

Tower restoration plans unveiled

By Ryan Saxton
Staff Reporter

Soon, visitors to the Delaware shore and locals who travel Route 1 will no longer have to wonder from afar about the famous towers that stand along the coastline — at least, not if the Delaware Seashore Preservation Foundation (DSPF) and Fort Miles Historical Association (FMHA) have their way.

The two groups announced on Wednesday their plans to restore Fire Control Tower No. 3, the southernmost tower of two located just south of Dewey Beach, in Delaware Seashore State Park.

Their project, with a fundraising goal of \$500,000, aims to restore Tower No. 3 to its World War II condition, open it to the general public and create a related database listing World War II veterans and donors to the project. "It's a milestone for this organization," said Ernie Felici, chairman of the DSPF.

This project is the second one for the volunteers, following the restoration of the Indian River Life Saving Station and establishment of the museum at Ft. Miles in Cape Henlopen State Park.

This new project, conceived just over a year ago, underwent engineering studies, which yielded positive results. A memorandum of understanding has also been signed with Delaware's Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) to move the project forward.

"The day we finished the engineering studies," recalled Felici, "John Hiott (fellow DSPF chairman) and I were able to get on the boom and get all the way to the top, and it was an inspiring experience. We promised ourselves that day that it would be something that we would share with everyone."

"This is not only a great day for the [DSPF] and Ft. Miles," said FMHA president Gary Wray, "but a great day for Delaware. What we're doing here is starting a project that will turn this tower into a destination for Dewey Beach, and the state."

The "monuments," as Wray referred to them, in the Delaware Seashore State Park, are two of 11 such towers throughout the state.

"A lot of people think they know about them," he said, "but we want to educate them further. It was a very, very important tower."

The two towers south of Dewey were used as observation tools, or "spotters," to locate the coordinates of enemy watercraft with triangular, geometric precision. That information was then advised to artillery



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Members of the DSPF and FMHA stand in front of one of the historic towers.

gunners, who manned machinery between the towers.

"We want to honor the World War II veterans to let people know what the military really did for our country in that war," Wray said.

Tower No. 3, built in 1942, is the tallest of three within that immediate vicinity, standing 64 feet high and 17 feet in diameter, with a 14.5-mile line of sight into the Atlantic Ocean. At the time, it cost \$17,900 to construct and was heated by coal.

The Tower No. 3 project is estimated to be completed in seven years, with Delaware State Parks personnel and volunteers staffing the site. The interactive program containing veterans' information will be accessible at Ft. Miles in Cape Henlopen, and will include their name, rank, branch of service and theater of operation in which they served.

Tax-deductible donations, ranging from \$50 to \$1,000, can be made and may include entry of a World War II veteran's name into the database. For more information about the project or donations, contact Dr. Gary Wray at (302) 645-0753 or gdwray@verizon.net, or Ernie Felici at (302) 537-7840 or ernie@crbsite.com.



Delaware Seashore Preservation Foundation
P.O. Box 981
Ocean View, DE 19970
302-227-2800
www.savethetower.org