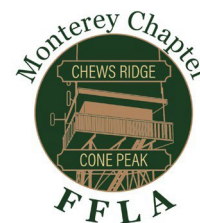


FOREST FIRE LOOKOUT ASSOCIATION
Monterey Chapter
P.O. Box 22631
Carmel, CA 93922



ANNUAL REPORT 2025

The Monterey Chapter operated the historic Chews Ridge Lookout (NHLR 751) for the seventh consecutive season for the Los Padres National Forest (LPNF) under the USFS Agreement Number 25-VS-11050751-001. The Lookout was in service from Friday, June 6th through Wednesday, October 29th. We welcomed and trained seven new volunteers this season. We had more than 161 visitors to the lookout, including many from local and distant fire agencies. We are most grateful to the Monterey Ranger District for their ongoing support of our volunteer fire lookout program.

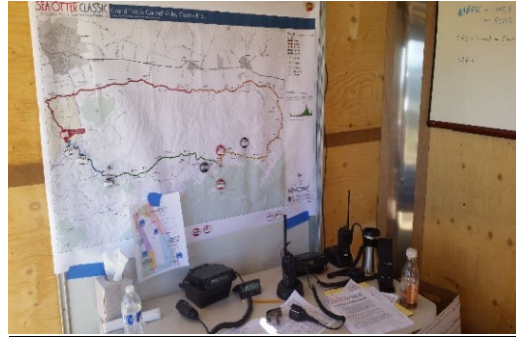
For the 2025 Fiscal Year (October 1, 2024 through September 30, 2025), 56 Chews Ridge Lookouts volunteered 3241 Hours (or 1.8 Person Years) with an appraised value of \$112,754.

Chews Ridge Smoke and Lightning Reports

Thankfully, it was another quiet fire season for the Monterey Ranger District of the Los Padres National Forest. The Ridge Fire/Incident on July 29th, in the vicinity of Palo Colorado, was called in to Dispatch at 1336 hours. Several other fires were observed off the forest and called in to dispatch as “informational”. Although several impressive nighttime thunderstorms, with frequent lightning and heavy rain passed through Central California during September, no lightning storms were observed by CRLO lookouts.

Chews Ridge Lookouts Support the Sea Otter Classic (April 13, 2025)

Each year for the past 39 years, Laguna Seca has hosted the Sea Otter Classic, which is one of world’s top bicycle events. Over the weekend of April 13th, Chews Ridge was the site of the communication center for one of the rides that travels down the Salinas Valley to Arroyo Seco Road and then returns to Laguna Seca via Camel Valley Road. Because a large part of this 90-mile course has little or no cell phone service, amateur radio operators are recruited to provide communication support for the event. A communications trailer was placed near the Lookout for the weekend. The ride was then coordinated by taking advantage of the radio reception up on top of the Ridge. This year, the Carmel Valley Loop ride was attended by 298 riders. Eleven radio operators were on the course assisting with the event. The communications trailer at Chews Ridge was staffed by three operators including two of our own lookouts, David Hitch (L-55) and Ron Ross (L-33). Despite the steep climbs and narrow roads, all went well for the riders that weekend.



First Aid, CPR and AED Training and Certification (June 15, 2025)

The training, taught by Matthew Todd (L-8), included online and in-person training. Seven Chews Ridge Lookouts completed the training, which was free due to a generous donation from his employer, The Nature Conservancy.

Chews Ridge Lookouts Support Amateur Radio Field Day (June 27-29, 2025)

Every fourth weekend in June, a group of ham radio operators comes to Chews Ridge to participate in the annual nationwide Amateur Radio Field Day event. This same group has been coming to Chews Ridge to set up their radio equipment since they were in high school. This year marked their 61st year! We assist them by making sure the gate is unlocked for this weekend. This year's Lookouts on scene were Ron Ross (L-33) and Steve Benoit (L-5).

Chews Ridge Lookout Restoration Project

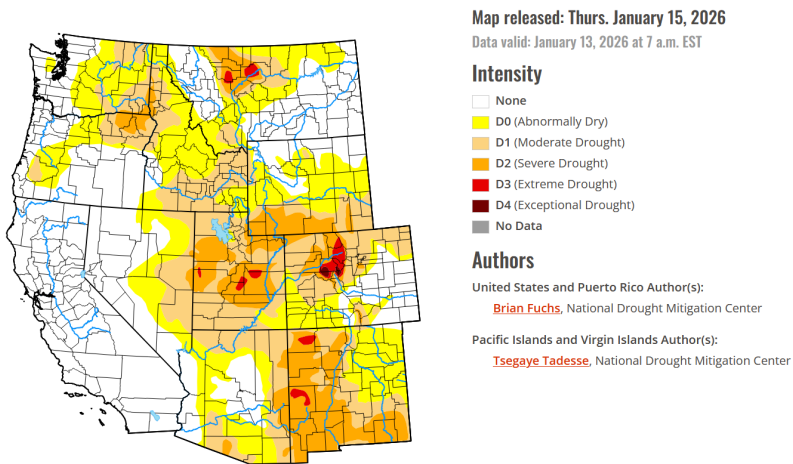
The Chews Ridge Lookout roof and sheetrock ceiling sustained significant damage during last winter's severe storms. We estimate the cost of materials and labor for the new roof to be between \$15,000 and \$20,000. This includes weather-resistant roofing and structural reinforcements, and will require preserving access to critical rooftop antennas used for radio communications during the installation.

We have reached 85% of our fundraising goal with nearly \$17,000 raised through generous donations from more than 50 donors. Corporate donors include a \$500 sustainment grant from the FFLA, a \$10,000 gift from the Bob and Beverley Stratton Trust, \$1,000 from the Carmel Vally Tennis Camp in Cachagua, and a \$2,000 Yellow Brick Road Benefit Shop grant request. We also thank our CRLO Lookouts and friends for their donations.

We are currently working with the Los Padres National Forest administrators to secure the necessary approvals, including the Heritage Shop. Interestingly, the National Historic Lookout Register (<http://nhlr.org/lookouts/us/ca/chews-ridge-lookout/>) indicates that LPNF replaced the CRLO roof in 2017.

Current Weather and Road Conditions at Chews Ridge

As of January 17, 2026, Chews Ridge has recorded an impressive 25.91” of rain since the start of the rain year (July 1, 2025). For the first time in 25 years, the entire state of California is free of drought conditions.



Reference:<https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/CurrentMap/StateDroughtMonitor.aspx?west>

Cone Peak Lookout Status

Per Los Padres National Forest, there is no current direction to move the Tone 8 repeater equipment that is currently located inside the Cone Peak Lookout to an exterior radio vault.

Chews Ridge Lookouts Support the Bald Mtn Lookout Project (Inyo National Forest)

The FFLA and the Inyo National Forest are partnering to bring Bald Mountain Lookout (BMLO) back into service staffed by volunteers. The BMLO is located eleven miles east of Hwy 395 and near June Lakes. BMLO operations this year were supported by CRLO lookouts Ron Ross(L-29), Mary Hubbel (L-16), Willis Costello(L-14), Patrick Dundon(L-67), Martha Dundon(L-66), Steve Prather(L-19), Jon Ramsey(L-54), Nancy Baker(L-1) and Mike Smelser(L-36), each of whom staffed the BMLO lookout for multiple days.

Respectfully submitted by,

Nancy Baker

Lois Van Buren

Nancy Baker (L-1), Chair, Monterey Chapter of the FFLA

Lois Van Buren (L-45), Assistant Chair, Monterey Chapter of the FFLA