

FOREST FIRE LOOKOUT ASSOCIATION, WELCHES, OREGON SUMMARY

September 16 - 18, 2011

The 2011 FFLA Western Regional Conference was held in the Mount Hood, Oregon area September 16-18. The Friday and Saturday conference sessions were held at the Mount Hood Lions Club on Highway 26, while evening barbecue and social activities, as well as the Friday evening board meeting, took place two miles down the road at the Mount Hood RV Park where many conference attendees were staying.

A few early arrivals took advantage of the opportunity to hike to Devils Peak Lookout on Thursday. Located within a recent addition to the Salmon-Huckleberry Wilderness, the future of the lookout and any restoration activities are unknown at this time.

Thursday evening's barbecue at the RV park drew a sizeable crowd, as new friendships were made and old ones renewed. Once again, Ray Grimes proved to be the master chef, grilling to perfection the brats and burgers provided by the host Oregon Chapter.

After setting up at the Lions Club early Friday morning, the group of forty-some lookout enthusiasts was welcomed by Zigzag District Ranger Bill Westbrook, who also gave an update on the local fire status; with cool, damp weather, closures had been rescinded that would have precluded some lookout tours.

After the customary round of introductions, Mt. Hood NF Historian Allie Wenzl gave a presentation on lookouts of the Mt. Hood. Rick McClure, Archaeologist for the Mt. Hood and the Gifford Pinchot NFs was unable to attend, but sent a powerpoint presentation on the Red Mountain Lookout restoration project that is nearing completion. During breaks, everyone perused the silent auction tables, as well as tables of used books for sale by Howard Verschoor and Ray Kresek to benefit the Oregon Lookout Restoration fund and Washington's Chuck Butler Memorial fund.

Friday afternoon's lookout tour took the group across the Cascade Crest, first to Fivemile Butte Lookout (left), and then to Flag Point Lookout (right). The renters at Fivemile graciously shared the mountaintop and the 30-foot R-6 flat lookout with the group for an hour before the short trip to Flag Point, which was unstaffed that day. From the cab of Flag Point's 41-foot R-6 flat, Howard pointed out where he and Deb currently live in Tygh Valley and enjoy looking up at the lookout nearly every day.

Back at the RV park, the grill was fired up and the tables once again filled with a variety of potluck items, for another delightful barbecue. Later in the evening, a short, but productive, board meeting was held (see p. 3).

Saturday morning's session was geared more toward FFLA activities. Chairman Keith Argow gave the "State of the FFLA" address, followed by Gary Weber describing how membership dues are distributed and used between chapter accounts, cost of the Lookout Network magazine, and other FFLA activities. A short rundown on the proposed bylaws amendments was given, as well as other highlights from the previous evening's board meeting. Forrest Clark gave an update on the Green Mountain lawsuit, and Charlie Heebner told of plans for the restoration of Hoodoo Lookout and the associated facilities at the Umatilla NF site. The morning breaks allowed for valuable networking and discussion.

Zigzag Assistant Fire Management Officer Jeremy Goers escorted the group to Hickman Butte Lookout Saturday afternoon, where member FFLA Jim Kelley welcomed the group to his immaculately kept 41-foot L-4.

After dinner at the Lions Club, the silent auction concluded with over \$600 going to the Oregon Lookout Restoration fund.

Sunday's tour, once again led by Jeremy, started with a visit to Clear Lake Butte Lookout (left), where the group was welcomed by FFLA member Carol Johnson, who has staffed the 41-foot R-6 flat lookout for several years. After an interesting stop at the Clackamas Lake Historic Ranger Station, Sisi Butte Lookout (right) was the final stop for the group. Although not regularly staffed full-time this year, the 40-foot tower with an octagon cab was being staffed because of fires still burning on the forest.

While many departed for home either Sunday or early Monday, several enjoyed the additional unique opportunity to be escorted to the three lookouts on the Warm Springs Reservation on Monday. The recent change in the weather allowed for access to all three lookouts; earlier fire activity had left that in doubt. First on the day's trip was Shitike Butte; the 80-foot Aermotor was the only one still staffed. The next stop was Eagle Butte and its 83-foot tower overlooking the Warm Springs community. The final lookout on the tour was Sidwalter Butte's 100-footer that, like Eagle, had been closed for the season only a few days earlier. After leaving Sidwalter and getting back down to the highway, the group said their goodbyes, and headed their separate ways, with another successful Western Conference in the books!