

# **Western Meeting Summary**

## **September 25 - 27, 2009**

### **Snohomish, Washington**

The FFLA's 2009 Western Conference was held in historic Snohomish, Washington, September 25-27, hosted by Western Washington Director Forrest Clark.

Activities began Thursday evening with a barbecue at the Lord Hill Park Barn, the county facility frequently used by Forrest, Bob Adler, and others for off-site restoration work. Several who had arrived early participated ... some staying longer than others into the late evening!

Friday morning saw conference attendees gathering at the historic Waltz Building, setting up, greeting old friends, and making new ones. The morning program included the traditional round-robin introductions. Interesting bits of information on Snohomish history and old railroad activities (including fires) were presented by local author Bob Heirman. Puget Sound Interagency Coordination Center Manager Bob Reis told of the next steps in dispatching after fires are reported, and also showed a video of the Martin-Mars water bomber.

The biggest news of the morning came from Darrington District Ranger Peter Forbes during his presentation on Darrington district lookouts. Everyone was pleasantly surprised to hear from Peter that Green Mountain Lookout had been returned to its mountaintop! After temporary setbacks, delays and other priorities, project leader Adrienne Hall saw the project through, and according to Peter, was on the mountain as he spoke! Skykomish District Wilderness Specialist John Robinson presented an update on his district's lookouts and the future plans for Evergreen and Heybrook. Mount Baker-Snoqualmie NF Partnership Specialist Aleta Eng closed out the morning with a presentation on partnerships and agreements.

The Friday afternoon lookout tour was to North Mountain Lookout near Darrington, where Forrest Clark solicited support to take on the restoration of the 41-foot R-6 flat top. From the catwalk, Green Mountain Lookout could be seen through binoculars, shining brightly in the afternoon sun!

After returning to Snohomish, a short board meeting was held after dinner at the Pizza Palace. Two items of business were covered. A clarification was given on the question of proxy voting that had recently come up. The FFLA Bylaws are very clear in the methods of voting

allowed, and do not include proxies. In the second matter of business, Gary Weber offered to host the 2010 Western Conference in Northern Idaho or Western Montana, adding to the 1910 Fire Commemoration. Saturday morning saw a few more late arrivals at the Waltz Building, bringing the total conference attendance to 58. The silent auction tables were beginning to draw interest from potential bidders. Chairman Keith Argow's opening comments were followed by Ray Kresek's "100 Years of Fire Lookouts". The remainder of the morning was taken up with presentations of lookout projects by Bob Adler (Kelly Butte) and Arthur Wright (Pilchuck and Three Fingers).

The Saturday afternoon tour was to Heybrook Lookout, where Forrest proudly showed off the restoration of the cab atop the 67-foot tower. What started as a simple restoration turned into a multi-year project requiring the removal and reconstruction of the one-of-a-kind cab. Forrest again was successful in recruiting help for the following week to work on some of the finishing touches on the cab. Saturday evening's pizza dinner was followed by spirited last-minute bidding on silent auction items. After time was called and pencils put down, the totals came to a respectable \$655.50.

Sunday's lookout tour took the group to the east side of the Cascades, first to Sugarloaf Lookout where Charlie Heebner remembered his experiences as a first-year lookout 50 years earlier. He regaled the rest of the group telling how he was discovered having set up a still in the lookout, and how the story changed over the years to that of the "crazy guy that just about blew up the lookout with a still!" His other story of note involved proposing to his girlfriend back in Connecticut, who just happened to be here with him, his wife Bev.

After a lunch stop at Steliko Point Lookout, the final group stop was the Columbia Breaks Fire Interpretive Center near Entiat, where the Chelan Butte Lookout and the cab of Badger Mountain Lookout have been relocated. The new foundation for the East Flattop Lookout cab was pointed out by Dick Morrison, who was to start work there a week later.