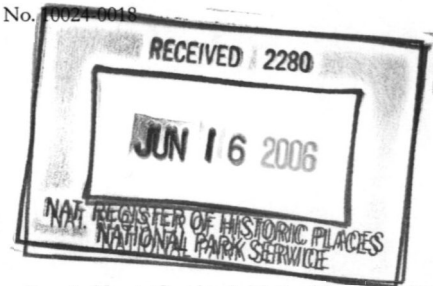


644

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Sterling Mountain Fire Observation Tower and Observer's Cabin

other name/site number _____

2. Location

street & town Sterling Forest State Park ☐ not for publication

city or town Greenwood Lake vicinity (Town of Warwick) ☒ vicinity

state New York code NY county Orange code 071 zip code 10987

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination
☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and
meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property
☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant
☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

M. J. Cant, State/Community
Signature of certifying official/Title

6/02/06
Date

State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

☒ entered in the National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the
National Register

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.

☐ removed from the National
Register.

☐ other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

[Signature]

7/20/06

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

- ☐ public-local
☐ private
☒ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property
(check only one box)

- ☐ district
☐ building(s)
☐ site
☒ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
2		Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register**

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Fire Observation Tower

Current Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION & CULTURE: Outdoor Recreation

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A

walls N/A

roof N/A

other METAL, GLASS, WOOD

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheets-

Property Name *Sterling Mountain Fire Observation Tower*
Location *Sterling Forest State Park, Orange County, New York*

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section Number 7 Page 1

7. Narrative Description

Location and Setting

The Sterling Mountain Fire Observation Tower is located on the summit of 1330' Sterling Mountain, located west of the Ramapo Mountain Range, in Sterling Forest State Park, located in the Greenwood Lake vicinity of Orange County, New York, near the New Jersey state border. Sterling Mountain is located to the east of Greenwood Lake and southwest of Sterling Lake, in the southwestern part of the park. Built in 1922, the fire tower affords a 360-degree view of Sterling Forest and surrounding areas of New York and New Jersey. The view shed includes Sterling Lake, located in the foreground to the northeast; Cedar Pond, to the south; and a portion of Greenwood Lake, visible to the west. On a clear day, North and South Beacon mountains of the Hudson River Highlands may be seen in the distance, to the northeast, and Schunemunk Mountain is visible to the north. The tower site is accessed via an unpaved road that traverses the east side of Sterling Mountain from Sterling Mine Road to the summit. The distant Catskills Mountains are visible on the northern horizon. The nomination includes two contributing components, the fire observation tower, a pre-fabricated steel structure erected on-site in 1922, and an associated observer's cabin, built c. 1934.

Resource Summary; Tower and Observer's Cabin

The Sterling Mountain Fire Observation Tower is sixty feet in height with a seven-by-seven foot steel observation cabin, enclosed and covered by a shallow hipped roof. The structure is of the typical four-post, riveted steel-frame type, and was fabricated by the Aermoter Windmill Company, originally of Chicago and later Oklahoma, which has been continuously manufacturing windmills, towers and parts since 1888. The four legs of the derrick-like tower are anchored by steel plates bolted into the exposed rock on the summit. Steel stairs with multiple wood landings provide access to the observation cabin from the ground. In 1993 the glazing of the tower's observation cabin was replaced. The tower is fitted with radio communication antennae that are part of the Department of Environmental Conservation's Region 3 fire detection and dispatch system.

The observer's cabin is of light frame construction, its exterior walls sheathed with vertical board-and-batten wood siding, stained brown. As presently constituted, the cabin includes the original rectangular-shaped cabin and a rear shed-roofed addition. The roof of the cabin is of medium pitch and is covered with asphalt shingles affixed to plywood planking; the raking cornices of the gable ends are terminated by fascia boards. A chimney and a small metal vent pierce the pitched roof. Recent additions, c. 1999, include a front deck and a catwalk against the north elevation. The porch fronting the cabin is likewise a later addition, its roof carried by rustic supports. Prior to additive modifications, the cabin had no porches and a self-contained, rectangular-shaped footprint.

8. Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering
Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

CONSERVATION

Period of Significance

c. 1922- c. 1934

Significant Dates

c. 1922, c. 1934

Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other Name of repository: _____

Property Name *Sterling Mountain Fire Observation Tower*
Location *Sterling Forest State Park, Orange County, New York*

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section Number 8 Page 1

8. Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary

The Sterling Mountain Fire Observation Tower, located in Sterling Forest State Park, is locally significant for its association with conservation and fire-prevention measures established by New York State to protect state-owned forest lands in the early twentieth century, and the interrelated development of the state's forest preserve system, initiated in the late nineteenth century. The tower is additionally significant as an intact example of pre-fabricated fire tower design by the Aermoter Corporation, a leading manufacturer of fire-towers and other tower structures in this period. The tower, constructed in 1922, and its associated observer's cabin, erected c. 1934, supported fire observation activities in the western part of the Ramapo Mountain region.

Historical Background: Fire Towers and Forest Fire Prevention in New York State

The first tower erected in New York State for the expressed purpose of forest fire observation was built in the Catskill Mountain region of western Ulster County on the summit of Balsam Lake Mountain. This first-generation fire tower, constructed not by the State of New York but by the Balsam Lake Club in 1887, was the predecessor of the standardized steel towers of the Sterling Mountain type which came into broad application in the Catskill and Adirondack Mountain regions beginning in the second decade of the twentieth century. The Balsam Lake Mountain tower, destroyed by lightning in 1901 and replaced in 1905 by a tower of lashed timber construction, represented the first phase of fire observation towers in New York State. Wes Haynes, in his Multiple Property Document entitled "Fire Observation Stations of the NYS Forest Preserve," provided the following outline of the development of observation towers in New York State:

Observation towers in New York State developed in three distinct phases. During the first phase (1870-1907), the first impermanent wood towers erected on mountain summits in New York State were used for one or more purposes, including visual observation of forest fires during drought conditions. Between 1907 and 1915, the state established an initial system of fire observation stations employing, for the most part, site-built towers to provide visibility above the tree line. These were manned during the summer months and connected by telephone to settlements in the valleys below. Encouraged by the initial success of the fire observation network, and in response to increased visitorship in the preserves brought about by the automobile, the state replaced the earlier towers and added new ones using taller, standardized steel structures during the third phase (1916-1971). These provided greater comfort for the fire observers and accommodated recreational use by the public.¹

¹ Wes Haynes, "Fire Observation Stations of the New York State Forest Preserve," Multiple Property Document, May 2000. Subsequent historical information has been gleaned from this Multiple Property Document, which offers a comprehensive look of the state's fire protection system and the various historical contexts with which the system is associated.

Property Name *Sterling Mountain Fire Observation Tower*
Location *Sterling Forest State Park, Orange County, New York*

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section Number 8 Page 2

The concern for forest fire prevention and the development of the tower system formed a natural outgrowth of the establishment of the New York State Forest Preserve, established by the Forest Commission Act of 1885, which offered itself as the first comprehensive environmental law enacted in the United States. This law emerged in response to a growing conservation constituency in the state that was galvanized by environmental issues centering on resource exhaustion and exploitation, among them over-lumbering and the denuding of the forests in association with a burgeoning tanning industry in the pre-Civil War period. Among the priorities of the act was establishing a method of mitigating against forest fires, though the early concerns were primarily with fire fighting, and not preventive maintenance in the form of observation stations. In the first decade of the twentieth century a series of devastating forest fires, the product of unusually dry conditions in the Northeast in this period, ravaged hundreds of thousands of acres of forest land in the Adirondack and Catskill forest preserves; the fires during the drought of 1908 were particularly damaging.

In 1909, and in response to the devastation rendered by fire during the previous year, a new philosophy towards fire prevention was taken up at the state level, and from it emerged the first network of fire observation stations. The amendments made to the Forest, Fish and Game law in 1909 shifted the burden of expense for forest fire prevention measures from local to state authorities, and created fire districts. In seeking to define this new programming responsibility, New York looked east to Maine, a state which put into place a system of observation towers in 1905 that helped limit the scope of fires in 1908 that had proved so devastating in New York. The New York State program, once up and running, proved itself immediately effective in controlling fires, as evidenced in the 1910 Forest, Fish and Game Commission annual report, which stated "the value of the observation stations has been fully demonstrated."² The dividends paid by this first comprehensive observation system helped lay the foundation for the expansion of the fire-spotting system, and the advent of the use of pre-fabricated steel towers, in the following decades.

Sterling Mountain Fire Observation Tower

Erected in 1922, the Sterling Mountain Fire Observation Tower represents the third-phase of tower technology adopted in New York State, at which time the temporary wood towers were replaced with steel towers of standardized and prefabricated design, which increased usability and effectiveness and likewise accommodated an additional use, public recreation, the latter an outgrowth of the advent of the automobile age. Between 1916 and 1920, the first steel towers were introduced, the trussed steel tower emerging as the standard type. The first tower of this type used in New York State was erected on Belleayre Mountain in Ulster County, in the Catskill Mountains, a sixty-five foot tall structure built at the cost of approximately \$362. New York State purchased towers from the Aermoter Company, a then Chicago-based company and manufacturer of self-oiling windmills and other farm structures. Towers such as the Sterling Mountain tower were essentially adapted from windmill towers, the upper stage and windmill replaced by a steel observation cabin, and the height adjustable by the addition of standard truss sections to the bottom. The method of fastening the tower to a summit and the gauge of the steel were dependent upon wind and ground conditions.

² Ibid

Property Name *Sterling Mountain Fire Observation Tower*
Location *Sterling Forest State Park, Orange County, New York*

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section Number 8 Page 3

The construction of the fire observer's cabin circa 1934 was likely the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the work of which in the pre-War period further improved the state-wide fire observation system. Initially the fire observers, when not in the tower, resided in tents and maintained a weather-proof box that housed the telephone. Given weather conditions on many of the higher summits, particularly in the higher Adirondack elevations, the tents were soon deemed insufficient and more permanent housing constructed. By the close of the 1911 fire season thirty-two of the forty-nine fire observation sites state-wide were equipped with permanent cabins for staff.

Sterling Mountain Fire Observation Tower
Name of Property

Orange County, New York
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than 1 acre

UTM References

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 560470 4560457
Zone Easting Northing

2
Zone Easting Northing

3
Zone Easting Northing

4
Zone Easting Northing

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title William E. Krattinger
organization NYS OPRHP, Field Services Bureau date May 2005
street & number Peebles Island State Park telephone _____
city or town Waterford state NY zip code 12866

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name/title New York State OPRHP (Sterling Forest State Park)
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town _____ state NY zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

Property Name *Sterling Mountain Fire Observation Tower and Observer's Cabin*
Location *Sterling Forest State Park, Orange County, New York*

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 10 Page 1

10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description and Justification

The boundary for the Sterling Mountain Fire Observation Tower and Observer's Cabin is not based on a legal property boundary but has instead been drawn as a simple square of less than one acre that includes both the tower and cabin at the summit of Sterling Mountain.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Sterling Mountain Fire Observation Tower and Observer's Cabin
NAME: n

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW YORK, Orange

DATE RECEIVED: 6/16/06 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 7/03/06
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 7/18/06 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 7/30/06
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 06000644

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: Y NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

___ACCEPT ___RETURN ___REJECT _____DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*Locally significant fire observation
tower and observer's cabin constructed (1922,
1934)
during third phase of the property
types historical development to ensure
protection and conservation of state forest
lands and parks.*

RECOM./CRITERIA *Accept A+C*

REVIEWER *Savage* DISCIPLINE *Architectural History*

TELEPHONE _____ DATE *7/28/06*

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the
nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



STERLING MOUNTAIN FIRE TOWER / CABIN
STERLING FOREST STATE PARK, ORANGE
COUNTY, NY

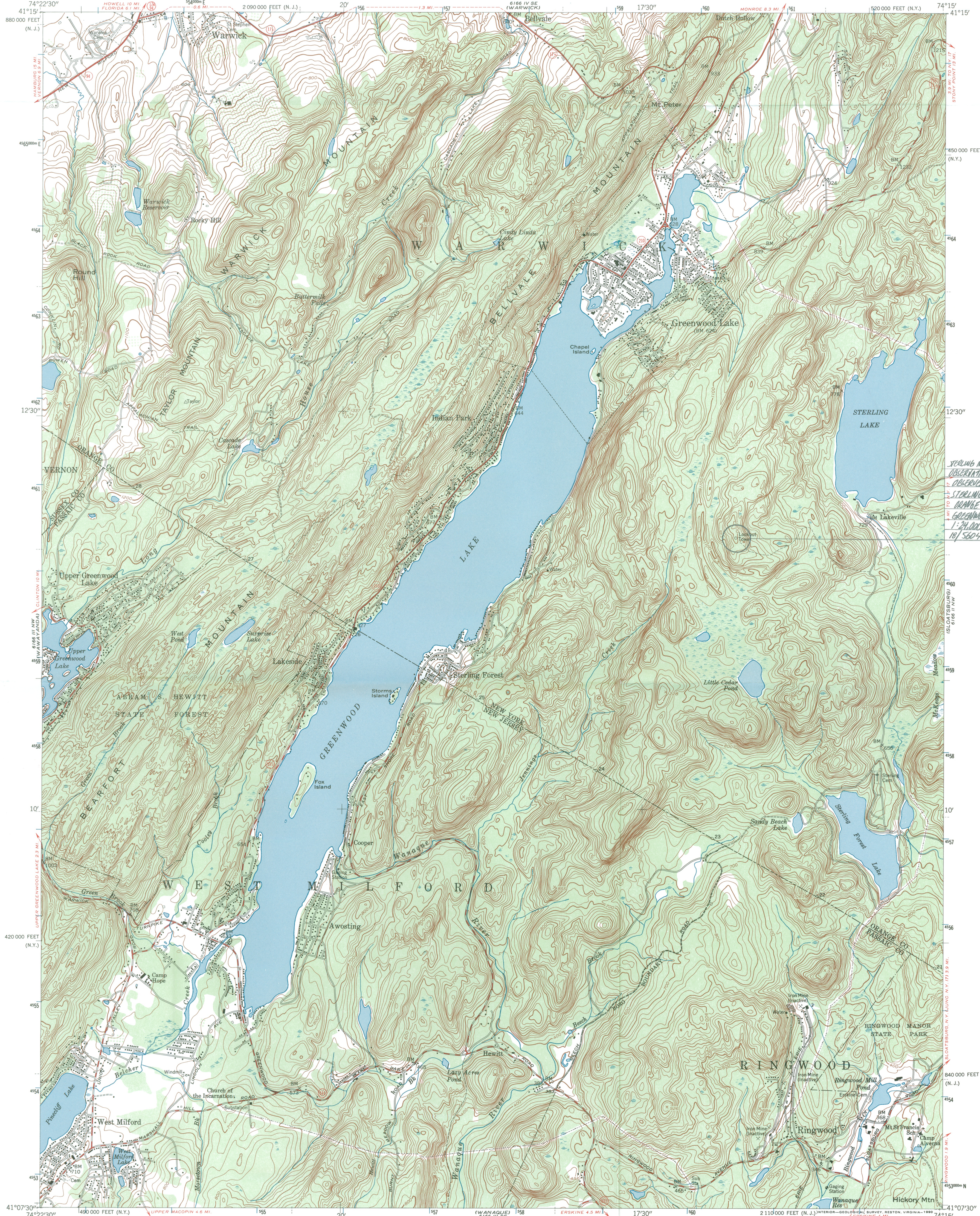
PHOTO BY NYS OPRHP STAFF, SEPTEMBER 2005
NEGATIVES AT NYS OPRHP, FSB, WATERFORD,
NEW YORK

#1 FIRE TOWER



STERLING MOUNTAIN FIRE TOWER / CABIN
STERLING FOREST STATE PARK, ORANGE CO. NY

#2 FIRE OBSERVERS CABIN



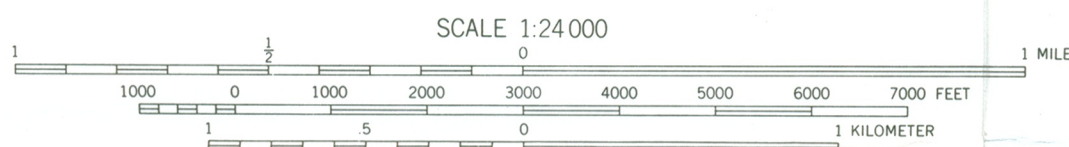
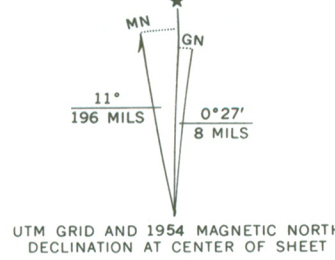
STERLING MOUNTAIN FILE
OBSERVATION TOWER AND
OBSERVERS CABIN
STERLING FOREST S.P.
ORANGE COUNTY, N.Y.
GREENWOOD LAKE QUAD
1:24,000
19/560470/4560457

Mapped by the Army Map Service
Edited and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and New Jersey Geodetic Survey

Topography from aerial photographs by photogrammetric
methods. Aerial photographs taken 1942
Culture revised by the Geological Survey 1954

Polyconic projection. 10,000-foot grid ticks based on New York
coordinate system, east zone and New Jersey coordinate system
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 17,
shown in blue. 1927 North American Datum. To place on the
predicted North American Datum 1983 move the projection lines
6 meters south and 34 meters west as shown by dashed corner ticks
Unchecked elevations are shown in brown

There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the
National or State reservations shown on this map



CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Heavy-duty ——— Light-duty ———
Medium-duty ——— Unimproved dirt ———
State Route

GREENWOOD LAKE, N. Y.—N. J.

41074-B3-TF-024

1954

DMA 6166 III NE—SERIES V821



Krattinger, William (PEB)

From: Smith, Sue (PAL)
Sent: Thursday, May 04, 2006 2:32 PM
To: Krattinger, William (PEB)
Cc: Ash, Carol (PAL); McLaughlin, Jayne (PAL)
Subject: NR Listing: SF State park preserve

As the PIPC/OPRHP contact for this project, I confirm that PIPC and OPRHP are in full support of the Sterling Fire Tower NR nomination and request that you proceed with the listing.

Thanks.

Susan E. Smith
Historic Sites Restoration Coordinator
Palisades Interstate Park Commission
Administration Building
Bear Mountain, NY 10911
T: 845-786-2701
F: 845-786-2776 F
www.nysparks.com