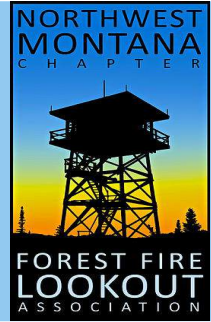


NORTHWEST MONTANA CHAPTER – FOREST FIRE LOOKOUT ASSOCIATION

*Dedicated to the preservation of forest fire lookouts
in Northwest Montana*



FALL 2017



NOTES FROM THE BOARD

2017 was a long and challenging fire management year for Land Management Agencies, to say the least. I think everyone was glad to see fall arrive in the Flathead. Despite the late start due to heavy spring snowpack, and the summer fires and smoke, NWMT-FFLA volunteers in partnership with the National Forests, Park Service, and Montana DNRC were still able to complete a substantial program of more than 1000 volunteer hours on 11 different lookouts, valued at \$31,600.

Many thanks to all the hardworking volunteers and members who have supported these efforts. Your sponsorship and participation continues to make a difference in keeping lookouts a part of Western Montana landscapes, and a resource for fire managers and the public alike. We can be proud to be one of the more active chapters in the National Lookout Association! I hope you will continue to support our work with your membership in the coming year. It means so much!

*Chuck Manning
Board Chair*



Mount Brown Lookout, overlooking Lake McDonald in Glacier National Park, spent much of the summer wrapped in protective covering, as the Sprague fire burned almost 17,000 acres of the surrounding area. We are happy to report that the lookout survived the fire.

GLACIER NATIONAL PARK

PORCUPINE RIDGE LOOKOUT ASSESSMENT

Porcupine Ridge Lookout sits in the NW corner of Glacier National Park, overlooking the Waterton Valley and gazing directly at the west face of Mount Cleveland, the highest mountain in Glacier NP.

A thorough condition assessment was badly needed as the bears and other critters have repeatedly tried to gain access to the lookout since it was last rehabilitated in 2003.

It takes a considerable effort to reach this lookout. Starting in Waterton Park you take a boat to Goat Haunt to begin the 9.7-mile hike. Fords of both Waterton River and Valentine Creek are required, as well as 17 switchbacks up the trail in the backpack trip to this lookout at 7100 feet elevation. But those who persevere are treated to amazing views that few park visitors ever see. Thanks to Greg Evans, Kyle Stetler, Molly Tingley and Chuck Manning for your time and energy to participate in this assessment.

A special thanks goes to Kelsey Bauer, GNP Backcountry Ranger at Goat Haunt who guided them up the Valentine Creek creek bed overgrown with stinging nettles and thimbleberry.





MOUNT BROWN LOOKOUT ASSESSMENT

Mount Brown, on the National Register of Historic Places, is a strenuous 5 mile 4,250' elevation gain above Lake McDonald in Glacier National Park, commanding views of Mount Vaught, McPartland Mountain and Heavens Peak towards the north, Sperry Glacier towards the east, as well as Lake McDonald in the valley far below.

This assessment was to be followed with a maintenance project, but due to protection wrapping during this summer's Sprague Fire the project was postponed. Luckily firefighters were successful in protecting the lookout from this tenacious fire. The planned project will likely be on our 2018 program.

Thank you to NWMT-FFLA volunteers Scott Murphy and Greg Evans for your effort and support on this assessment.



LONEMAN LOOKOUT ASSESSMENT

Loneman is located north of Nyack near the southern boundary of Glacier National Park. Access is by fording the Middle Fork of the Flathead River and Nyack Creek. After a 7.4-mile hike and an elevation gain of 3900 ft. you reach the historic lookout, built in 1929.

Thanks to the warm welcome of Karen Reeves, staffing the lookout, we conducted a thorough condition assessment for the Park Service.

From Loneman the assessment crew could view the south edge of the Sprague fire as well as the Great Bear Wilderness, Nyack Valley, and many spectacular mountain peaks like Mount St. Nicholas and Mount Stimson.

Thank you to NWMT-FFLA volunteers Traute Parrie, Greg Evans, Duane Bauch, and Chuck Manning for your effort and support on this assessment.



FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST

MUD LAKE LOOKOUT



Mud Lake Lookout is located 23 miles in from the Meadow Creek Trailhead on the South Fork of the Flathead River, in the Bob Marshall Wilderness.

This is our 3rd project at Mud Lake. This year's goal was to rebuild the west wall, which had failed due to some structural shortcomings. With all the windows safely removed, the crew was able to build a new strong wall from the ground up, based on last year's foundation work.

Packers from the Spotted Bear Ranger Station and Salmon Forks Outfitters supported this year's project. Two NWMT-FFLA volunteers, Rick Davis and Chuck Manning, worked with Spotted Bear Ranger District's Backcountry Facility Manager, Andy Nelson, to get the job done. Thank you to all involved!



MORAN PATROL CABIN



This cabin, also known as the Coal Ridge Cabin, is located west of Polebridge along the Pacific Northwest Trail.

A crew of NWMT-FFLA volunteers gave it another good dose of maintenance this year, scraping and painting the gable ends, as well as the south facing exterior wall and rafter tails. They also did spot scraping and painting on the other walls and rafter tails, to complete the tune-up begun last year.

Thanks to volunteers Greg Evans, Don Carroll, Scott Schermerhorn, and crew leader Traute Parrie for all your hard work to complete this job!



MONTANA DEPT. OF NATURAL RESOURCES & CONSERVATION

LITTLE NAPA LOOKOUT

It's a wrap on our two-year project on Little Napa Lookout on the Swan River State Forest.

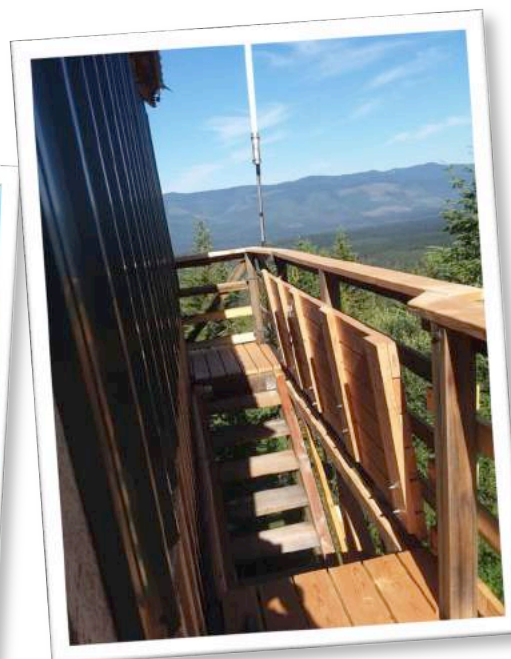
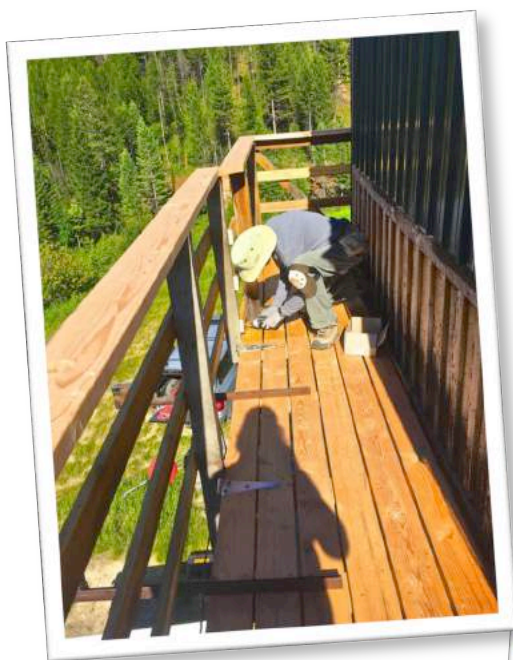
This year's work included removing the old trap door, enlarging the opening, constructing and installing a new larger weighted trap door. Catwalk decking and handrails were also replaced.

We are grateful to NWMT-FFLA volunteers Steve Penner, Doug Berglund, Barb Penner, Rick Davis, and Chuck Manning for their determination to see this project to completion.

DNRC supplied the materials and NWMT-FFLA supplied the labor.



A special thank you goes out to everyone at DNRC's Forest Division Swan Unit for the role they played in this project. Little Napa is staffed part time by DNRC.





A Birdseye View of the Future Libby Dam from Swede Mountain Lookout



In 1952, UC Berkeley college students Rod and June Ash loaded their car and traveled to Libby, MT to work for the Kootenai National Forest for the summer. Their job as lookouts on (Big) Swede Mountain Lookout would allow Rod to read and do research for his Masters degree in Anthropology and Ecology and make some money at the same time.

June recalls that the lookout was a “hub of traffic” because of its location. They had visits from the Army Corps of Engineers and the railroad. Swede Mountain is 4 miles ESE of Libby, Montana, and in 1952, the Army Corps of Engineers was designing the Libby Dam and Lake Koocanusa. It is across from the controversial asbestos mine. And because the dam was going in, they had to move the major railroad that ran through the area. “We looked right down on the railroad,” June says. “I mean, we could time ourselves whenever the train...would go through down in the basin.”

Prior to working on the lookout, June and Rod went through training in Warland, MT. “The thing I remember most about Warland was that in the evening we’d meet down at the Warland Bar as the train went through, and we would wave at people on the train. I had my first shot of whiskey down in the Warland Bar.”

As with many other lookouts, life for Rod and June consisted of living in a 50-foot high cabin on a platform, with a wood stove and a fire finder. Although a post-polio person, June did not feel the tower encumbered her any more than the outhouse they had to reach downhill from the lookout.

They regularly got water at the fish hatchery at the bottom of the hill, which they carted in big containers. June did simple laundry on the stove, but she also periodically went to a Laundromat in Libby

Gordon, June’s son, asked if they had any exciting times. June said there was a huge electrical storm coming down from Canada. They were being hit by lightning and had to sit in chairs “that had the little insulated booties on them.” They didn’t move. The storm made them think carefully about what they were doing. June said it “created immense suspense.”

Another memory involved being awakened at 3 or 4 o’clock in the morning. Herb Flodberg, the ranger, asked what they saw. They scrambled out of bed, and saw a huge fire down in the valley and some guy’s barn was on fire. Herb heard about it, probably, from the fire depot. Most fires they spotted were at the Libby dump.

Also, periodically, Herb would call at night and ask if they saw any headlights by the asbestos mine, indicating poachers. Herb caught quite a few illegal hunters that way.

The experiences June and Rod had on Swede Mountain had “an immense effect” upon their lives. Although hoping to settle in Libby, teaching jobs paid poorly. In 1969, they bought a home from Min Copra, one of the original homesteaders in the Swan Valley. They permanently moved there in 1984, continuing to raise their 4 children. Although Rod died in 2006, June has kept the home. Currently she lives in Brendan House in Kalispell.

Swede Mountain Lookout still stands guard over Libby, and now Lake Kooconusa. Swede Mountain is still actively staffed by the Kootenai National Forest.

VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION POTLUCK



In October we hosted a gathering to celebrate the season’s accomplishments with our members and especially to thank the many volunteers who worked so hard on this year’s many projects. We hope to see more of our members and partners at this event next year!

KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST

NORTHWEST PEAK LOOKOUT

Northwest Peak Lookout is located on the Kootenai National Forest in the Northwest Peak Scenic Area. Built in 1929, this L-4 lookout prototype sits at at 7606 feet in elevation, and has endured some of the most extreme weather conditions possible.

This year was the beginning of a major top to bottom restoration project on this rare gable roof L-4. Our crew first removed ceiling boards to expose the rafters. Then collar ties were installed to tie rafters together, and ceiling joists were secured to collar ties. These steps should get the lookout much closer to a stable future!

Thank you to this year's volunteer crew: Matt Heinen, MCC Intern, NWMT-FFLA volunteers Reggie Good, Barbara Bates, Peter Kitts, and Chuck Manning.

A special thank you goes out to the Three Rivers Ranger District who supplied all materials and made sure our tools and gear were delivered on-site.



BERRY MOUNTAIN LOOKOUT ASSESSMENT

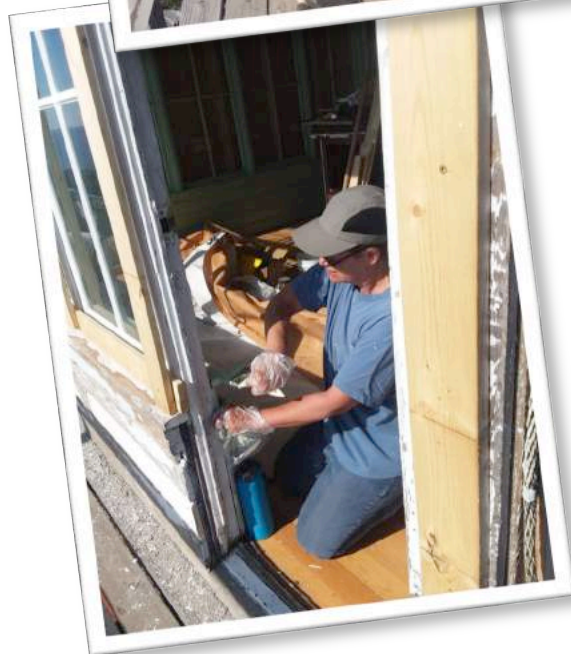
Berry Mountain Lookout is located north of Noxon and the Clark Fork River and East of the Bull River. The present lookout, built in the 60's replaces a prior observation platform from the 1930's. Berry has not been staffed for many years and is on the Cabinet Ranger District's short list to be restored.

The District completed a major project to install a new roof this summer, to protect the structure from further water damage. Structurally, the lookout is in passable shape, and we look forward to working with the Kootenai National Forest and the Cabinet Ranger District to developing a plan and further restoring this historic structure.

Our appreciation to members Doug Ferrell, Doug Lang, and Chuck Manning for this detailed assessment, the critical first step on the road to restoration.



MEADOW PEAK LOOKOUT



A NWMT-FFLA crew returned to Meadow Peak Lookout this summer to continue the good work begun with last year's project. Based out of the historic Raven Ranger Station, this summer's crew traveled each day to work on the lookout.

This year's work consisted of painting new shutters, built at the Regional Historic Preservation Shop in Missoula, in preparation for installation next year. Major structural work included replacing ceiling boards, soffit & fascia and the west wall below the windows. New materials and all exterior walls were scraped and painted. With a Phase 3 project next year, we hope to complete the major restoration at Meadow Peak.

A big thank you goes out to Matt Heinen, MCC Intern, Justin Moschelle & Cindy Hemry, KNF Archaeologists, and NWMT-FFLA volunteers Harry McAllister, Terry Richmond, Neil Jensen, Duane Bauch, Ron Erickson, and Chuck Manning for their dedication and talents this year in preserving this historic structure.

TOM ROBERTS – LOOKOUT VOLUNTEER



We thought you might like to meet Tom Roberts, the artist behind the beautiful lookout products including mugs and notecards that you have seen at our events and on our website.

Tom L. Roberts was born in Des Moines, Iowa. He graduated from Spencer High School in 1974 and studied art at the University of Northern Iowa where he earned a BA in Art Ed. in 1978. His teaching career in art has spanned the last 39 years with positions in Iowa, Virginia, Kobe, Japan, Vienna, Austria and Kalispell, Montana where he taught both two and three-dimensional art.

His love for the west was inspired by early trips to the Rockies in the 70s with his wife



Cindy and their work as seasonal park rangers in Yellowstone National Park for 20 summers. During his time as an interpretive summer ranger he presented many historical living history portraits of John Colter and his exploration of the Yellowstone region.

His attention to detail was nurtured by his love for history and his involvement in reenacting the time period from 1755 to 1810. Tom works mainly in oils and watercolors but has done some sculpting and pottery. He has had two one-man shows at the Sioux City Art Center, was the feature artist for three consecutive years at the Missouri River Expo, and had a one man show of Yellowstone historical paintings at the Yellowstone Gateway Museum in Livingston, MT. Tom's work is in many private collections in the Midwest and Montana.

He and his wife, Cindy, have two grown daughters, Lisa and Lori and he currently lives and works in Kalispell, Montana. For more information contact Tom L. Robert, at yellranger@yahoo.com.



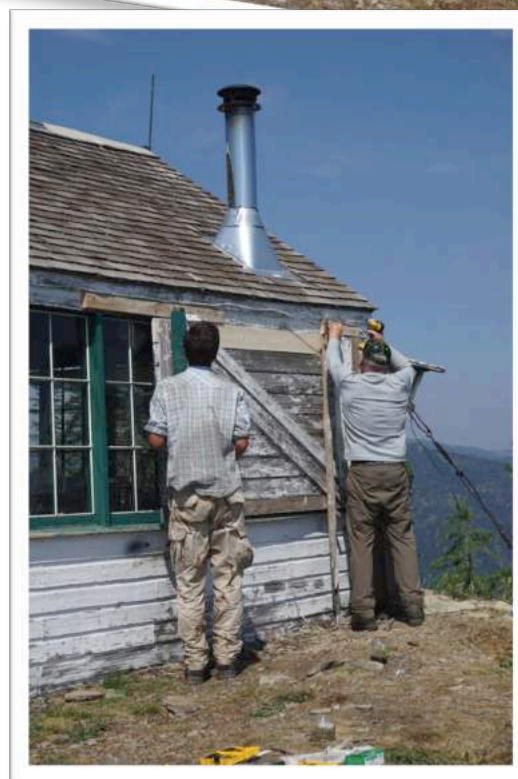
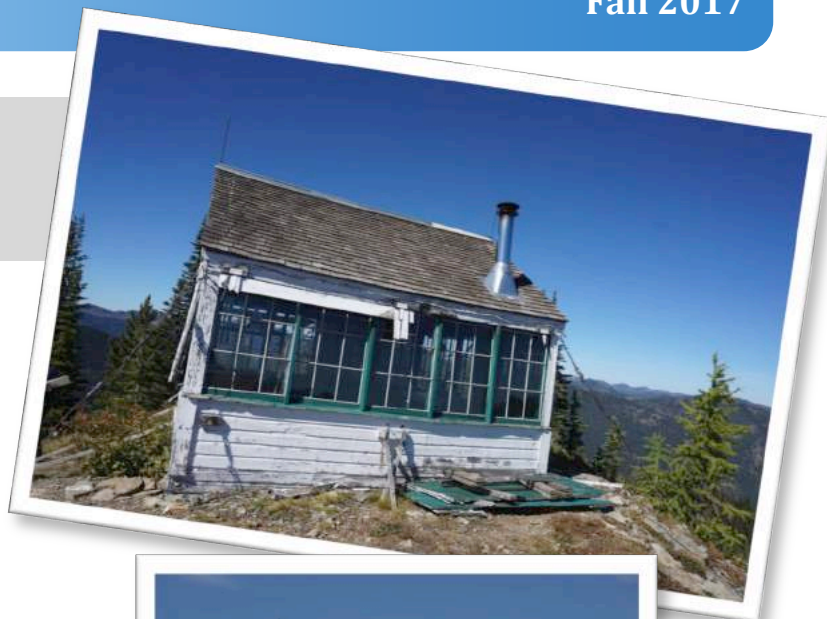
WAM LOOKOUT ASSESSMENT & PROJECT

Wam Mtn Lookout is located in the Ten Lakes Scenic Area in the Whitefish range and is about a 5-mile hike from the trailhead.

This was a two-day assessment and maintenance trip for NWMT-FFLA volunteers Traute Parrie and Chuck Manning with the assistance of the Fortine Ranger District Trail Manager, Dan Ward and crew, Scott, John, and Aaron with Archeologist Cindy Hemry.

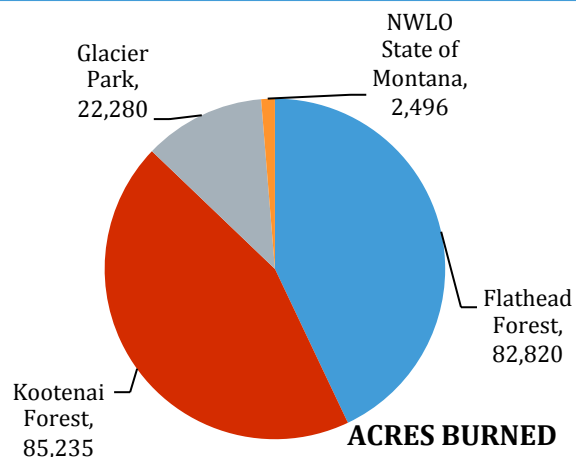
After doing a thorough assessment, the shutters got some much-needed maintenance. Over the years Wam has weathered many extreme environmental conditions at over 7100 ft in elevation, and is in need of some TLC. The shutters were repaired to withstand winter's weather events with plans to be replaced next summer.

A special thank you must go out to the Fortine RD trail crew and others who hand carried in all of the supplies we needed for this year's project.



2017 FIRE FACTS

In Western Montana in 2017, there were 289 fires, only 4 more than the prior 10-year average, but due to our extremely dry conditions, 5 times as many acres burned. In Montana as a whole, a total of 1.25 Million acres burned in 2017, 4 times the 10-year average.



A VOLUNTEER'S S PERSPECTIVE

from Traute Parrie



Traute, Rick Davis and Inez Love at Firefighter LO

As members of the NWMT-FFLA, you all understand the importance of the lookout tower as a symbol of forest protection and the ongoing need for both the towers and their symbolism. In fact, as more people play in the woods and high country, lookout towers are the destination now for mountain bikers, through-hikers, and skiers – users that didn't occur there a decade ago.

What I hope we can do now is tap into that enthusiasm for lookout towers to grow this great group of restoration volunteers! Folks like Chuck Manning and Rick Davis have demonstrated huge success in working with the agencies to establish a strong partnership and complete some beautifully done projects in the realm of pikas, wolverines, and passing hawks.

But they can't do it alone! There's much to be done. They even asked me to be a project

leader this year! Turns out Chuck made it a very easy job, even though I traveled quite a few miles, from Red Lodge. And I met yet more cool people in this community of fire tower lovers.

If you are even contemplating volunteering for a project, don't hesitate. The payoff is more than you expect. And, if you've already worked on a restoration project, please say yes if Chuck asks you to lead a project, as you already know how quickly projects fill up and the limiting factor is not volunteers, but project leaders.

And where else can you work on Montana's rooftop, with views of Canadian Rockies, or Hungry Horse Reservoir blanketed in fog, or sit in the middle of a lightning storm? Come follow in the footsteps of Edward Abbey, and now Buck, and Karen Reeves. We need you.



**NORTHWEST
MONTANA**
C H A P T E R



**FOREST FIRE
LOOKOUT**
A S S O C I A T I O N

WILDERNESS SPEAKER SERIES

We will again be a co-sponsor of a great speaker series this winter with the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation and Montana Wilderness Association. Planned talks at FVCC at 7:00 p.m. are:

- **Wednesday Feb 7 – Coulter Pence & John Fraley – Wild & Scenic Rivers : 50 Year Anniversary**
- **Wednesday March 7 – Andrew J. Larson - The Untrammeled Observatory—Lessons from Wilderness Fire**
- **Wednesday April 4 – Rick Mace - The Recovery of Grizzly Bears in Montana**

Stay tuned for info this spring on our 2018 fundraisers & projects on and our website: <http://www.nwmt-ffla.org>



NWMT-FFLA

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