

# **CALIFORNIA SIERRA NEVADA CHAPTER**

## **2019 ANNUAL REPORT (12-30-19)**

The California Sierra Nevada Chapter addresses Forest Fire Lookouts from the area of Kernville, CA to the South, continuing North thru Sequoia/Inyo/Sierra/Stanslaus/Eldorado/Toiyabe and Tahoe National Forest to Interstate 80, West to Route 99 and East thru the State of Nevada. Included here are CDF (California Department of Forestry, i.e. Cal Fire Lookout Towers in the Sierra Foothills.

### **SIERRA/NEVADA FORESTS---**

Forest fires continue to change some of the dynamics within the forests, as well as, the use of lookouts, the financial ability of the Forest Service to maintain and/or restore lookouts and how they intend to use them within their forest. Each one appears to take a different direction from the other. Some towers are inactive, some they have no interest in restoring, and some they want to use for other purposes, i.e. rentals, Interpretative centers, etc. This will be discussed in further detail as relates to Eldorado National Forest.

### **RESEARCH---**

Research continues to be an essential part of the development of the territory, as is personal contact, cold calls, and how I might be supportive of the National Forests or CDF facilities.

### **MEMBERSHIP---**

Recent updated Membership lists from Gary Weber indicate members from as far away as Texas and Kansas to the Pacific Ocean as relates to the California Sierra Nevada Chapter.

### **FOUNDATIONS---**

There are two subchapters that I am presently familiar with that include the independent foundation called the Buck Rock Foundation, which essentially mans the lookouts within the Sequoia National Forest/Park. Their chairperson is Kathy Allison. I continue to have a close working relationship with her, and she keeps me informed of issues within her area, as well as

issues outside of her area and the Forests in general. Another subchapter called the Miami Chapter runs the Miami Lookout within the Sierra National Forest. The Fire Coordinator there is Barbara Thurmann.

#### **FINANCIAL---**

I have a business account for the California Sierra Nevada Chapter which presently has a balance of \$853.09 . Including some minimal interest. This will continue to be used to support FFLA interests within the territory. Some additional funds are still being maintained by Gary Weber. I will be advising Gary of the accounting amounts by a separate e-mail in the next day or two.

#### **INFORMATION ON FOREST/CDF CONTACTS---**

During 2019 I made some cold calls and appointment calls to National Forests and CDF locations as a greet and meet to identify myself to Forest and CDF personnel. I have had some successes and will review those in future paragraphs.

#### **SEQUOIA NATIONAL FOREST/PARK—**

The Buck Rock Foundation Volunteer Fire Lookout Program this year had 44 lookout volunteers which staffed Delilah Lookout 145 days, Park Ridge 123 days, and Buck Rock 38 days. Ages of volunteers ranged from 20's to 94. They continue to work on preservation projects and do inspections as well as education and outreach. Thru cooperative discussions between Kathy Allison, myself, and the Buck Rock Foundation we have addressed an area of concern that has previously been e-mailed to FFLA Leadership.

1. **Penon Blanco Lookout—**With Buck Rock Foundation support and a request by me. an Assessment team met with BC (Battalion Chief) Steven Ward and spent several hours surveying the Lookout on 12-9-19. An engineering report is in process of being written. Based on the team review the lookout has very good views of important areas and would be useful as a fire detection location. It is in the foothills of Mariposa County where there were many fires with devastating consequences. This is a Cal Fire lookout. I want to thank the Buck Rock Foundation and Kathy's team in addressing the Lookout's issues.
2. Kathy and I have also tried to address an issue with the Sequoia NF in that they no longer appear to be committed to staffing lookouts. Last year was the lowest number of staffed lookouts in the Forest with only four standing functional lookouts staffed to include Buck Rock, Delilah, Bald Mountain and Jordan Peak. A couple of the lookouts

that are not in use have the fire finders in the attics of the lookouts. Both lookouts are ground cabins and would be easy to vandalize.

3. Baker Point-- The Buck Rock Foundation has committed to the Sequoia NF to provide the Kern River Ranger District with a similar engineering survey of Baker Point. The District is looking for funding and partnership and there is a possible benefactor in the wings. The lookout is in serious need of help on restoration to the best of my knowledge. KATHY IS POSING A QUESTION TO THE FFLA BOARD TO CONSIDER, THAT IF A DONOR WAS TO CONTRIBUTE A LARGE SUM OF MONEY, i.e. 20 K WOULD THE FFLA CONSIDER ADMINISTERING THAT MONEY IF THE BUCK ROCK FOUNDATION DOESN'T. THIS IS AN UP IN THE AIR IDEA AT THIS TIME.

#### **INYO/SIERRA NATIONAL FOREST—**

Having had no prior success with the Inyo National Forest, Kathy Allison was recently able to provide a PIO contact name, address, and telephone number for contact. The Inyo has one lookout which is the Bald Mountain Lookout and is advertising for a paid lookout. I did make verbal and email contact with the PIO of the Inyo and offered if they ever decide to change their modus operandi we would have some interests in forming a volunteer Chapter, and she appreciated the contact. It is in the Mono Lake Ranger District. Barbara Thurmann, with the Miami Group operates the Miami Lookout. Both Kathy and I have had limited contact with her as to what is occurring within her group. Some lookouts are Volunteer, hybrid, or paid lookouts.

#### **STANISLAUS NATIONAL FOREST—**

My contact continue to remain with Kathy Strain, Resource Manager for the Stanislaus. I have nominated seven towers for the NHLR. I have received back the official recognitions and took them directly to Kathy Strain including signs and she was most appreciative. This includes Woods Ridge, North Mountain, American Camp Lookout, Elizabeth Mountain, Smith Peak, and Duckwall Mountain.

#### **ELDORADO NATIONAL FOREST—**

I have continued my conversations with Jordan Serin, Archaeologist for the Eldorado National Forest. National FFLA has approved (2) \$500.00 grants, one for Robbs Peak and one for Bunker Hill Lookouts over the past 2 years. Robbs Peak will be put into the Rental Program. Bunker Hill Lookout appears to be the one with the most possibilities. I have been working heavily with Jordan Serin, Jenifer Chapman, Regional PIO for the Western Forest Service Region, and Kristi Schroeder, Acting PIO Eldorado National Forest and others to form a partnership with FFLA either on restoration, staffing, or other ideas within the forest to include training, manning

lookouts for paid lookouts on vacation, or to specifically man Bunker Hill Lookout with volunteers. In that light the following has taken place:

1. Attended the Eldorado County Fair in June 2019, a 4-day event in cooperation with the Eldorado National Forest.
2. Approximately 40 individuals provided e-mail addresses to support restoration and/or staffing.
3. Went back to Placerville on 8-17-19 and took a visit to Bunker Hill Lookout with approximately 15-20 people including Forest Service personnel.
4. Returned to Placerville to present on 11-13-19, two Power Point presentations to the Eldorado National Forest Leadership Team (approx. 10 people) and the Eldorado/Amador County Public Forum and group of Forest professionals (approx. 30 people).
5. Recent conversations indicate we may know something in the later part of winter, as the forest disperses its resources financially.
6. There had been a request outside of the Eldorado National Forest interests, by an employee of the Forest Service who is a preservationist asking if we would support a Placerville Heritage Project. This has been submitted to the FFLA Senior leadership. They wanted to piggyback our 501c3. I understand from last conversations that this will not be approved.

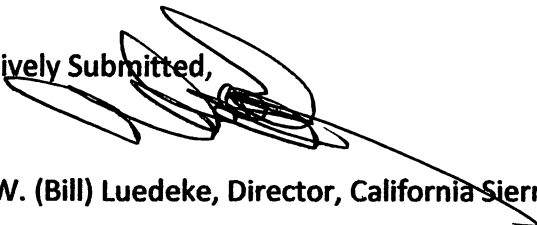
#### TAKOE/TOIYABE NATIONAL FOREST/CDF/NEVADA BLM—

I will continue my cold calls to these locations but continue to have no contacts to directly address what we can do for them, not getting beyond the front desk.

#### PLANS FOR 2020—

1. I plan to make multiple trips up North in my areas of responsibility to address FFLA and what we can do for their Forest or Cal Fire.
2. Submit grant proposals as appropriate, and NHLR requests.
3. Continue my work with the Eldorado National Forest and a possible FFLA Chapter.

Respectively Submitted,



Arthur W. (Bill) Luedeke, Director, California Sierra Nevada Chapter (FFLA)

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