

PRESERVING HISTORY:

Groups look to save WWII towers



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Along the Delaware coast stands a series of watchtowers that helped protect the United States during World War II. They were used to look for enemy ships and, if any had been spotted, the crews within the towers would have alerted the Army at Fort Miles to defend the shore.

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Tower 3, the World War II tower located on Tower Road in Dewey Beach, already features a beach house with a public restroom as well as parking.
MEGAN RAYMOND PHOTO

Towers

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With World War II over for 70 years now, the towers lining the shore are no longer used for defensive purposes and now stand as a monument to the times.

Due in part to joint efforts between the Delaware Seashore Preservation Foundation, Fort Miles Historical Association and Delaware State Parks, three of these towers are going to be restored.

"We want to restore the towers internally and externally so that people can enjoy the history of the towers and see the vistas from the top," said Ernie Felici, chairman of the Delaware Seashore Preservation Foundation.

The three towers that have been chosen are all located on the Route 1 corridor. Tower 1 is located in Fenwick Island, Tower 2 is located in Bethany and Tower 3 is located just south of Dewey Beach.

"Right now, we are focusing on Tower 3," Felici said. "We want to be able to open it to the general public. The location is perfect."

Tower 3 already features a beach house with a public restroom as well as parking.

"Our overall goal, however, is to open the area to weddings and events, like with the Indian River Life Saving Station," Felici said. "But right now we are just focused on the restoration. Once that is finished then we will focus on the other activities."

In order to open Tower 3 to the gener-



World War II observation towers, used for defending the Delaware Bay at Fort Miles in Lewes, still stand after 60 years of exposure to the elements in Cape Henlopen State Park.



FILE PHOTO

An old WWII watchtower on Tower Road in Dewey Beach is one of three on the Route 1 corridor targeted for restoration.

al public, Felici said there needs to be some costly work done.

"The major cost is the stairway system and the internal parts of the tower," Felici said. "We need to secure the stairway for the weather."

Felici also added the engineering costs to restore the tower will be the most expensive and the reconstruction of the concrete on the outside is a relatively minor repair.

However, the three vested organizations have been making progress to save the tower.

"We have done a preliminary engi-

neering study and we had positive results," Felici said. "Right now, they are doing a drainage study because, through the years, sand has accumulated at the base."

Currently, funds and grants are being sought to aid in the restoration of the towers, an effort, Felici said, that is going well.

The towers have had one large benefactor assisting with the costs for the past two years. To aid in the reconstruction of these towers, Delaware Coastal Preservation Foundation has been named a beneficiary of the Coastal Dela-

ware Running Festival, a Boston Marathon qualifying run which has been held the past two Aprils and will be held once again next April.

The three towers are a part of the Fort Miles Historical Association. Felici said he hopes by restoring interest in the tower, there will be a renewed history in Fort Miles at Cape Henlopen State Park as well as the history of the coastal Delaware region during World War II.

For more information, Felici encourages people to visit dspf.net or save-thetower.org.

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