



ON THE LOOKOUT

From the
National Chairman
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Vienna, Virginia
Winter 2009

THE TIME IS NOW TO START UP "LOOKOUT STEWARDS"

ARE YOU ONE OF OUR MEMBERS WILLING TO ADOPT A LOOKOUT AND CARE FOR THE "LAST OF THE LEAST AND THE BEST OF THE REST"?

In recent columns some of you have noticed references to "Lookout Stewards." These are a core group of dedicated FFLA members who have come forward to "adopt a lookout" as its special advocate. Every fire lookout is unique in some way, which is why folks like us understand how important they are, how useful they can be in public safety and service, and their important role to the American forestry heritage. The 2000 or so fire towers and lookouts that remain standing across the United States are in various states or repair, may be either in the process of being phased out or in a few cases being upgraded for continued use. A handful, like Hancock in western Massachusetts and Happy Camp in northern California are new.

About 80 lookouts in America have received extensive maintenance within the last 10 years ranging from new roofs (the most common upgrade) to foundation repair. New glass, paint and carpentry work are annual activities accomplished by agency personnel responsible for the structure. Many FFLA members volunteer their services to help get these things done in partnership with agency staff. Each year the FFLA appropriates \$2,500 in matching restoration grants, plus another \$500 in emergency repair and stabilization money. By coming forward with even these limited matching dollars, we have encouraged folks to go after much larger amounts, sometimes in excess of \$100,000 in order to complete more expensive renovations needed.

Sometimes FFLA is the leader in these restorations, but more often we are a silent, but very important, partner committed to getting the job done without

seeking credit. We do it because we care, and it is the right thing to do. Too often we have seen these historic sentinels of the forest gradually fall into disrepair and decay into the ground, much like a shipwreck pounded by weather and surf. Why? Because those who knew of the coming destruction had neither the authority, responsibility, or gumption to step forward to make a difference.

The history of the FFLA is full of individuals who cared enough to take charge. As a group we have had remarkable success. But what are the chances that individual lookouts will get the care and support needed? It depends upon who shows up.

It is time to stop leaving these important tasks to "those who show up." FFLA already has Chapters or Representatives in all 50 states. We can and should start a nationwide program of Lookout Stewards.

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 both the agency manager of the lookout and the leadership of the FFLA chapter or sub-chapter.

HOW DO I BECOME A LOOKOUT STEWARD?

- * Contact the district ranger, forester, or fire management officer responsible for the lookout you are interested in.
- * Determine if they would appreciate a lookout steward.
- * If yes, notify FFLA: chairman@firelookout.org. We will do the next step if you haven't.
- * Contact your FFLA chapter or sub-chapter leader (see list on back page of Lookout Network).
- * After review and signing of a co-op agreement, FFLA Chairman will confirm the appointment.
- * Position is posted on the lookout site on the National Historic Lookout Network as the Lookout Steward.

Interested? I surely hope so. The continued use and/or maintenance of many fire lookouts could be greatly enhanced if we are able to make this program

work. Fact is, there are already probably at least 25 folks reading this column who are in fact already serving as lookout stewards through local arrangements. This will be your Chairman's #1 Objective for our 2010 FFLA program.

The Lookout Steward program is worth doing, and I need your help and enthusiasm to make it happen.

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