

2023 Year-End Report

FOREST FIRE LOOKOUT ASSOCIATION - Affiliate
Northwest Montana Lookout Association (NMLA) – Local Chapter
MONTANA / IDAHO NORTH CHAPTER
Gary Weber, Director

LOCAL NMLA CHAPTER OFFICERS:

Chuck Manning, Board Chair
Deb Starling, Vice-Chair
Nancy Manning, Secretary
Joe Schmidt, Treasurer

2023 MOUs and/or Challenge Cost Share (CCS) Agreements:

Flathead National Forest
Kootenai National Forest
Glacier National Park

PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES:

Projects:

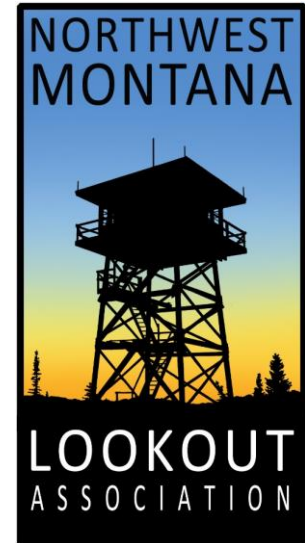
- McGuire Mtn.
- Mount Wam
- Star Peak
- Big Creek Baldy
- Mount Brown

Assessments:

- Mount Henry
- Losthorse
- Porcupine Ridge
- Stahl Peak
- Heavens Peak

McGuire Mountain Lookout Restoration Project:

The McGuire Mountain Lookout and support structures restoration project is finally completed. Starting in 2016 when our first on-site condition assessment took place this endeavor evolved into a major rehab project consisting of leveling the lookout; removing, reconditioning, and replacing all windows; building new shutters; moving the outhouse onto a newly constructed vault; reroofing the lookout and both support structures. Leif Haugen from the Flathead National Forest and his volunteer crew of four tackled the reroof of the D-6 Cupola designed lookout which required fall protection certification. This year the Northwest Montana Back Country Horsemen supported both ends of the project to help transport tools and supplies not airlifted in by helicopter in early June by the Kootenai National Forest Helitack Crew. The Youth Conservation Corp also helped sherpa supplies to and from the lookout again this summer.





Mount Wam Lookout Restoration Project:

Mount Wam Lookout is located within the Ten Lakes Wilderness Study Area near the town of Eureka, MT within a couple of miles of the US-Canada border. Besides trimming out painting the interior windows and exterior trim, the outhouse was moved to a new location. As the mount top is an outcrop of sedimentary rock, a generator powered demolition hammer was used to break up the layers and a pit close to five feet was dug in about two and a half days. The outhouse was then moved to its new location. The Northwest Montana Back Country Horsemen supported both ends of the project to help transport tools and supplies. The YCC joined the project for one day to pull staples as the lookout was covered with Aluminized Structure Wrap during the 2022 Weasel Fire.



Star Peak Lookout Restoration Project:

Star Peak Lookout, located in the Scotchman Peaks Recommended Wilderness Area, is the site of the first recorded lookout in Montana. The original rock house, built in 1910, still sits below the current

lookout. This historic lookout restoration is supported through the Great American Outdoors Act, passed in 2020, which provides funding to improve infrastructure and expand recreation opportunities in national parks and other public lands. The Star Peak Lookout project began in early June when all windows were removed and flown off the mountain, thanks to the Kootenai National Forest Helitack Crew along with Cabinet Ranger District personnel. The windows will be reconditioned over the winter and flown back up the mountain to be reinstalled next spring. This summer's mid-July NMLA volunteers reroofed the structure with new cedar shingles, scrapped and painted the exterior except for the deteriorated shutters (to be replaced) and addressed failing structural issues. Shutter material was painted in preparation for building new shutters to be installed over the reconditioned and reinstalled windows. In mid-August NMLA volunteers wrapped up this year's project by repairing shutter outriggers, installing one set of new shutters, and giving the exterior another coat of paint. The Cabinet Back Country Horsemen supported both ends of this project by transporting tools and supplies not airlifted in by helicopter in early June.



Big Creek Baldy Maintenance Project:

A great day at Big Creek Baldy - the heater was installed, but not needed today....there was ongoing work with the roof and hatch.

Mount Brown Lookout Restoration Project:

Overlooking Lake McDonald in Glacier National Park (GNP) sits Mount Brown Lookout just south of its namesake peak. This summer marks the completion of several ongoing maintenance projects which included replacing cracked windows, replacing failed siding boards on the lower enclosed storage area, replacing failing catwalk deck boards, and painting the parts of the lookout's interior and exterior. GNP personnel were instrumental in supporting this project and coordinated pack stock to transport all materials and supplies. Volunteer support was funded in part through the Whitefish Community Foundation.



Mount Henry Assessment:

Volunteers hiked to Mount Henry Lookout on the Kootenai National Forest to do an assessment for future restoration needs for the Northwest Montana Lookout Association was completed. Lookout in pretty good shape considering she was built in 1942 and has been out of use since 1978. Needs a major paint job to restore her former glory! The outhouse however, flattened a few years ago by the elements is barely hanging in there, now propped up by rocks and boards - needs some major TLC!



Lost Horse Lookout Assessment:

Located in the Kootenai National Forest, this seldom-seen lookout, Lost Horse, is reached by a flagged route after a 30-mile drive on a dirt road. NMLA volunteers were greeted by the weather-greyed wooden tower, L-4 cab, and butter or ventilation box was reward in itself but one can also see downtown Yaak, Mount Henry Lookout and the surrounding mountains. Built in 1934, this little gem of a lookout needs the catwalk, steps, railings, and shutters repaired or replaced and light shines through several small holes in the ragged roof which needs to be patched or better yet, re-shingled. Amazingly, inside, the cab is in good shape with in-tack windows and glazing. In 1994 it was wrapped to protect it from the Yaak-Red Dragon Complex Fire.



Heavens Peak Assessment:

Heaven's Peak Lookout was built by conscientious objectors who were members of the Civilian Public Service during World War II. The lookout uses native materials to integrate the structure into the landscape and was operational from 1945 until 1953. Extensive work to stabilize the structure was completed in 2013-14. NMLA volunteers completed this assessment and were rewarded with relatively clear skies and expansive views including Chapman Peak, Mt Cleveland, the garden wall, Lake McDonald and the Camas drainage after bushwhacking to the lookout. The structure is generally in good shape, but is in need of extensive painting in addition to other repairs.



Stahl Peak Lookout Assessment:

NWLA volunteers completed the assessment of Stahl Lookout on a cold, blustery day in late August. The D6 cupola-style lookout is perched dramatically on a cliff's edge in the Ten Lakes Wilderness Study Area of the Kootenai National Forest. The lookout can be accessed by a number of trails. It's a common detour for thru-hikers on the CDT trail, offering shelter from inclement weather. At an elevation of 7,281' there are uninterrupted views of the entire Ten Lakes basin, Canada, and Glacier Park. The lookout itself is in a state of disrepair, something a coat of fresh paint and some basic carpentry could improve.



Porcupine Ridge Assessment:

The lookout is in good, if not buff, condition. Mainly needs routine maintenance of painting, and some shutters could be replaced. As far as access, the 1st two fords of Valentine were dry (as of 8/24), but that 3rd one is still a doozy. The trail was easy to find, except for navigation required at Valentine Creek, so the flagging there was appreciated. It is definitely brushy/overgrown below treeline. Nice easy gradient. We carried all our water - between 5 and 10 liters each, which we collected and filtered at Valentine. Logistical planning and support was necessary and appreciated! Boat tickets, a backcountry permit, and answering a gazillion questions. Oddly enough, there were no tent shelters left at Goat Haunt, even with a permit. CBP ROAM is required for remote entry into the U.S. via Goat Haunt.



Total In-Kind - Forest Service & Park Service	
1376	TOTAL PROJECT HOURS (includes hiking)
249	TOTAL TRAVEL HOURS
1625	TOTAL INKIND HOURS
\$ 39,399.00	TOTAL VOLUNTEER IN-KIND HOURS VALUE (27.87)*
12528.97	TOTAL MILES DRIVEN
\$ 10,185.60	TOTAL MILEAGE VALUE (.625/Mile)
\$ 45,409.74	TOTAL PROJECT IN-KIND VALUE
\$ 23,645.57	SUBTOTAL BCH IN-KIND VALUE (packer/stock)
\$ 69,055.31	TOTAL COMBINED IN-KIND VALUE

OBJECTIVES FOR 2023:

- Continue membership and donor campaign - 2023 members and donors are ~150.
- Continue to increase our outreach – 2023 contact list are ~700.
- Continue updating our website with current information and maintain our social media platforms.
- Continue to develop positive relationships with agency personnel.
- Meet restoration and assessment commitments with agencies.
- Continue to sign up qualified volunteers with skills sets necessary to accomplish required tasks..

2023 NWMTLA Lookout Statistics:

- 50 - Total standing lookouts and support structures in service area
- 15 - Lookouts in active service
- 12 - Lookouts in rental program
 - 4 - Lookouts maintained as shelters
- 22 - Lookouts on inventory – use not specified
 - 0 - Lookouts converted to alternate function
 - 0 - Lookouts schedule to be removed
 - 0 - New lookouts under construction

Respectfully submitted 1/4/2024,



Board Chair