



ON THE LOOKOUT

From the
National Chairman
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WHY NOT ADOPT A LOOKOUT? THE BENEFITS ARE HUGE!

Last year I wrote a column promoting a new FFLA initiative: The LOOKOUT STEWARD program. The purpose is to recognize folks willing to adopt a lookout and work with the agency/owner to help maintain it. The Steward would receive a certificate and be listed on the National Historic Lookout Register. People who step forward to adopt a lookout, much as groups adopt a stretch of highway, agree to visit it periodically, keep it clean and serve as a special advocate. The program is flexible. It can be a person, a family, a Scout Troop, or a group of people who adopt several lookouts with additional support and recognition as a sub-chapter of the FFLA.

Every fire lookout is unique in some way. Folks like us understand how important they are, how useful they can be, and their important role to the American forestry heritage. They are also a great place to apply your carpentry skills while camping in a glass house surrounded by your favorite forests and mountains.

To get started, all you have to do is tell me which lookout or lookouts in which you are interested via the email address below. We will then check with the District Ranger or manager and find out if they will work with a Lookout Steward partner. Most often the answer is yes. The next step is an informal interview and compatibility check. Then comes an brief written agreement, often in the form of a Memo of Understanding, describing what is expected of the Lookout Steward, and what the agency will do to support your work.

The Lookout Steward program is not an exclusive cabin use program. Yes, you will be able to stay there during work trips, but as public property other folks

are welcome too, much as it is in a Pacific Crest Trail Shelter or an Appalachian Trail Shelter. Once folks become aware that a lookout has a designated Steward, they may offer their volunteer services as well. In some cases the lookout remains locked but the Steward and the agency host periodic "open house" days for the public to visit. In other locations group comes of lookout enthusiasts emerges, the agency provides fire detection training and a uniform shirt, and soon the lookout is back in service spotting fires with volunteers. About one in five active lookouts in the U.S. are now staffed with volunteers, and the number grows.

Again, every Ranger District is unique. Some of the managers will welcome the assistance in clean up and keeping an eye on the place, while others will encourage a full volunteer fire observer program. With chapters or designated representatives in all 50 states, we are in an excellent position to promote and support Lookout Stewards. At FFLA we are in the business of opening doors to opportunity!

WHAT IS A LOOKOUT STEWARD?

- Lookout Stewards are individuals willing to "Adopt a Lookout." They are the "go to" person for the site.
- They serve as liaison to the responsible agency to coordinate volunteer activities.
- Activities may include light maintenance, periodic inspections, opening and closing each season.
- They work closely with the Lookout Host Volunteer staffing program, or paid observers.
- There is excellent potential for a Lookout Steward to assist ranger district staff in monitoring rental lookouts.
- They maintain supply of FFLA brochures at the lookout.
- They keep contact with the agency manager of the lookout and the leadership of the FFLA chapter or sub-chapter.

HOW DO I BECOME A LOOKOUT STEWARD?

- Contact me at the email below with a brief description of yourself and identify the lookout.
- We will contact the district ranger or fire management officer to determine their interest.
- As soon as we get an answer, we notify you right away.
- After review and signing of a co-op agreement, your appointment is official.
- The information is posted on the lookout site on the National Historic Lookout Network.

Interested? I sure hope so. The continued use and/or maintenance of many fire lookouts will be greatly enhanced if we are able to make this program work. Abandoned buildings begin to look more abandoned every year and vandalism does more damage. We can help stop that. Fact is, there are already probably

at least 25 folks reading this column who are in fact already serving as Lookout Stewards please let me know who you are so you can get the recognition you deserve!

Last year I announced this as my #1 Objective for 2010. Please let me hear from you. The first step has to be yours.

I look forward to sharing “lookout magic” with many of you at these summer meetings!

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