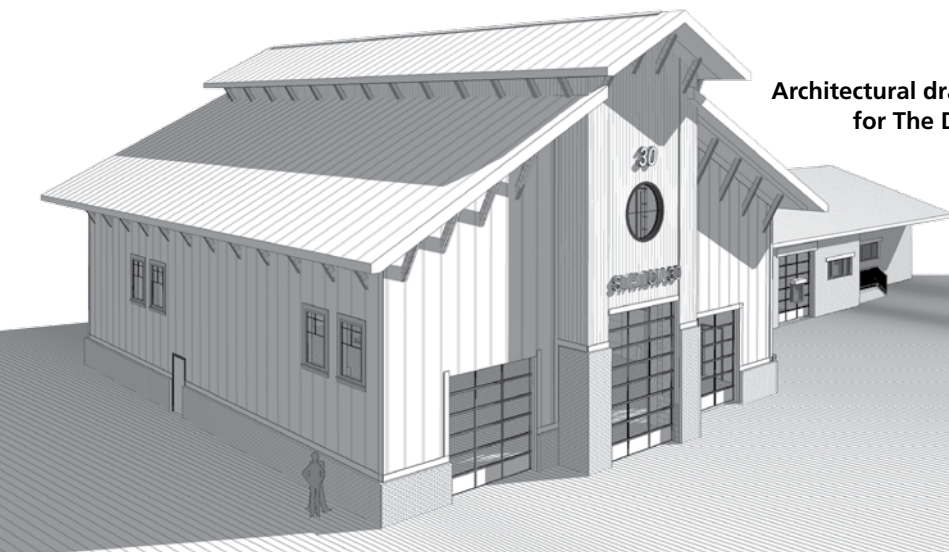


The Deep Creek Volunteer Fire Company

– All Volunteer Since 1966

Written by: **Josh Hook**



Architectural drawing of the new, upgraded facility for The Deep Creek Volunteer Fire Company.

The Deep Creek Volunteer Fire Company has been servicing the Deep Creek Lake area for 48 years. In 1966, the company purchased the current property and built the existing facility to begin the organization's existence. Jim Thomas, current project manager for the new upgrades, joined the fire company as a junior member during the charter process. He recalled that "A sign-up sheet was placed in Walt's General Store, (the store no longer exists but was located across from the McHenry Post Office) for anyone that would be interested in starting a fire company." Jim said that once that interest was gathered, the group began meeting. "Before the fire hall was built, meetings were held on the second floor of the Wisp Ski Resort. The original building was funded by Garrett County Community Action." As the meetings continued and the building erected, the newly formed organization began to purchase equipment for the men. "The first turn-out gear for the company was received from the Maryland State Surplus store in Jessup, Maryland. It was really no more than rain gear. Later, Deer Park Volunteer Fire Company gave Deep Creek their used turn-out gear when they purchased new. The first fire truck was a 1956 Ford, 500 gallon pumper and was purchased from a fire company in West Virginia." In regards to activating the fire company, Jim stated "The method used to report emergencies was to call a dedicated telephone line located at Point View Motel (the motel has since been torn down but was located beside what is now the Board Walk, just south of McHenry). The operator

at the motel would call four firemen and each of those firemen would call four other members (phone calls were most often made by the women as the firemen were responding to the emergency)."

Today, the fire company continues to meet the demands of the local and tourist communities. Whether this service is on land or water, the fire company is prepared to address any emergency. On April 7, 2014, the company stepped up its medical capabilities. On this date,

we were able to get our utility vehicle upgraded to ALS capability. There are four members within the company that are Nationally Registered Paramedics. Because the lake is a great attraction, the company staffs 15 open water divers. These divers are trained to respond to water emergencies and recovery operations. During the year, the company actively participates in firefighting training. It is important that the volunteers remain current to provide the best service when called upon. Josh Hook, acting president for the Deep Creek Fire Company reports that "It is important for the community to realize that the Deep Creek Fire Company is an all-volunteer company. In 2013, the members dedicated over 4,000 volunteer hours to the community of Deep Creek Lake." In addition to the training responsibilities, the fire company is also required to meet National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards on firefighting equipment. In reference to these standards, Jason King, acting chief reports "there are certain costs involved with safety and the fire service. NFPA requires certain aspects of the fire service to be tested and certified annually. Each year we spend roughly \$40,000.00 in testing and maintenance of our apparatus and personal protective equipment. This includes our pumps, hose, breathing apparatus, ladders, Department of Transportation (D.O.T) Inspections and repairs. Although this is expensive, it is a necessary step we must take to provide a professional service to our community and to ensure the safety of our responders."



The 2014 volunteers of The Deep Creek Volunteer Fire Company. Photo by Lance C. Bell

The company has just embarked on a \$900,000 project to upgrade our 48 year old facility. During this project, the company is preparing to launch a fund drive with a goal of raising \$1.5 million. This goal was determined in an effort to cover the expense of the facility project and to upgrade our 20 year old first-line engine. The new facility will also accommodate a ladder truck. As structures are being erected in the lake area, it is noted that these facilities and residences are growing in height, indicating the immediate need for a ladder truck. This expense would cost the fire company approximately \$750,000.

We need your help! As you live, love and play in the Deep Creek Lake area, we ask that you remember the volunteers that keep us all safe. Life can change in the blink of an eye and to have highly skilled volunteers to respond is a great asset to the community. If you would like to support the fire company's efforts, the following tax-deductible gift avenues can be used:

- Tax Deductible Donation mailed to:
P.O. Box 419, McHenry, MD 21541
- Contact us at deepcreekvfcfunddrive@gmail.com
- Find us on Facebook at Deep Creek Vfc

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