



FOREST FIRE LOOKOUT ASSOCIATION CALIFORNIA SIERRA-NEVADA CHAPTER



2017 ANNUAL REPORT

The California Sierra Nevada Chapter addresses Forest Fire Lookouts from the area of Kernville, CA to the South, continuing North thru Sequoia/Inyo/Sierra/Stanislaus/Eldorado/Toiyabe and Tahoe National Forest to Interstate 80, West to Route 89 and East thru the State of Nevada. Included here are CDF (California Department of Forestry, i.e. Cal Fire Lookout Towers in the Sierra Foothills.)

SIERRA/NEVADA FORESTS---

Forest fires continue to change some of the dynamics within the forests, as well as, the use of lookouts, the financial ability of the Forest Service to maintain and/or restore lookouts and how they intend to use them within their forest. Each one appears to take a different direction from the other. Some towers are inactive, some they have no interest in restoring, and some they want to use for other purposes, i.e. Rentals, Interpretative centers, etc.

RESEARCH---

Research continues to be an essential part of the development of the territory, as is personal contact, cold calls, and how I might be supportive of the National Forests or CDF facilities.

MEMBERSHIP---

Recent updated Membership lists from Gary Weber indicate members from Nevada to Idaho and of course California.

FOUNDATIONS---

There are two subchapters that I am presently familiar with that include the independent foundation called the Buck Rock Foundation, which essentially mans the lookouts with the Sequoia National Forest/Park. Their chairperson is Kathy Allison. I continue to have a close working relationship with her, and she keeps me informed of issues within her area, as well as issues outside of her area and the Forests in general. Another subchapter called the Miami Chapter runs the Miami Lookout within the Sierra National Forest. The Fire Coordinator there is Barbara Thurmann. Loren Ross, who had a sub-chapter around Baker Point in the Sequoia has since moved to the Washington/Oregon area and is no longer involved in Baker Point to the best of my knowledge.

FINANCIAL---

I have a business account for the California Sierra Nevada Chapter which presently has \$1406.00 plus some minimal interest. This will continue to be used to support FFLA interests within the territory. Some additional funds are still being maintained by Gary Weber.

INFORMATION ON FOREST/CDF CONTACTS---

During 2017, I have made some cold calls and appointment calls to National Forests and CDF locations as a greet and meet to identify myself to Forest and CDF personnel. I have had some successes and will review those in future paragraphs.

SEQUOIA NATIONAL FOREST/PARK—

The Buck Rock Foundation Volunteer Fire Lookout Program has 51 volunteers staffing 3 lookouts with over 3,000 volunteer hours. These include Buck Rock (9 volunteers), Delilah (30 volunteers), and Park Ridge (29 volunteers). Twenty smoke reports were submitted, 7 prescribed or managed fires monitored. Between all lookouts there were approximately 7500 visitors. The Buck Rock Foundation conducts facilities assessment programs to assist partners in lookout maintenance. They also do community outreach about the Lookout Program. Additional items include open houses, docent programs, and an end of season party. Kathy had some other information to provide which I believe is important to share in this report and I thank her for sharing it with me—

1. Shadequarter Lookout (CALFire) in Tulare County—Cal Fire is beginning the process of refurbishing the lookout, but no word on staffing. Note—this lookout is a duplicate of Boucher Hill tower in the Palomar State Park.
2. Baker Point—Kern River Ranger District/Sequoia NF—Loren Ross has moved to Washington state and is no longer involved with Lookout Preservation.

3. Western Divide Ranger District, Sequoia National Forest—Kahty has heard from multiple sources that the Forest Service no longer intends on staffing these towers. She believes this is a huge deal in her neck of the woods, considering not long ago this was a very strong program. This includes the Jordan, Tobias, and Mule Peak Lookouts. Tobias has not been staffed for 2 years and is falling apart.
4. There is no movement on rebuilding the Needles Lookout, which burned down in 2011. The rumor is the engineering department is still waiting a seismic report to deem the rock safe enough to rebuild.

Please note that their Foundation area of interest is concentrated on the Hume Lake Ranger District of the Sequoia National Forest and the Kings Canyon National Park.

INYO/SIERRA NATIONAL FOREST—

Having had no prior success with the Inyo National Forest, Kathy Allison was recently able to provide a PIO contact name, address, and telephone number for contact to follow up, which I intend to do. The Inyo has one lookout which is the Bald Mountain Lookout and is advertising for a paid lookout. It is in the Mono Lake Ranger District. Barbara Thurmann, with the Miami Chapter, had a somewhat rough year. She is the Fire Coordinator and Miami Chapter Chairwoman for the Sierra National Forest. The Miami lookout was not opened this year due to early rain washouts of the roads and dead trees not cleared to the lookout. Due to fires within the forest, equipment needed to repair roads was not available. Several other lookouts were open including Shuteye. Due to the lack of paid lookouts, some volunteers were being used. Jeff May, previous Miami Group Chapter leader, has closed FFLA account check for Barbara, not yet delivered. I met with Kathy Allison and Barbara in Oakhurst for a 2-hour luncheon in May. We discussed how to proceed with chapter, gave some FFLA training manuals, and how to coordinate a memorandum of understanding with Sierra National Forest etc.

STANISLAUS NATIONAL FOREST—

My contacts continue to remain with Kathy Strain, Resource Manager for the Stanislaus. I have nominated seven towers for the NHLR. I have received back the official recognitions but had to do one correction on the Blue Mountain Lookout, for which I am waiting an update on the correction from Keith, prior to taking the completed items up to the Stanislaus. This includes Blue Mountain, Woods Ridge, North Mountain, American Camp Lookout, Elizabeth Mountain, Smith Peak, and Duckwall Mountain.

ELDORADO NATIONAL FOREST—

I have continued my conversations with Jordan Serin, Archaeologist for the Eldorado National Forest. National FFLA has approved (2) \$500.00 grants, one for Robbs Peak and one for Bunker Hill Lookouts. It is the intent to bring both Robbs Peak and Bunker Hill back on line as fire lookouts and interpretive centers. Robbs Peak is near completion and is set for refurbishing and will be ready for next year or following year at the latest. Bunker Hill still needs a lot of work and is probably two years out. Jordan has asked me to work on forming a Chapter located near Placerville, CA, the location of the Eldorado Forest Headquarters.

TAKOE/TOIYABE NATIONAL FOREST/CDF/NEVADA BLM—

I will continue my cold calls to these locations, but continue to have no contacts to directly address what we can do for them, not getting beyond the front desk. I did get an interesting e-mail from Bob Yandow, who is the fire lookout for the Yellow Peak Lookout in Nevada, part of the BLM. He mans one of the two lookouts manned by BLM in Nevada. I sent him an extended e-mail hoping to meet with him.

PLANS FOR 2018—

1. I plan to make multiple trips up North in my areas of responsibility to address FFLA and what we can do for their Forest or Cal Fire.
2. Submit grant proposals as appropriate, and NHLR requests.
3. Continue my work with the Eldorado National Forest and a possible FFLA Chapter.

Respectively Submitted:

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