

# Red Mountain Lookout Restoration and Rehabilitation Project



Red Mountain Lookout, October 2009

Gifford Pinchot National Forest  
Skamania County, Washington



A volunteer partnership  
in historic preservation



The summit of Red Mountain, at 4,965 feet, overlooks much of the southern Washington Cascades. It was used as a fire lookout point by the Forest Service as early as 1910 and described as "unquestionably the best lookout point" within the national forest. The first lookout cabin was built on the summit in 1913. During World War II Red Mountain Lookout served as an Aircraft Warning Service station, staffed year-round during the winter of 1942-1943. The existing structure was built in 1959 and represents the last standard lookout design used by the Forest Service before the fixed-point detection system was largely abandoned in favor of aerial observation.



Red Mountain Lookout in 1964

Red Mountain Lookout is listed on the National Historic Lookout Register of the national Forest Fire Lookout Association. It has also been determined eligible to the National Register of Historic Places and is the last surviving fire lookout within the Mt. Adams Ranger District, Gifford Pinchot National Forest.

In December 2006 Red Mountain Lookout was badly damaged by a severe windstorm event. The roof was blown off and the walls collapsed.



Red Mountain Lookout in June 2007

Because of its historical significance, the Heritage Program, Gifford Pinchot National Forest, mounted an effort to save the lookout. This effort was made possible with the help of the national Forest Service *Passport in Time* volunteer program and a special partnership with Haldeman Homes, Inc.

During the summer of 2007 volunteers worked with Forest Service personnel to rebuild and stabilize the walls and roof. Matt Haldeman, owner of Haldeman Homes, Inc., coordinated donations of material and labor from local businesses to make this project possible. Donors included Parr Lumber Company, High Cascade Veneer, Inc., and Carson Valley Hardware. All donors will be recognized in publicity and on a special plaque installed on site.



*Passport in Time* volunteers at Red Mountain Lookout , 2007

In the fall of 2007 a new roof structure was built by the Forest Service. The original, historic plans were used as a guide for the new construction.

*Passport in Time* volunteers returned to Red Mountain in July of 2008 to continue restoration and rehabilitation of the lookout. Their primary objective was the replacement of the aluminum windows with original, period wood sash windows salvaged from an identical lookout in Oregon. The historic windows were donated by the Oregon Chapter, Forest Fire Lookout Association.

Volunteers also made catwalk repairs, and a new roof covering was added by the Forest Service in the fall of 2008.



*Passport in Time* volunteers install historic replacement windows, 2008

The Forest Service received special storm damage funding for further repairs in 2009, and additional work was accomplished by Forest Service Fire Management and Recreation personnel. The interior wall covering and ceiling was installed, exterior and interior painting and staining completed, and weatherization improvements made to secure the building for winter.

### Goals and Objectives: 2010

Contracts have been awarded for the installation of a new roof membrane and a new lightning protection system. Installation is expected in July 2010. A *Passport in Time* volunteer project is planned for Red Mountain Lookout in late July and early August. Sixteen volunteers have been selected for the project.

The volunteer project will involve a variety of activities intended to finish the rehabilitation of the lookout. Planned work includes finish treatments to interior walls and ceiling, installation of interior trim, exterior stain application, catwalk decking repairs, installation of floor tile, and the installation of a stove and furnishings.



*Exterior stain application, Red Mountain Lookout.*

Volunteers will also begin restoration of the associated garage, built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in 1938. During World War II, the garage was modified for use as quarters for Aircraft Warning Service observers. The initial phase of garage restoration will involve foundation repair. Proposed work will require jacking the structure, hand excavation, construction of forms, and the mixing and pouring of concrete.



*The garage at Red Mountain Lookout*

As progress with the foundation repair allows, there may also be an opportunity to prepare for the second phase of work on the garage, involving repair and replacement of missing siding and windows. Plans call for the salvage of materials from another CCC-built Forest Service garage for use in the restoration. As time permits, some volunteers participating in the 2010 project may work on the removal of siding, windows, and other architectural material from the "donor" garage. Materials will be stockpiled for later use at Red Mountain.

### *Public Access*

Red Mountain has been closed to the public since 2006. If restoration and rehabilitation goals are met in 2010, the site may be reopened to the public in the summer of 2011. The Forest Service currently considering the addition of the lookout to its popular historic cabin and lookout rental program.