

Western Region Annual Report 2008

MEMBERSHIP - At the close of 2008, there were 554 paid members in the Western Region, an increase of 19 members from the same time last year. This is over 64 % of the total paid and assigned FFLA membership.

CONFERENCE - The 16th annual Western Region Conference was held September 19th to 21st in Roseburg, OR. More than 50 FFLA members plus some guests and speakers attended. Once again, the conference attendees enthusiastically supported the silent auction with donations and bids. More than the amount necessary to provide the seed money for the 2008 conference was raised. Roseburg proved to be a great area to visit lookouts from. Lookouts of the Douglas and Coos FPA as well as the Umpqua National Forest were visited. This was another great conference, enjoyed by all who attended. The 2009 conference has been tentatively scheduled to take place in the Wenatchee, WA area during September.

LOCAL CHAPTERS – The local chapter idea is proving to be a very successful concept indeed. There are ongoing and/or successfully completed lookout restoration projects in virtually every state of the Western Region.

LOOKOUTS – Sadly, one lookout was lost to wildfire in 2008. This was Limesdyke Lookout in the western part of the Shasta-Trinity NF of California. On the bright side however, a brand new lookout was completed and opened on Brush Mt. in the Six Rivers NF of California not far northwest of Limesdyke. Also in the Six Rivers NF, a new permanent lookout was finally built atop Ship Mt., replacing a portable trailer lookout that had been used at this site since 1973!!

Washington state lost the only two 60 foot DNR lookouts ever built when the long abandoned and storm-damaged Harriets Lookout in central Washington, as well as the also long abandoned Cascade Lookout in western Washington, both collapsed. The L-4 cabin at Delyle Ridge Lookout, located in the Kaniksu NF of Idaho, also collapsed after more than 50 years of abandonment. Kelly Butte Lookout, a tall wooden tower, was removed by the Coos FPA in Oregon due to safety concerns.

Unfortunately, the Payette NF in Southern Idaho chose to remove two of their unused lookouts during 2008 – the 2-story ground cabin at Smith Knob Lookout was demolished and the steel tower at Split Creek Point was dismantled. The Split Creek Point cabin was also intentionally damaged by FS personnel. Neither of these lookouts was a wooden-legged tower, and there was no danger of collapse. These losses are especially unfortunate in light of the fact that there are many fine Payette NF personnel who continue to recognize and appreciate the value of fire lookouts. They still actively staff 13 other lookouts every summer, the most of any national forest in the Pacific Northwest.

The FFLA can take some of the credit for raising awareness of and appreciation for the old lookout structures over the years. As can all the great agency personnel who have cared enough about the lookouts to get involved. The hard-working crews who wrap the lookouts that are threatened by wildfire also continue to help out immeasurably every year.

We can't rest on our laurels, however. For every single lookout that is successfully restored and saved, there are several more lookouts in dire need of the same. As each year goes by, weather, vandalism, and some shortsighted and uncaring agency personnel continue to take their inevitable toll. Again, every single state, and every single chapter area, has some old lookouts that are currently threatened.

Thanks to all who have supported the FFLA and the fire lookouts.

Dave Bula
Western Deputy Chairman, FFLA