

Central California/Nevada Chapter Report

2009

MEMBERSHIP: The Central California/Nevada chapter currently has 29 paid members. The end-of-year balance for this chapter was \$1,140.35, up \$104.22 from last year. This reflects an overall increase in membership. We received 1,200 new brochures which will be distributed this spring to all CCA/NV members and staffed lookouts.

RESTORATION: Beginning in 2007, archaeological processes halted most preservation efforts on lookouts in Sequoia National Forest/Giant Sequoia National Monument. Happily, the SQF is back in business operating under a Programmatic Agreement in compliance with SHPO, which allows for in-kind maintenance and repair. This got the ball rolling for **Jordan Peak**, where after a three year delay the lookout finally got a new roof. This was due in part to the efforts of volunteer and FFLA member Loren Ross, a long-time advocate for historic preservation of the remaining historic buildings on public lands. Loren also spent time traveling to other SQF guard stations and fire lookouts, providing his own labor and materials to maintain several of those facilities, including **Breckenridge** Lookout where he repaired components on the outrigger shutter system. SQF FMO Scott Williams initiated the inspection of the lightning protection system of all four of the Kern River RD lookouts and found that while Bald Mt was operationally sound, Breckenridge was not. The SQF has contracted for a complete **grounding system inspection** and necessary upgrades or repairs to be made on all 10 of its remaining lookouts.

Buck Rock Foundation volunteers spearheaded a complete restoration of the outhouse at **Delilah Lookout**. The High Sierra Trail Crew volunteers spent two days rehabilitating portions of the road and trail into **Buck Rock Lookout**. They also scraped and painted two storage outbuildings located at the base of the lookout. The Kern River RD is committed to repairing a leaky roof at **Bald Mountain Lookout** and brought **Oak Flat Lookout** back into the Recreation Rental system after the lookout was damaged in a storm in 2007.

On the Sierra NF, **Fence Meadow** restoration continued with the completion of the external and internal painting of the cab. At **Miami Lookout**, the weather station was torn apart and refurbished. The tower was dedicated as the "Joe Knowles Memorial Tower" and a monument was placed at the base of Miami in his honor. FFLA member Jeff May and his Miami cronies are going high-tech experimenting with Dragon Plot to help with pinpointing fires. They report good success. Jeff used Dragon Plot to recalibrate the fire finders at **Signal Peak, Shuteye and Fence Meadow**. Sierra Patrol Paul Waddell raised \$500 at a Smokey Bear Bike Run, which he will donate to Miami Lookout. The Sierra NF developed a Lookout Recreational Activity Guide for public information purposes.

THREATENED: Based on an engineering assessment, the Forest has determined that **Bald Mountain Lookout** on the Sierra National Forest is "not worth the liability or repair." Using already-appropriated stimulus money, the Forest plans on removing the cab in the Spring of 2010, then restore the tower for use as an observation platform. As there is local support of volunteer groups to restore the lookout, the Central California Chapter representing the FFLA will propose that necessary steps are taken to ensure that the lookout remains standing in place as is.

There is no new known development on the dismantling of **Blue Ridge** Lookout. Local CAL-Fire personnel are still attempting to get approval to move the lookout to the Tulare County Fairgrounds, but the state bureaucracy continues to thwart their efforts.

CHAPTER DEVELOPMENT: The creation of a sub-chapter of the CCA/NV FFLA called the **Yosemite/High Sierra Chapter** was approved last year. Under the development of FFLA member Jeff May, this chapter is concentrating on the fire lookout towers in Yosemite National Park and the Sierra National Forest, Bass Lake and High Sierra Districts. Lookout towers would include but not be limited to: Signal, Miami, Shuteye, Mt. Tom, Fence Meadow, Musick Mountain, Goat Mountain, Signal Peak, Henness Ridge, and Crane Flat. 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.” Jeff is working with Yosemite National Park on the placement of NHLR plaques at Henness and Crane Flat, with a dedication planned for Spring 2010.

ACTIVITIES: Discussions between Sequoia Forest Supervisor Tina Terrell and her staff and local lookout enthusiasts early in 2009 proved to be the impetus needed to move forward the arch process for continuing to restore Sequoia lookouts. During a lookout meeting in June at McNally's near Kernville, it was confirmed that management of **Baker Point Lookout** would be transferred from the Western Divide District to the Kern River District. The planning process for restoring Baker is in the beginning phase.

In May, I was invited to attend a lookout training session for the **Angeles Forest Lookout Association**. What fun to participate with Southern California Director's George and Pam Morey as they orientated newbie volunteer lookouts!

Our chapter continues to promote the importance of preserving and staffing lookouts through **community outreach**: participating in local events, attending meetings, establishing relationships with our local government agencies and other partners. The Buck Rock Foundation (BRF) publishes a quarterly newsletter for contributors to the Foundation and with compliments to FFLA board members and beginning in 2010, Central Ca/Nevada chapter members as well.

Through the Buck Rock Foundation, we are continuing to offer a **Lookout Training** program which is extended to paid lookouts as well as volunteers interested in working at a fire lookout. Our training program recruits top-notch fire, public relations and communication specialists to teach the classes, which span a two day period each Spring. Several of the volunteers who have attended our training have been hired as lookouts for both the Forest Service and BLM. FFLA members are welcome to attend!

PLAN OF WORK FOR 2010:

- RAC Grant proposal submitted 1-8-2010: Restoration work at Mt. Tom, Fence Meadow (SNF) and Delilah (SQF) [Partnership BRF and USFS]
- Begin the planning process for restoration at Baker Point (SQF)
- Southern Sierra Climbing Association partnership for project work weekend at Buck Rock in August 2010.
- Nominate Park Ridge Lookout to the NHLR
- Assist the new Yosemite/High Sierra Chapter with development, grant-writing and project work. Dedication of Yosemite Lookouts 2010.
- Celebrate lookouts in conjunction with 2010 Big Burn 100 year anniversary.

For more information on all the lookouts in this chapter, please refer to the “Central

California/Nevada Lookout Status Report.”

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Ball Allison
CCA/NV Chapter Director

Attached Reports

Nevada Fire Lookouts Status 2009

Notes: 5 total lookouts: 3 standing, and 2 still actively staffed.

ELLA MT. LO - BLM, Ely, NV District - built 1964 - 2 story –Built 1964; T 6S R 67 E Sec 2; **Still actively staffed**

MCCLELLAN PEAK LO - Built early 1930s by USFS, transferred to BLM in 1963, last staffed 1970, destroyed 1971.

PEAVINE PEAK LO - Built originally by Tahoe NF, later staffed by Nevada Division Of Forestry for a while, then abandoned in 1964 - was still standing in 1972. No longer standing, unsure of when it was removed.

YELLOW PEAK LO - BLM, Susanville, CA District, Washoe County NV, Sheldon Hart Wildlife Refuge – T45S R 21E Sec 9; Built in 1981, 9x9; **Still actively staffed**

ZEPHYR POINT LO - Built 1931 by Eldorado NF, later transferred to Toiyabe NF, later loaned to Nevada Division of Forestry then returned to Toiyabe NF, then later transferred to Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit – no longer used for fire, but still standing and used as a communications site.

Status of Lookouts In Central California 2009

Updated 9/2009

FFLA Central California Chapter Area Covers the Territory South of I-80 and North of the Tehachapi Mountains, West to (but not including) the Los Padres National Forest.

* Indicates NHLR Listing

ELDORADO NATIONAL FOREST

1. Alder Ridge* – **Recreation Rental**, *Placerville RD*
2. Armstrong Hill– **Abandoned**. *Amador RD*
3. Bald Mountain* – **Staffed 7 days GS employee** *Georgetown RD*
4. Baltic Peak* – **Abandoned**. Decommission granted through Forest Service channels. Removed. Will be relocated to Gold Bug Park. *Placerville RD*
5. Big Hill*- **Staffed 7 days GS employees** *Pacific RD*
6. Bunker Hill* – **Abandoned** *Pacific RD*
7. Leak Springs – **Staffed 7 days a week**. *Amador RD*

8. Lookout Mountain – **Removed (mid-2000's?)**
9. Robbs Peak* – **Recreation Rental** *Pacific RD*
10. Slate Mountain- **Removed 2003** *Georgetown RD*

INYO NATIONAL FOREST

1. Bald Mountain – **Standing, Not staffed in 2009**

SEQUOIA NATIONAL FOREST

1. Baker Point* – **Abandoned** – Operational management transferred from Western Divide RD to Kern River RD. Restoration pending evaluation.
2. Bald Mt* – **Staffed** 5 days with USFS GS employee. Kern River RD
3. Breckenridge* – **Staffed** 5 days with GS employee. Kern River RD
4. Buck Rock* – **Staffed** 7 days: 5 days w/GS employee and 2 days with BRF vols Hume Lake RD
5. Delilah* – **Staffed** with BRF volunteers as often as possible.
6. Jordan Peak* – **Staffed** 5 days with GS employee. Western Divide RD
7. Mule Peak* – **Staffed** 5 days with GS employee. Western Divide RD
8. Oak Flat* – **Recreation Rental**. Kern River RD
(Reservations: 760-379-5646 x-514)
9. Tobias* – **Staffed** 5 days with GS employee. Western Divide RD
10. The Needles* – **Staffed** 5 days with FS employee. Western Divide RD

SIERRA NATIONAL FOREST

1. Bald Mountain – **Abandoned** and vandalized. Local 4 wheel drive club is interested in adopting. Boy Scout troop also showed interest. USFS plans

to remove cab and restore platform for observation only purposes.

1. Fence Meadow* – **Staffed** 5 days with GS employee
3. Goat Mountain* – **Abandoned**. Talk of turning it into a Recreation Rental or Volunteer staffing program OR removing it.
4. Miami Mountain* – **Staffed** 7 days a week with Volunteers
5. Mt. Tom* – **Staffed** 5 days with GS employee
6. Musick Mtn – **Emergency use** only. Heavily laden with communications equipment
7. Shuteye – **Staffed 7 days** with GS employees
8. Signal Peak* – **Staffed 7 days** with GS employees.

STANISLAUS NATIONAL FOREST

1. American Camp – **Abandoned**
2. Duckwall – **Emergency Use Only** (Needs repair, esp. wood stairway) *Miwok RD*
3. Mt Elizabeth – **Staffed 7 days** with GS employees. *Miwok RD*
4. North Mountain – **Abandoned**. Word is the cabin and tower are still standing, but it is not in use. However, in 2008, the North Fire burned near/around the lookout and it is not confirmed that the lookout survived. *Groveland RD*
5. Pilot Peak – **Staffed 5 days** a week with GS employee. *Groveland RD*
6. Smith Peak – **Staffed 7 days** GS employee. *Groveland RD*
7. Trumbull* – **Abandoned but slated for restoration for rec. rental**. *Groveland RD*
8. Woods Ridge – **Abandoned**. Cabin and tower standing, not in use. *Groveland RD*

TAHOE NATIONAL FOREST

1. Babbitt Peak* – **Staffed 7 days** with GS employees. Needs repair

Sierraville RD

1. Calpine* – **Recreation Rental**, *Sierraville RD*
2. Duncan Peak* – **Staffed 7 days** with GS employee
3. Martis Peak* – See CDF Truckee (*Truckee RD*)
4. Grouse Ridge* – **Abandoned. Talk of turning into Recreation Rental**
5. Sardine* – **Restored**. To be put into the Rec Rental system *Sierraville RD*
6. Saddleback* – **Staffed 7 days** with contract lookout. *Downieville RD*
7. Sierra Buttes* – **Abandoned. Talk of decommissioning** – At Truckee conference we had word that they had received a RAC Grant for Restoration
8. Verdi – **Abandoned**. *Truckee RD*

TOIYABE NATIONAL FOREST

1. Leviathan* – **Not staffed**, but still standing

SEQUOIA NATIONAL PARK

1. Milk Ranch – **Abandoned** for fire detection 1996. Utilized for communications links

KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARK

1. Park Ridge – **Staffed** with BRF volunteers as often as possible

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

1. Crane Flat* – **Restored**. This lookout is now open to the public as an interpretive site but is not staffed as such. It is still used on occasion as a fire detection location during lightning busts.
2. Heness Ridge* – **Abandoned**. Some external rehab has been done, but Jeff May recently visited and reports there is increased sign of disrepair (leaky roof). Under the wings of the High Sierra/Yosemite Chapter FFLA.

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE 2009

(Historically CDF has had as many as 77 lookouts located statewide. Due to budget cuts and “people driving through with cell phones and hampered visibility due to air pollution” CDF has stopped staffing most of its lookouts in California. CAL-Fire’s official position in 2009 is that it “no longer staffs or maintains any fire lookouts.” However, unofficially, local units have the option of utilizing a lookout as needed during high fire danger or lightning activity using prevention personnel or volunteers.)

CAL-Fire Amador/El Dorado (530-644-2345)

None of these lookouts were officially scheduled to be staffed for fire season 2009.

1. Mount Danaher* – **Standing**; Plans to use for public relations.
2. Mt. Zion – **Standing and staffed as needed**.
3. Pilot Peak – **Standing and staffed as needed**.
4. Pine Hill – **Abandoned**, Heavily vandalized

CAL-Fire – Fresno/Kings

(No active lookouts)

1. Bear Mountain – **Abandoned** Land-owner’s have said they will leave the lookout in place.

1. Black Mountain – **Abandoned**
2. Cottonwood Pass - **Abandoned**
3. Owens Mountain - **Removed**

CAL-Fire – Madera/Mariposa/Merced

(No active lookouts)

1. Basalt Peak – **Standing**, used for radio used. May be abandoned.
2. Deadwood – **Abandoned**, still standing. Used for communications. May be preserved by local historian.
3. Green Mtn. – **Abandoned**, unknown if still standing.
4. Guadalupe Peak (Hwy 140) Foundation still there, lookout gone.
5. Penon Blanco – **Abandoned**, still standing.
6. Red Top – **Dismantled**
7. Williams Peak – **Abandoned, still standing.**

CAL-Fire – Nevada/Yuba/Placer (Auburn Hdtq. 530-889-0111)

All of these lookouts were staffed in some form 2009 – some are volunteers and others are prevention specialists who are CAL-Fire seasonals. It varies according to fire danger and other seasonal considerations.

1. Banner Lookout - **Standing and staffed using community volunteers**
2. Mount Howell – **Standing**, staffed on occasion.
3. Oregon Peak – **Standing and staffed using community volunteers**
4. Wolf Creek Mountain – **Standing and staffed using community volunteers**

CAL-Fire San Benito/Monterey

(No active lookouts and no plans for future use per Chief Robertson convo. 3/08)

1. Call Mountain – **Abandoned**, Bad shape will most likely be removed.
2. Calandra* – **Abandoned**; Heavily vandalized/ talk of preservation
3. Chalone Peak* – **Abandoned**; Still standing, no plans to rehab
4. Sid Ormsbee – **Abandoned; Targeted for preservation** by land-owner (Santa Lucia)
5. Smith Mountain – **Abandoned**; Still standing, no plans for rehab

CAL-Fire Tahoe/Truckee

1. Martis Peak* – **Standing, staffing unknown**; Owned by Tahoe National Forest, managed by Cal-fire and in 2008, was staffed 5 with Paid employee (paid by North Star Community) and 2 with volunteers. Unknown if staffed 2009.

CAL-Fire– Tulare County

(No active lookouts)

1. Blue Ridge* – **Abandoned**, Still standing, in disrepair. Cal-fire employees actively seeking relocation to Tulare County Fairgrounds.
2. Shadequarter – **Abandoned**, Still standing, starting to deteriorate. Used as a communications site and for training exercises.

CAL-Fire - Tuolumne/Calaveras (Capt. Allen Columbro convo. 3/08)

1. Blue Mountain – **Staffed** as needed. (*Calaveras County*)
2. Fowler – **Abandoned**. Targeted for preservation. Used for antennas)
3. Rushing (Big Hill) – **Abandoned, still standing**

4. Sierra Vista (Quiggs Mountain) – **Abandoned, metal tower.**
5. Valley Springs - **Removed**

TAHOE BASIN MANAGEMENT UNIT

1. Angora Ridge* – **Abandoned.** Unstaffed during the devastating Angora Fire of 2007.
2. Stateline – **Removed, interpretive sign at location.**

Stats – Approximately 48 federal lookouts and 30 state lookouts remain standing in Central California for a total of 78. Approximately 30 confirmed staffed for fire detection.