

Northern Idaho/Montana Chapter Report 2007

MEMBERSHIP:

115 Current Paid Members (46 Plus)
Includes: 5 Membership Renewal Past Due
12 New members, 7 Dropped
38 Complimentary Memberships (agency personnel, etc.)

Chapter finances increased, with an ending balance of \$7110.95, up over two thousand dollars from the start of the year, primarily due to proceeds from the Western Conference and two large donations ear-marked for the Mineral Peak Restoration Project (see Treasurers Report for details).

ACTIVITIES:

The chapter hosted a very successful 2007 Western Regional Conference at Seeley Lake, Montana June 29-July 1, despite a lack of some planning elements due to Director Gary Weber's retirement, new job and move shortly beforehand.

The chapter sold about 85 copies of member Libby Langston's Lookout Cookbook. Once again, fifty percent of the year's profits were donated to the national treasury.

Restoration of the 53' L-4 tower at Mineral Peak (Lolo NF, MT) began, several planned tasks were postponed until 2008 due to fire activity. Member Libby Langston is spearheading the project. Restoration continued at Double Arrow Lookout (Lolo NF, MT), and Mount Henry (Kootenai NF, MT) with indirect support from the chapter. Double Arrow subsequently survived a fire that burned all around the site. Safety upgrade work was initiated on Hughes Ridge Lookout (Kaniksu NF, ID). The final components needed to finish the restoration of the lightning protection system at Square Mountain Lookout (NezPerce NF, ID) were obtained.

Assistance and support were offered for the successful USFS RAC proposal for repairs and safety upgrades at Middle Sister Lookout (St. Joe NF, ID). Local interest in restoration at Mallard Peak Lookout (St. Joe NF, ID) was directed to appropriate USFS officials, with plans being developed for next summer. Chapter members are active in discussions concerning restoration and repairs of several lookouts in Montana's Helena and Lewis & Clark National Forests.

Unused lookouts continue to be identified under the USFS facility reduction initiative, however none are known to have been disposed of yet. In at least two cases, continued interest from FFLA members and others, along with changes of USFS personnel, is causing renewed discussion of potential restoration of lookouts previously identified for disposal.

Another extremely active fire season saw several lookouts threatened and structure protection actions taken. Hidden Peak Lookout (Clearwater NF, ID), previously identified for disposal, had fire burn around and over it, but survived in spite of a decision to make no efforts to protect it. Falls Point Lookout (Lolo NF, MT) was "re-discovered" by firefighters after many locals thought it had collapsed. Now believed to be the only original 40-foot pole L-4 tower still standing, it was also threatened by a wilderness fire.

The cabin rental program continues to be very popular, but lack of workforce time and funding to manage existing rentals, let alone to add other facilities to the program, continues

to be an issue.

Restoration activities are expected to continue at several sites in 2008.

Gary Weber
FFLA-North Idaho/Montana Chapter Director