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Delaware's Cape Region

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BLUE BEACON



RON MACARTHUR PHOTO

BLUE LIGHTS SHINE ON WORLD WAR II TOWER 3 at Delaware Seashore State Park off Route 1 near Dewey Beach. The lights match the color of lights on the Indian River Inlet bridge, and were lit at twilight Feb. 12 to commemorate Phase 3 of restoration of the tower. The project is a partnership among Fort Miles Historical Association, Delaware Seashore Preservation Foundation and DNREC's Division of Parks and Recreation.

Tower 3 lights the way to a top destination

Delaware Seashore visitors spent \$3.5 million, leading all state parks

By Ron MacArthur

ronm@capegazette.com

A towering blue sentinel now lights the night along Route 1 south of Dewey Beach, highlighting World War II Tower 3, one of the most iconic structures of the Cape Region beaches.

At twilight Feb. 12, a host of state and local officials, joined by the public, gathered in Delaware Seashore State Park for a ceremonial lighting of the tower, the first of Delaware's 11 towers to be illuminated.

Nine cobalt lights illuminate the tower in a color that matches the lights of the Indian River Inlet bridge.

Tower 3 and the other eight concrete towers were built from 1939 to 1942 along the beachfront from Fenwick Island to Lewes as part of coastal defenses during World War II.

Once restoration is complete, Tower 3 will become the second tower with public access to an observation deck overlooking the beach. Also providing access to the public is the tallest of the towers, the 75-foot-tall Tower 7 at Fort Miles in Cape Henlopen State Park.

In addition to lighting the tow-

er, state officials also unveiled statistics showing 4.1 million visits to Delaware's 16 state parks during fiscal year 2016-17, including the summer of 2016.

Cape Henlopen State Park, with 1.3 million visitors, and Delaware Seashore State Park, with over 1 million visitors, led the way among state parks, with Delaware Seashore State Park topping all others in total visitor spending at \$3.5 million.

Statewide, 1.6 million visitors traveled at least 50 miles and named a state park as the primary reason for their visit, while 1.8 million visitors were state residents, with about 1 million of them camping in state parks. On average, state park visitors statewide spent \$245 per person, including an average of \$228 among camping park visitors and \$365 per person among day-use visitors

Restoration continues

At the lighting ceremony, Gov. John Carney recalled the event 10 years ago that kicked off fundraising to restore Tower 3, a partnership among Delaware Seashore Preservation Foundation, Fort Miles Historical Association and the Department

of Natural Resources and Environmental Control's Division of Parks and Recreation.

The preservation foundation is charged with raising most of the \$500,000 needed.

While fundraising began 10 years ago, work on a five-year plan to restore the tower began last summer.

Shirley Price, foundation vice president, said the foundation provided \$130,000 in startup funds, and work was done by the Fort Miles volunteers known as the Bunker Busters, who cleaned up inside the tower. New pavement and large lights have now been added around the tower.

The next phase is a stairway, needed to open the tower to the public, expected to cost \$150,000. "That is the next mission," Price said.

The project has been a true collaboration, she said, among local businesses, memorial donations, civic clubs and military organizations. She said Coastal Delaware Running Festival and Focus Multisports have donated \$80,000 to preservation efforts.

Price also said Longwood Foundation has offered a \$130,000 matching grant if the association can raise \$300,000.

ABOUT THE TOWERS

- Tower 3 is 64 feet tall with a view that extends more than 14 miles from the observation deck
- Towers were built from 1939 to 1942 to defend Delaware's coastline in World War II, protecting the entrance to Delaware Bay from German ships
- Towers were built of concrete to last about 20 years
- Two towers built near Cape May, N.J.

- Eleven towers built along a 40-mile stretch in Delaware
- Towers served as spotters for 16-inch, 12-inch and 6-inch guns at Fort Miles, now in Cape Henlopen State Park
- Towers are 39 to 75 feet tall; walls are 1 foot thick
- Towers are 16 feet in diameter
- Eight soldiers were assigned to each tower

Sources: Delaware State Parks; Fort Miles Historical Association



Proposed Tower #3 Site Rendering



Shirley Price, vice president of the Delaware Seashore Preservation Foundation, says a capital campaign is underway to raise money to build stairs so the interior of the tower can be open to the public.



RON MACARTHUR PHOTOS

NINE COBALT LIGHTS surround the bottom of World War II Tower 3 near Dewey Beach.

A conceptual site plan of what the finished project will look like.