

Central California/Nevada Chapter Report 2007

MEMBERSHIP:

30 Current paid members

FINANCES:

Ending balance of \$1,019.91

Discussion:

Staffing: With a lower than normal snow pack in the Sierra, fire managers were primed for the potential of a catastrophic fire season. The state and federal government increased staffing of all fire resources including in many cases fire lookouts. The early season 3,100 acre Angora fire near Lake Tahoe, which destroyed homes, property and nearby wildlands, seemed to portend of things to come. Interestingly, the fire started near un-staffed Angora Lookout, which almost succumbed to the conflagration. In the end, Fire Season 2007 was actually slower than usual in our region, with few lightning busts or large fires reported

Facilities: According to reports, efforts towards continued if not increased, maintenance and restoration is occurring on primary lookouts on most Federal facilities throughout Central California and Nevada. The majority of California State lookouts are not receiving any care, and several are slated for removal. Discussions were held in March with Cal-Fire regarding the rumor that Blue Ridge Lookout (Tulare County) and Bear Mountain Lookout (Fresno County) were to be dismantled. The private property owner where Bear Mtn is located agreed to allow the state to keep the facility on his property, however the historic garage was removed and destroyed. Plans for the removal and relocation of Blue Ridge are still under negotiation.

A grant proposal for aiding the Sierra National Forest restore Fence Meadow Lookout was submitted to the FFLA Grants committee in the Fall of 2007

Public Relations and Public Awareness: Many within the CCA/NV chapter continue to promote the FFLA through public outreach at staffed lookouts and during special events, including the Mariposa State Fair, Buck Rock Open House, Blessing of the Rock and Celebrate Sequoia Festival. Informal tours, naturalist talks and an "open door policy" at several lookouts (Buck Rock, Needles, Tobias, Bald Mountain, Mt. Tom and Shuteye to name a few) make fire towers popular destinations for visitors to the forest. On the Sequoia National Forest alone, over 10,000 people visited a lookout in 2007.

Looking Forward: Discussions to create local subchapters have taken place on many fronts, with at least one – The Yosemite Sierra Chapter – about to be formalized. The FFLA awarded a \$500 grant to the Buck Rock Foundation towards the restoration of Fence Meadow Lookout, Sierra National Forest. Partnerships with other organizations, like the Southern Sierra Climbers Association, High Sierra Trail Crew and volunteer fire departments enhanced our ability to get important work accomplished. Efforts for lookout preservation may be best served through increased public awareness with focus on youth conservation education. Many agree that fire lookouts provide a unique forum for connecting people (kids!) to the land. Our future may well indeed lay in the hands of our youth.

LOOKOUT UPDATE

Central California

Sequoia National Forest – Facilities engineers have procured the funding to inspect and rehabilitate when necessary the lightning protection systems of all Sequoia Lookouts. The Sequoia National Forest had 70 fires that burned over 10,000 acres, with lookouts reporting approximately 30% of these fires.

- Jordan Lookout is scheduled to have its roof replaced in 2008;
- The Needles – A major rehab took place in June in partnership with the SQF, Buck Rock Foundation and the Southern Sierra Climbers Association. Most of the 189 steps were replaced, portions of the catwalk and awnings were repaired, cement steps were reinforced, windows were re-glazed and portions of the lightning protection system updated.
- Buck Rock - Winter damaged catwalk gates repaired, the shed roof was replaced, stairway was linseed oiled, picnic table refurbished, door frame replaced.
- Bald Mountain – Safety signs added, display cases re-worked , reinforced storage shed.
- Oak Flat scheduled to re-open after severe winter storms in 2006 damaged the structure.

Kings Canyon/Sequoia National Park

- Park Ridge Lookout – Ceiling repair Fall 2007 for roof leakage; scheduled to have the floor replaced 2008.

Sierra National Forest - Lookouts reporting to the Sierra called in 41 fires for Forest, Park and State lands during fire season 2007. (Smith Peak/Pilot Peak(STF) – 1, Signal 17, Miami 1, Shuteye 12, Mt Tom 7, Fence Meadow 0, Delilah 2, Buck Rock 1. Fire managers continue their commitment to staff and maintain these lookouts.

- Fence Meadow – Rehab begun at end of season – gutted cab and shed, repainted and carpeted interior, new bed and appliances.
- Signal, Shuteye and Miami – Minor maintenance repairs. All are considered to be in decent shape (“all things considered”!)

Stanislaus National Forest

- Pilot, Smith Peak and Mt. Elizabeth Lookouts are staffed and maintained by the Forest Service. New 10” panorama photos have been developed and displayed for each lookout, assisting staff and visitors with landmark identification.
- Duckwall Lookout – On stand-by for emergency use. Repairs are needed
- Trumbull Peak – “Shot to hell”. Cabin below is being considered for a vacation rental.

Eldorado National Forest

- Baltic Peak – Forest Service is still attempting to have this lookout removed and relocated to a local Fairground.

A complete listing of fire lookout status in this region is attached.

Other News:

- Lookouts are people as well as towers!

Tragically 2 popular long-time lookouts and FFLA members passed in 2007 – Carol Ann Ralston, Bald Mountain Lookout, Sequoia National Forest and Tony Brackett, Leak Springs Lookout, Eldorado National Forest.

Margee Kelly, of Georgetown Colorado, was honored for 20 years of service as a fire lookout at spectacular Needles Lookout, Sequoia National Forest.

Don Wisseman, of North Fork California and most recently the voice of Shuteye Lookout, retired after 20 years of service as a fire lookout for both state of California and the Sierra National Forest.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathryn Ball
January 2008

Attached Reports

Status of Lookouts In Central California 2007

Reported 3/2008

FFLA Central California Chapter Area Covers the Territory South of I-80 and North of the Tehachapi Mountains, West to (but not including) the Los Padres National Forest.

ELDORADO NATIONAL FOREST

1. Alder Ridge – **Recreation Rental**, *Placerville RD*
2. Armstrong Hill– **Abandoned**. *Amador RD*
3. Bald Mountain – **Staffed 7 days GS employee** *Georgetown RD*
4. Baltic Peak – **Abandoned**. Decommission granted through Forest Service channels. Still being consider for removal to a local Fairgrounds, *Placerville RD*
5. Big Hill- **Staffed 7 days GS employees** *Pacific RD*
6. Bunker Hill – **Emergency Staffing** *Pacific RD*
7. Leak Springs – **Staffed 7 days a week**. *Amador RD*

8. Lookout Mountain – **Removed recently**
9. Robbs Peak – **Recreation Rental** *Pacific RD*
10. Slate Mountain- **Removed 2003** *Georgetown RD*

INYO NATIONAL FOREST

1. Bald Mountain – **No information**

SEQUOIA NATIONAL FOREST

1. Baker Point – **Abandoned** – Talk of rehab. *Tule/Hot Springs RD*
2. Bald Mt – **Staffed 7 days** with 2 GS employees. *Kern River RD*
3. Breckenridge – **Staffed 5 days** with 2 GS employees. *Kern River RD*
4. Buck Rock – **Staffed 7 days**: 5 days w/GS employee and 2 days with BRF volunteers *Hume Lake RD*
5. Delilah – **Staffed** with BRF volunteers as often as possible.
6. Jordan Peak – **Staffed 5 days** with GS employee. *Tule/Hot Springs RD*
7. Mule Peak – **Staffed 5 days** with GS employee paid by Tule Indian Reservation *Tule/Hot Springs RD*
8. Oak Flat – **Recreation Rental**. *Kern River RD*
(Reservations: 760-379-5646 x-514)
9. Tobias – **Staffed 5 days** with GS employee. *Tule/Hot Springs RD*
10. The Needles – **Staffed 5 days** with FS employee. *Tule/Hot Springs RD*

SIERRA NATIONAL FOREST

1. Bald Mountain – **Abandoned** and vandalized. No plan for rehab
2. Fence Meadow – **Staffed 5 days** with GS employee

3. Goat Mountain – **Abandoned**. Talk of turning it into a Recreation Rental or Volunteer staffing program OR removing it.
4. Miami Mountain – **Staffed 7 days a week** with Volunteers

5. Mt. Tom – **Staffed** 5 days with GS employee
6. Musick Mtn – **Emergency use** only. Heavily laden with communications equipment
7. Shuteye – **Staffed 7 days** with GS employees
8. Signal Peak – **Staffed 7 days** with GS employees.

STANISLAUS NATIONAL FOREST

1. American Camp – **Abandoned**
2. Duckwall – **Emergency Use Only** (Needs repair) *Miwok RD*
3. Mt Elizabeth – **Staffed 7 days** with GS employees. *Miwok RD*
4. North Mountain – **Abandoned**. Cabin and tower standing, not in use. *Groveland RD*
5. Pilot Peak – **Staffed 5 days** a week with GS employee. *Groveland RD*
6. Smith Peak – **Staffed 7 days** GS employee. *Groveland RD*
7. Trumbull – **Abandoned but slated for restoration for rec rental**. *Groveland RD*
8. Woods Ridge – **Abandoned**. Cabin and tower standing, not in use. *Groveland RD*

TAHOE NATIONAL FOREST

1. Babbitt Peak – **Staffed 7 days** with GS employees. Needs repair

Sierraville RD

1. Calpine – **Recreation Rental**, *Sierraville RD*
2. Duncan Peak – **Staffed 7 days** with GS employee
3. Martis Peak – See CDF Truckee (*Truckee RD*)
4. Grouse Ridge – **Abandoned. Talk of decommissioning**
5. Sardine – **Abandoned**. In bad disrepair. *Sierraville RD*
6. Saddleback – **Staffed 7 days** with contract lookout. *Downieville RD*
7. Sierra Buttes – **Abandoned. Talk of decommissioning** – At Truckee conference we had word that they had received a RAC Grant for Restoration
8. Verdi – **Abandoned**. *Truckee RD*

TOIYABE NATIONAL FOREST

1. Leviathan – **Not staffed**, but still standing

SEQUOIA NATIONAL PARK

1. Milk Ranch – **Abandoned** for fire detection 1996. Utilized for communications links

KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARK

1. Park Ridge – **Staffed** with BRF volunteers as often as possible

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

1. Crane Flat – **Emergency use** only.
2. Hennes Ridge – **Abandoned**. External rehab has recently been done.

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE 2008

(Historically CDF has had as many as 77 lookouts located statewide. Due to budget cuts and “people driving through with cell phones and hampered visibility due to air pollution” CDF has

stopped staffing most of its lookouts in California.)

CAL-Fire Amador/El Dorado (530-644-2345)

None of these lookouts are scheduled to be staffed for fire season 2008.

1. Mount Dana – **Standing**; Plans to use for public relations.
2. Mt. Zion – **Standing, Staffed as needed.**
3. Pilot Peak – **Standing, Not staffed**
4. Pine Hill – **Abandoned**, Heavily vandalized

CAL-Fire – Fresno/Kings

(No active lookouts)

1. Bear Mountain - **Abandoned**

1. Black Mountain – **Abandoned**
2. Cottonwood Pass - **Abandoned**
3. Owens Mountain - **Removed**

CAL-Fire – Madera/Mariposa/Merced

(No active lookouts)

1. Basalt Peak – **Standing**, used for radio used. May be abandoned.
2. Deadwood – **Abandoned**, still standing. Used for communications. May be preserved by local historian.
3. Green Mtn. – **Abandoned**, unknown if still standing.
4. Guadalupe Peak (Hwy 140) Foundation still there, lookout gone.
5. Penon Blanco – **Abandoned**, still standing.
6. Red Top – **Dismantled**
7. Williams Peak – **Abandoned, still standing.**

CAL-Fire – Nevada/Yuba/Placer (Auburn Hdtq. 530-889-0111)

All of these lookouts are staffed – some are volunteers and others get paid. It varies according to fire danger and other seasonal considerations.

1. Banner Lookout - **Staffed**
2. Mount Howell – **Staffed**
3. Oregon Peak – **Staffed**
4. Wolf Creek Mountain – **Staffed**

CAL-Fire San Benito/Monterey

(No active lookouts and no plans for future use per Chief Robertson convo. 3/08)

1. Call Mountain – **Abandoned**, Bad shape will most likely be removed.
2. Calandra – **Abandoned**; Heavily vandalized/ talk of preservation
3. Chalone Peak – **Abandoned**; Still standing, no plans to rehab
4. Sid Ormsbee – **Abandoned**; **Targeted for preservation** by land-owner (Santa Lucia)
5. Smith Mountain – **Abandoned**; Still standing, no plans for rehab

CAL-Fire Tahoe/Truckee

1. Martis Peak – **Staffed**; Owned by Tahoe National Forest, managed by Cal-fire 7 day staffing, 5 with Paid employee (paid by North Star Community) and 2 with volunteers.

CAL-Fire– Tulare County

(No active lookouts)

1. Blue Ridge – **Abandoned**, Still standing, in disrepair. Cal-fire employees actively seeking relocation.
2. Shadequarter – **Abandoned**, Still standing in good repair

CAL-Fire - Tuolumne/Calaveras (Capt. Allen Columbro convo. 3/08)

1. Blue Mountain – **Staffed** 7 days for fire detection. Status 2008 ? (*Calaveras County*)
2. Fowler – **Abandoned**. Targeted for preservation. Used for antennas)
3. Rushing (Big Hill) – **Abandoned, still standing**
4. Sierra Vista (Quiggs Mountain) – **Abandoned, metal tower.**
5. Valley Springs - **Removed**

TAHOE BASIN MANAGEMENT UNIT

1. Angora Ridge – **Abandoned**
2. Stateline – **Removed**

Nevada Fire Lookouts Status 2007

Notes: 5 total lookouts: 3 standing, and 2 still actively staffed.

ELLA MT. LO - BLM, Ely, NV District - built 1964 - 2 story –Built 1964; T 6S R 67 E Sec 2;
Still actively staffed

MCCLELLAN PEAK LO - Built early 1930s by USFS, transferred to BLM in 1963, last
staffed 1970, destroyed 1971.

PEAVINE PEAK LO - Built originally by Tahoe NF, later staffed by Nevada Division Of
Forestry for a while, then abandoned in 1964 - was still standing in 1972 - likely gone by
now, but unable to confirm this for certain - it's remotely possible that the old LO still remains
and is used to house electronic equipment.

YELLOW PEAK LO - BLM, Susanville, CA District, Washoe County NV – T45S R 21E Sec
9; Built in 1981, 9x9; **Still actively staffed**

ZEPHYR POINT LO - Built 1931 by Eldorado NF, later transferred to Toiyabe NF, later
loaned to Nevada Division of Forestry then returned to Toiyabe NF, then later transferred to
Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit - now unused for fire, but still standing.