

National Interdisciplinary Lookout Conference

Third conference · March 20, 2027 · University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho

Conference theme: Fire lookouts were originally built for a single purpose: to spot smokes and suppress wildfires. But a structure built to watch for one thing rarely stays confined to that purpose. Over a century, these structures have become something their builders never quite intended — staging points for backcountry search and rescue, seasonal homes for writers and artists seeking silence, informal weather and wildlife observation posts, historic landmarks kept alive by volunteers and preservation groups, and, for many who have spent a season in one, something closer to a spiritual practice than a job. *Beyond the Smoke* asks what happens when a tool for detection becomes a tool for reflection — when the act of watching, sustained long enough, turns outward into stewardship and inward into meaning. This year's conference invites presentations, panels, and conversations that follow the fire lookout past its original mandate: into rescue and resilience work, into literature and art, into architecture and preservation, into ecology and land management, and into whatever else a life spent watching the landscape entails. We are always interested in presentations that discuss how the fire lookout's original purpose of detecting fires has endured despite technological advances in GIS and remote sensing. We ask that presenters discussing fire watching acknowledge the tension with newer technology and how human staffed observation points have adapted to continue fire watching over the years. Please see our conference website for a complete description of theme and subthemes.

Any questions can be directed to Michael Decker at mdecker@uidaho.edu. To register, submit an abstract, or learn more about the details of the conference, please visit our [conference website](#).