

2025 Year-End Report

FOREST FIRE LOOKOUT ASSOCIATION

Northwest Montana Lookout Association (NWMTLA) – Local Chapter

MONTANA / IDAHO NORTH CHAPTER

Gary Weber, Director

LOCAL NWMTLA CHAPTER OFFICERS:

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

2025 MOUs and/or Challenge Cost Share (CCS)

Agreements: Flathead National Forest, Kootenai National Forest, Glacier National Park, Montana DNRC

PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES:

Projects:

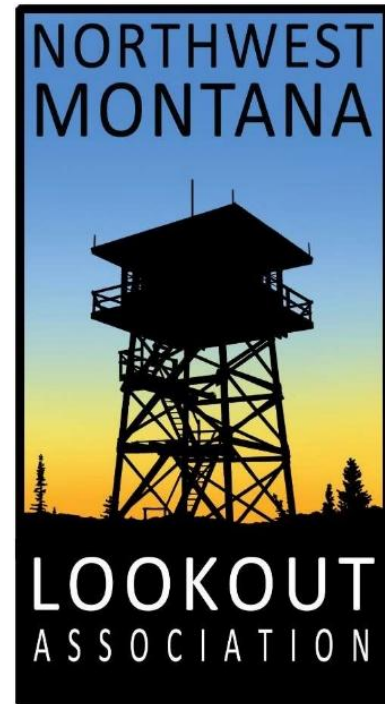
- NW Peak Lookout
- MT Wam Lookout
- Big Creek Baldy Lookout

Assessments:

- Mud Lake Lookout
- Spotted Bear Lookout
- Little Napa Lookout
- Swiftcurrent Lookout
- Apgar Lookout
- Numa Ridge Lookout

NW Peak Lookout

Northwest Peak Lookout located in the Yaak overlooks the Northwest Peak Scenic Area in Northwest corner of Montana. Perched on a mountain of broken talus this lookout project started last year with the removal of all windows which were blown off and refurbished over the winter by Edd Kuropat and Peter Kitts. The windows and other materials were flown back up to the lookout in June in advance of this summer's project which consisted of stabilizing all four wall that had major structural deficiencies, the installation of several new shutters that were built in 2018, and the start of installing the ceiling which was removed in 2017. This year's onsite NMLA volunteers were Peter Kitts, Mark Gunther, John Zardis, Chuck Stearns, Randy Beachman, and Chuck Manning. A special recognition must be given to the Cabinet Back Country Horseman for their support in helping transport tools and supplies to a base camp located just off the talus slope. Also, a huge thank you must go out to the Three Rivers Ranger District and the Kootenai National Forest Helitack Team for their ongoing support.



MT Wam Lookout

Mount Wam Lookout, built in 1931, is one of the last gabled L-4 lookouts that sits atop a 7,121' peak in the Whitefish Range and was staffed as a fire lookout in the 1950s. Located in the Ten Lakes Scenic Area and along the Pacific Northwest Trail, this lookout is open to the public and often used as a shelter. This summer's project focused on reroofing the lookout which took place in mid-August. The new cedar shingle roof was funded through the Great American Outdoors Act and installed by NMLA members, Mark Miller, Barb Hvizdak, Rory Trimbo, Steve Glow, and Chuck Manning. Several Forest Service employees also helped tackle this project and a huge THANK YOU must go out to the Northwest Montana Back Country Horsemen who transported supplies and scaffolding back and forth to the jobsite.



Big Creek Baldy Lookout

Long-term work in progress. Work has been occurring on Big Creek Baldy with a new roof, lightning protection and securing the hatch to the roof with Troy Denman as the lead. In addition, the Libby Ranger District crew of Micha and Zach helped with securing landings and new handrails at the landings. Additionally, a new wire mesh was installed for safety and stability on the catwalk. Needs and materials were prioritized with NWMTLA, and all materials were purchased funds in the challenge cost share with Libby Ranger District.

This year the volunteer crew did get a new railing on the catwalk. This also improved stability and safety for those visiting this great lookout. A special thank you to the crew for hanging in there and the ranger district for their patience in working with us!

There will be future need on this lookout for scraping and staining/painting.....



Mud Lake Lookout

The crew hiked into the Bob Marshall Wilderness, leaving from the Meadow Creek Trailhead. The first day they hiked 12 miles to the Blac Bear Cabin. The second day they hiked 8 miles and stayed at the Salmon Forks Cabin. On the third day, they made it to Mud Lake Lookout. A 2.5-mile hike one way with lots of blowdown to navigate. This required a ford across the South Fork of the Flathead River in both directions. The team did the same itinerary on the way back to Meadow Creek Trailhead. The crew enjoyed the wilderness experience, worked well together, had an enjoyable time overall and especially when some FWP folks joined us at Black Bear on night one with their engaging banter, and Kira graced them with her guitar and singing talents.



Thank you to Joe, Katie and Kira for committing five days to complete this assessment. This trip was done with backpacks as there was no stock support available.

In addition to completing the assessment, the crew also had packed in the needed paint/stain to put on the window glazing that was an outstanding need. The painting was completed.

Spotted Bear Lookout

The crew met at the Spotted Bear Ranger Station. The hike went well, but all hoped the false summit was the actual. That said, all did make it to the lookout for a beautiful bluebird day.

The lookout has been wrapped a few times for wildfire protection. These efforts are greatly appreciated so that the lookout has not been harmed by fires. There are many needs identified – including window glazing, painting, some flooring, and potentially a new outhouse or stabilizing the outhouse.

Two windowpanes need immediate replacement. Measurements were taken and new panes and glaze compound were delivered to Spotted Bear to be packed up and installed to better winterize.

A special thanks to this crew for making this hike up and down and completing the assessment in one day. It takes a lot of stamina!



Little Napa Lookout

Located in the Swan River drainage near Goat Creek in Northwestern Montana, Little Napa Lookout sits at 4448 feet and was built in 1977 to replace a school bus with an attached cupola that was used from 1969 through 1976. In 2017, the NWMT Lookout Association participated in a major project to replace stairs, catwalk, and improve cross-bracing. This year's objective was to assess the feasibility of improving/stabilizing the lookout so that it can safely function intermittently for staffing in times of high fire danger or predicted lightning. Thank you volunteers Cathy Calloway, Doug Berglund, Barb Penner, Steve Penner, and Beth Hodder along with DNRC Swan Unit staff for conducting this assessment.



Swiftcurrent Lookout

The Swiftcurrent lookout is a two-story, square plan structure constructed in 1936. The construction of this lookout provided one of the final links in a system of lookouts that minimized the destruction by fire of the park's scenic qualities. This summer's project involved a condition assessment. The Swift Current lookout is in satisfactory condition with no major defects or rehabilitation issues seemingly present. Ongoing maintenance tasks appear to be required but were generally minor in scale.



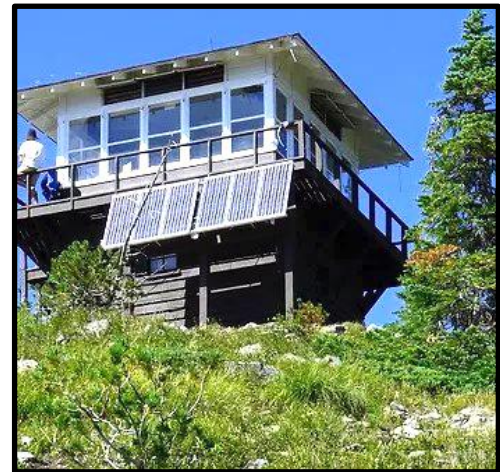
Agger Lookout

Agger Lookout, build in 1929, is a two-story, square log-framed interior building with a cedar-shingled pyramidal hip roof and lapboard siding. Ironically shortly after its completion the lookout was destroyed by fire. The park service secured funding and rebuilt the lookout, identical to the first, in 1930. While the Agger lookout is not currently staffed, it is still significant because it illustrates an important aspect in the management and conservation of timber resources in Glacier National Park. This summer's project involved a condition assessment which found the lookout to be in good shape with primarily minor cosmetic repairs needed.



Numa Ridge Lookout

Numa Ridge Lookout is a standard wood frame, 14x14-ft house set on a 10-ft tower with catwalk. Numa Ridge lookout is one of several similar buildings constructed in Glacier National Park between the late 1920s and the early 1940s to protect park lands from the always critical threat of fire. This summer's project involved a condition assessment which found the lookout's exterior in poor condition with structural repairs and replacement needed on the foundation, catwalk/railings, stairs/railings and some of the siding. The entire exterior is in need of scraping and painting while the interior is in overall good shape with the exception of the door which is in need of repair.



OBJECTIVES FOR 2026:

- Continue membership and donor campaign - 2024 members and donors are ~150.
- Continue to increase our outreach – 2024 email list is ~800.
- Finish the new website, update current information, and maintain our social media platforms.
- Continue to develop positive relationships with agency personnel.
- Work with agencies to mitigate project efficiency.
- Meet restoration and assessment commitments with agencies.
- Continue to sign up qualified volunteers with skills necessary to accomplish required tasks.

2025 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 on 1/13/2026



Board Chair