joseph T. Rothrock founded the PA Forestry Association and the forestry and the state forestry school. Watch for series of articles by JTR III in 2012 newsletters!

# STRATEGIC *Planning*

During the afternoon of the annual meeting Dr. Peter Linehan, professor of forestry at Mont Alto, organized small group discussions on what needs to be done over the next five years to achieve our goal of building a full-fledged forest fire museum now that a smaller discovery center has been completed. Attendees were assigned to small groups and asked to come up with suggestions on the following four questions: **1)** what do you see as the future of the PAFFMA during the next five years; **2)** what are the steps and strategies we should take to add new members; **3)** how can we improve publicity and communication with current and prospective members; 4) what should be our immediate next steps.

**The following suggestions were offered to question #1:** no appreciable progress has been made towards the envisioned permanent facility; we need to find an available fire tower; we need to seek a larger “interim” facility because the present one is admirable but marginally usable; groundbreaking should be held in the next five years as a start to the first stage; we need to develop some steps to reach our goal.

**The following suggestions were offered to question #2:** we need to use more “tech” stuff and social media to both recruit and to share information; we need to identify our largest audience; every member should get another member; we should find out what our current members want; we need to reach out to local schools (Mont Alto), scout troops, senior high projects; develop a real plan to increase membership.

**The following suggestions were offered to question #3:** hold a first anniversary “event” with music, Nittany Lion and Smokey Bear; highlight Dustin Wirt’s graduation and have a family display and history; develop Youtube clips; post hours/days of operation of the FH&DC on our website.

**The following suggestions were offered to question #4:** set up volunteer effort and seek fund; put ads in the “The Bridge”; do a presentation at Penn National; seek media attention; obtain the email list of the Chambersburg Chamber of Commerce members; Join the Chamber to get visibility; increase membership; do site improvements at the proposed museum location; develop a financial plan, revenue/reserves to complete steps; revisit the feasibility study; identify phases to complete museum; better communication among association members.

# FH&DC EVALUATION

Dr. Peter Linehan also organized a second set of evaluation sessions during the afternoon session of the annual meeting to critique the FH&DC. The groups were asked for comments of the following components: Forest Heritage Entrance; Fire Prevention (Smokey Bear Room); Forestry and Fire Fighting Equipment; Tower Room/Office. Comments are listed below.

Forest Heritage: move small helicopter to just over the entrance door or over the display case; good exhibits but too busy – less is more; pitch 1 or 2 artifacts or panels to highlight; change appearance of display case, location of registry book; only one sign needed outside with printing on both sides; pay attention to cleanliness of building especially the bathroom; Smokey should be greeting visitors at the door; use indirect lighting – get rid of fluorescents; murals are eye catching, but maybe too much at once; counter should say welcome – can we help you; we need eye grabber, such as the firefighter mannequin; we need a hand-out of the discovery center’s layout and other information about our organization, membership and items for sale, web site; the center lacks a main focus; we should have a CD player or tape player explaining the murals; we should have a large FREE ADMISSION sign outside.

Fire Prevention (Smokey Room:) the farm diorama wastes too much space; are posters available, where?; wall display should be first, then Smokey items; signage should be more consistent; artifacts should be explained; need large pictures; a large Smokey is needed; center exhibit (barn yard) is an eye-catcher; participatory exercise is challenging; fire prevention handouts needed; description of fire-cause evidence is needed; explanation of different Smokey annual campaigns in display is needed; labels on display articles are needed; there is no focus point in that room; better signage needed; fire starters not explained.

Forestry and Fire Fighting Equipment: great artifacts!; mannequin is attractive and should be in front room; safety of sharp tools, such as axes & brush hooks is of concern; description of tools and chemicals needed; information is needed on fire warden program is needed and how to contact someone if interested; explanation on each tool is needed; explain how fire heritage and forest heritage go together; Tree Farm sign should be hung somewhere; should have more tools; where do forestry tools come in; signage should be more uniform and more professional looking; mannequin should be wearing backpack tank; goggles on mannequin look like sun glasses, not safety goggles; “Burns more than trees” exhibit is rash – idea should be in Smokey room.

Tower Room: this cannot be both office and exhibit space – make it one or the other; need to get people to look at tower room – most people think it’s the office and will not go in; great artifacts, phone, alidade; move artifacts to see through doorway to attract people; show smoke/fire pictures taken from towers; have more information about original observation points to wooden, then steel towers; need view from tower to sight pointer on alidade; put desk behind portable partition; need pictures of views from a fire tower; what is tower ladder, why?; tower models are interesting- how are they related?

## Welcome

### New Members:

**CECILE M. STELTER, Titusville**

**EARL A. HIGGINS, Shillington**

**DUSTIN H. WIRT, Mechanicsburg**

**MITCHELL STICKLE, Fayetteville**

**JOSEPH ENGLE, Williamsport**



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### MUSEUM MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Pennsylvania Forest Fire Museum is to preserve and showcase the heritage of forest fire protection as it relates to forestry. The museum celebrates Pennsylvania's pioneers in forest stewardship – past, present and future.

### VISION STATEMENT

The Pennsylvania Forest Fire Museum is a place of discovery. Significant artifacts and interactive exhibits trace the past and point to the future of forestry in Pennsylvania. The museum is dedicated to the stewardship of all forest resources and honors the men and women who nurture and sustain today's forest. Here everyone can enjoy a variety of experiences that further an understanding of forestry and forest fires. In addition to indoor and outdoor exhibits, the facility includes a library, training center, classrooms, volunteer accommodations, museum store and administrative offices. Future plans include outreach programs, transportable exhibits, an auditorium and food service.

### PA Statistics: **WILDFIRE** 2011

# of fire	188
Acres	476
Total costs	\$119,127
Residences & structures threatened	71

### 2011 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please enroll the following as a member of the Pennsylvania Forest Fire Museum Association:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ ST \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Check One:

- Student/Youth \$ 5.00
- Individual \$ 15.00
- Family (number in household) \$ 25.00
- Sustaining \$ 35.00
- Non-profit Volunteer organization (check below). \$ 35.00
  - Forest Fire Crew
  - Volunteer Fire. Co.
  - Forest Fire Wardens Assn.
  - Environmental Org.
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_

Corporate \$100.00

Life \$300.00

Contributing \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I do not wish to join, but I would like to make a donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to:

The Pennsylvania Forest Fire Museum Association

**Mail to:**

The Pennsylvania Forest Fire Museum Association  
 R.D. 9, Box 9203  
 Stroudsburg, PA 18360