

2013 FFLA WESTERN CONFERENCE

MAYHILL, NM

SEPTEMBER 19-23, 2013

The 2013 FFLA Western Conference was held in Mayhill, NM at the local community center. The conference started on Thursday for any early arrivals. On Thursday at 1300 everyone who came in early met at the Mayhill Café below the hotel where a few members were staying. Our first stop was at the old Mayhill Ranger Station, which today is an admin site where two engines are located during fire season. During WWII, the site was a POW camp for German prisoners; up to 12 were held at this location during the war. The next stop was at the old site of the Mayhill LO; now it just has a few artifacts of the old tower, which was relocated to James Ridge. The last stop for Thursday was at James Ridge to see the tower that was the old Mayhill tower and was moved to its new location in the late 60's. It was also raised from a 48' to a 62' tower with a small catwalk on one side so you can go in to the cab from outside and not from a trap door through the floor.

Friday's meeting started with registration at 8 am and the meeting starting at 9am. The first order of business was NM director Mark Gutzman welcoming everyone to NM. He then introduced District Ranger James Duran from the Sacramento Ranger District of the Lincoln NF. James welcomed everyone to the Lincoln NF and gave a brief overview of the lookouts on the Sacramento. James also brought along the recreation specialist from the Sacramento and led a small discussion about putting the lookouts on the district into the rental program. Keith Argow welcomed everyone to NM and the Lincoln NF. He spoke about the FFLA, getting more members into the organization. Then he talked about the fall issue of the Lookout Network newsletter that Gary Weber put together and would be in our mail by the time we got home from the conference. Mark Gutzman talked about restoration projects that were done on the Lincoln NF to a few of the lookouts and cabins. Afterwards he did a power point presentation of Monjeau LO; the first lookout there was a D6 cupola, before the current stone tower. He showed the first restoration before the Little Bear Fire and what the lookout looked like after the fire. Mark then showed the progress of the restoration and what it looks like today after the completion of the restoration.

Chris Mabli from GeodesyBase of Sisters OR spoke about the DragonPlot system that his company is working on and is used within a few lookouts in the US. The system consists of a laptop with a topo map program and a scope (like a rifle scope) that is mounted on top of an Osborne fire finder, with which can read the angle that you are looking when you spot a smoke. The system works by getting a degree reading from the Osborne and the angle of the smoke from the scope, and going to the laptop with the computer program that was created by GeodesyBase for that lookout. It already has in the program the elevation of the lookout site and the height up to the scope mounted in the lookout on the Osborne. You then type in the degree reading down to the minute with the angle from which you spot the smoke and the computer program can plot from that info where the fire is located. Chris had a power point presentation how it works and with this program if you to relocate to another spot due to fire

threatening your lookout, you can take the laptop and scope system to a temporary site, punch in elevation and height of the scope and you can make a temporary lookout site and still use the DragonPlot system to spot fires. This system is not a solution to replace lookouts, but a system to help lookout operators locate the exact location of a fire. Chris mentioned that you can purchase the scope, but you rent the high-speed laptop with the topo program and when you are done for the season, send it back to the company where they can go over and clean it up for the next season. The only requirement is that you need an Osborne fire finder in the lookout because you need to get down to the minute to get a more precise location. The www.GeodesyBase.com web site is available if you are interested in finding more out about DragonPlot.

After lunch the group went to the Sacramento Ranger Station then to the Sacramento LO. Sacramento LO was built in 1968 and is a USDA-FS CL-100, 67' tall. After Sacramento LO dinner was on your own and at 1930 there was a small board meeting at the Mayhill Hotel in Mark's room, which was a small apartment with a living room.

The Saturday meeting started at 0835 with a power point presentation of Arizona lookouts and stories of lookouts by Dave Lorenz. Due to few speakers cancelling at the last minute, we started the Saturday tour a bit earlier and we saw Bluewater LO, which was built in 1937, a 7x7 International Derrick and is 45'9" tall. The lookout is currently an inactive tower and is showing its age, so is in need of restoration work, as is the cabin below. Weed LO was built in 1926; it is 7x7 Aermotor LX-24 and is 48' tall. The lookout is in pretty good shape and is listed as a semi-active lookout on the Lincoln NF. Carrisa LO was built in 1934-35; it is 7x7 Aermotor MC-39 and is 79.6' tall. The lookout is listed as inactive, but the archeologist of the forest just restored all the building around the lookout. There was talk about putting this lookout into the rental program or even maybe putting Carrisa back as an active lookout. After Carrisa LO we returned to the Community Center in Mayhill for our dinner from the Mayhill Café of beef brisket, chili, salad and dessert. After dinner, Mark Gutzman gave a power point presentation of lookouts of New Mexico. The silent auction ended and made over \$200.

Sunday started for those in Mayhill meeting at the café and then head to Cloudcroft to meet up with the group staying there and then heading to Wofford, which is an inactive lookout. Wofford LO was built in 1933 and is a 7x7 Aermotor MC-39 and is 79.6' tall. The outbuildings have just been restored and the next thing is to do the lookout. The lookout is in good shape but does not have any windows in it at the time. Our next stop was at Ruidoso LO, which is located above the town that it gets its name from. From the main street in Ruidoso, you can see the lookout; it is an active lookout. Ruidoso was built in 1940 and is a 14x14 L-4 cab on an Aermotor MI-25 tower and is 31.6' tall. With field glasses we could see Monjeau LO from Ruidoso LO. We had lunch at [SCHLOTZSKY'S DELI](#) in Ruidoso then we were off to Monjeau LO where we met a former lookout, Diane Rose Person. She gave a little history about Monjeau and different events that happen while she was the lookout. Monjeau was built in 1940 and is 7x7 International Derrick built on a 10' tall stone base. Monjeau is listed as an active lookout. After leaving Monjeau LO, we headed to Capitán to the Smokey Bear Museum and gravesite of the original living Smokey. After the Museum we headed back to Cloudcroft to the Western Bar and Café for dinner

On Monday for those who were still around and wanted to make the trip, we head south to Dark Canyon LO. Earlier in the week before the conference it was not sure if we would make it to the lookout due to so much rain; there was so much debris on the roads that they had to get a dozer in to remove all the big rocks that were left in the road from all the rain water coming down the mountain. Dark Canyon was built in 1948 and is 7x7 Aermotor MC-99 and is 30' tall. Dark Canyon is an inactive lookout and could use some repairs to the lookout and outbuildings. After Dark Canyon we headed back to Mayhill.