

CA Sierra/Nevada Chapter Report 2010

MEMBERSHIP/FISCAL: The CA Sierra/Nevada chapter currently has 31 paid members. Although we lost 2 members, by years end we had gained three new members. The end-of-year balance for this chapter was \$888.95.

CA Sierra Chapter: End of Year Balance: \$888.95
Tahoe Subchapter: End of Year Balance: \$2,200.00
Yosemite/High Sierra Subchapter: End of Year Balance: \$900.00

NEW: The name of our chapter has been changed from Central California/Nevada Chapter FFLA to California - Sierra/Nevada Chapter FFLA.

RESTORATION/REHABILITATION: The Buck Rock Foundation received grant monies from the Fresno County Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) to **rehabilitate Delilah Lookout (SQF), Mt. Tom and Fence Meadow Lookouts (SNF)**. For both Delilah and Fence Meadow, this is the continuation of an ongoing restoration process. BRF partnered with the Forest Service, Fresno County Mounted Posse Search and Rescue and Cascada Cabinets of Auberry, California to complete the work. Most of the labor was done by BRF volunteers over several project work weekends throughout the summer of 2010. A complete interior rehabilitation was done at Delilah; a new shutter system, plumbing and electrical work were done at Fence Meadow; and Mt Tom received new cabinets, a new floor, and plumbing upgrades.

The Sequoia National Forest sponsored a project work weekend during the summer of 2010 to **“clean-up” Oak Flat Lookout**, which is currently in the lookout rental system. The cab received a fresh coat of paint, windows were caulked, and the grounds were cleaned up.

The SQF contracted for a complete **grounding system inspection** and necessary upgrades or repairs to be made on all 10 of its remaining lookouts. The work was to begin in 2010, but as of this report none of the repairs have started.

The Sierra National Forest made repairs to Signal Peak Lookout, which is still staffed for fire detection. The catwalk and door jam were replaced and the firefinder refurbished.

Plans for the rehabilitation of Henness Ridge (YNP) are being considered, under the facilitation of Jeff May and the FFLA Yosemite/High Sierra Subchapter. Jeff is establishing a partnership with the Yosemite Conservancy and hopes to engage volunteers to participate in restoration efforts.

The Tahoe Subchapter has begun the restoration of Grouse Ridge with initial work dedicated to lead paint removal/remediation.

THREATENED: Last years threat to remove Bald Mountain Lookout on the Sierra NF has been delayed due to a lack of funding (Stimulus money was originally designated for the dismantling of the lookout). 4-wheel drive groups are

still interested in adopting the lookout. The lookout is abandoned and in desperate need of repair.

REMOVED: In May of 2010, Blue Ridge Lookout, Tulare County, was finally lifted from its long-time mountain perch in preparation for a new home at the Tulare County Fairgrounds after a grueling 4 year process. The lookout had been slated for removal by CAL-Fire until local lookout enthusiasts intervened and rescued the fire tower. The lookout is currently at the CAL-Fire Headquarters in Visalia, CA, where it is undergoing a full restoration. It is the hope of all involved that the lookout will be restored in time for the annual Tulare Country Fair in October.

CHAPTER DEVELOPMENT: The creation of a sub-chapter of the CCA/NV FFLA called the **Tahoe Chapter of the FFLA** was approved last year and is well on its way to rehabilitating Grouse Peak Lookout. (See attached detailed report.)

The **Yosemite/High Sierra Chapter**, under the direction of FFLA member Jeff May, is continuing its quest to improve lookout towers in Yosemite National Park and the Bass Lake/Mariposa districts of the Sierra National Forest. The purpose of the chapter is “to provide increased public awareness and appreciation of the history and benefits of the fire lookout towers and value to early detection and fire suppression activities; seek approval for historic designations by the National Historic Lookout Register; and to utilize the Forest Fire Lookout Association Tax donation status to encourage public and private sector donations or sponsorships of the chapter.” The subchapter opened up a checking account and raised \$900 from donations raised during the Smokey Bear Run and from individual donations. A portion of the funds are designated for repair of the Miami Lookout firefinder (work done by Palmquist Tools). Presentations of NHLR certificates are planned during the Summer 2011 for Henness Ridge and Crane Flat Lookouts, in Yosemite National Park.

ACTIVITIES:

The Buck Rock Foundation held its annual Lookout Training Program during April and May 2010. Over 60 potential volunteer lookouts and Forest Service lookouts participated in the program which featured presentations from personnel and demonstrations of fire engines from **the National Park Service, CAL-Fire, and the National Forest Service**. The Miami Volunteer Lookout Association (Yosemite/High Sierra Subchapter) held its annual training in April and May and included a “SkyWarn Training” led by a meteorologist from NOAA. Volunteers staffed Miami throughout fire season, May – October.

Our chapter continues to promote the importance of preserving and staffing lookouts through **community outreach**: participating in local events, attending community and service organization meetings, publishing a newsletter, and facilitating relationships with our local government agencies and other partners. We worked with a Student Conservation Association (SCA) intern who provided interpretive programs at Buck Rock, archived historic photos and documents, and worked on creating a Sequoia Lookout passport.

The Buck Rock Foundation collaborated with the Lindsay Unified School System and the Sequoia National Forest on a “**More Kids in the Woods**” grant designed to bring underserved kids from the Central Valley to the forest. 120 fourth graders took a field trip to Buck Rock, where they learned about

watershed, water-cycle, forest animals, fire ecology, giant sequoia habitat, fire prevention, and living history. An ongoing forest fire was in progress just a few miles away, which gave the kids the opportunity to see the fire watcher, helicopters and firefighters in action. The positive impact and impression it made on the kids was obvious and rewarding, and worth the detailed planning, expense and hard work. We all realize that our future depends upon the stewardship of younger generations.

In an effort to promote sustainable tourism and recreation, the National Geographic Society is implementing a project called the **Geotourism Mapguide Project**. Several lookouts from this chapter have been nominated to be listed in the Mapguide including Buck Rock (SQF), Bald Mountain (INF), The Needles (SQF), and Angora (TNF).

PLAN OF WORK FOR 2011:

- Fresno County RAC Grant proposal submitted and approved 2/11: Continued restoration work at Mt. Tom (SNF) and Delilah (SQF) [Partnership BRF and USFS]
- Tulare/Kern County RAC grant proposal to be written and submittal due June 1st, 2011 – for the rehabilitation of Buck Rock Lookout.
- Continued restoration work at Grouse Peak Lookout, Tahoe National Forest.
- Plans to replace the roof and the catwalk railings and continue rehabilitation of Henness Ridge Lookout.
- Continue the discussion regarding planning process for restoration at Baker Point (SQF)
- Continue to pursue using Dragonplot for staffed lookouts on the Sierra NF
- Media/PR opportunity for presenting the NHLR for Park Ridge Lookout.
- Buck Rock Open House – Labor Day weekend, September 4, 2011.
- Ongoing outreach at community events and lookout towers.
- Provide resources for creating an interpretive experience at Blue Ridge Lookout at the Tulare County Fairgrounds.

In Memorium: Long-time fire watcher, Mary Ann Evans, passed away in January 2011 after a short-illness. Mary Ann staffed Tobias Lookout for over 20 years, was a passionate and out-spoken advocate for fire lookouts, and was a devoted member of the FFLA. Central California fire lookouts are bonding together to honor her with a memorial bench and gatherin to take place this summer at Tobias. To contribute or for more information, visit the Buck Rock Foundation website: www.buckrock.org.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Ball Allison
CA Sierra/NV Chapter Director

Attached Reports

Grouse Ridge Lookout Restoration Tahoe National Forest 2010 Report

Beginnings – the Grouse Ridge Restoration project actively began in the fall of 2009. An initial meeting was held by the Forest Service with potential volunteers. The meeting identified general work to be done as well as the need for volunteers and various committees.

2010 Summary - In the spring of 2010, the fund raising committee was formed and the committee began planning fundraising activities. A volunteer contractor began working closely with the Forest Service and core committee to serve as the primary liaison with the contracting community. The State Historic Preservation Office was consulted. Due to late snows, access was restricted until August. Hanta virus and lead paint remediation was completed by two volunteer contractors. The lookout was winterized due to early fall snows.

Communication – The Forest Service sent out a variety of news releases announcing the lookout project which generated stories in the local media. A website was created and revised. A 3-D model of the lookout, display, and handouts were developed.

Fund Raising and Financial Update – Forest Fire Lookout Association granted subchapter status. A bank account was obtained along with the \$500 seed money from FFLA. The fundraising committee developed a logo, stickers, and business cards and participated in the Grass Valley Thursday Night Market every week from June to September raising \$646.64 from donations. In addition, \$1,560 were donated by private individuals. The Forest Service contributed funds for supplies which were purchased. A Resource Advisory Committee grant was written and obtained for \$10,000. An additional \$4,000 is needed for remaining supplies.

Historical Protection – Consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office occurred by the Forest Service. With the publicity in the local paper, a variety of historical documents were shared including an informal diary from the family of one of the lookouts, a description of the construction of the lookout, and a copy of the FS manual on lookout construction.

Work Projects – Due to late snow in the spring, the lookout was not accessible until August, 2010. Hanta virus and lead paint remediation were completed in the upper portion of the lookout by two volunteer contractors, Wagner Construction Group and Environmental 26, hazmat certified contractor. Early snowfall reduced accessibility and the lookout was winterized. Supplies including paint, siding, roofing, and concrete were purchased and stored.

Plans for 2011 – Depending on weather availability, the construction volunteers expect to be able to finish the construction this field season. A work day will be scheduled in the spring at an easily available worksite to complete the painting

and other off-site construction needs. The fundraising committee will again ramp up to generate the additional \$4,000.

Volunteers:

Project Coordinator – Larry Gruver

Treasurer – Joyce Canon

Website Donation and Development – Pascale Fuesshoeller, Susan Prince

Fund Raising Committee – Chris Hersey (Co Chair), Rich Veal (Co Chair),

Michael Biolchini, Wes Schultz, Gina Torvinen, Heather Newell, Ann Westling

Photographers – Craig Rohrsen, Wes Schultz

Volunteer Contractors – Wagner Construction Group – Brian Wagner;

Environmental 26 – Patrick Marcom

FS Support

Genice Froehlich – Yuba River District Ranger

Terry Brennan – Public Service Officer

Temoc Rios – Facilities Engineer

Monique Bluvas – Safety

Carrie Smith – Acting Forest Archeologist

Bill Slater – District Archeologist

Terry Adams – Construction and Maintenance

Joe Chavez – District Public Services Officer

Heather Newell – Asst Recreation Officer

Ann Westling – Public Affairs Officer