

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

## National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (formerly 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information.

\_\_\_\_\_ New Submission        X   Amended Submission

### A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

L-4 Fire Lookouts in the USFS Northern Region (Region 1), 1932-1967

### B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

Lookout Development on the Bitterroot National Forest

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date August 7, 2017

### D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

L-4 Fire Lookouts in the USFS Northern Region (Region 1), 1932-1967

Idaho & Montana

Name of Multiple Property Listing

State

**Table of Contents for Written Narrative**

Create a Table of Contents and list the page numbers for each of these sections in the space below.

Provide narrative explanations for each of these sections on continuation sheets. In the header of each section, cite the letter, page number, and name of the multiple property listing. Refer to *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* for additional guidance.

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 250 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Name of Property Idaho, Montana
County and State L-4 Fire Lookouts in the USFS Northern Region (Region 1), 1932-1967
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

### E. Statement of Historic Contexts

#### Fire Lookout Development on the Bitterroot National Forest

The following appends to the original *L-4 Fire Lookouts in the USFS Northern Region (Region 1), 1932-1967* multiple property document accepted in 2017. This appended form focuses on the L-4 Lookouts of the Bitterroot National Forest.

Originally established as the Bitter Root Reserve in 1897, the majority of the reserve at that time was located on the west slope of the Bitterroot Mountains in Idaho. In 1906, Elers Koch conducted an inspection of the Montana side of the reserve. He described the steep mountains on the west side of the Bitterroot Valley as “very bad fire country.” The previous year, one fire on the West Fork of the Bitterroot River drainage had burned a considerable area, requiring the forest administrators to suspend all “free” public use of the area through the fire season. At the time of Koch’s inspection, few trails accessed the Bitterroot Mountains, on either side of the divide. He concluded that a much larger ranger force would be the only protection against fires in the Bitterroot Mountains.<sup>1</sup>

After the issuance of the 1916 regional directive on developing fire detection and suppression systems, the Bitterroot National Forest began the process of identifying appropriate lookout points and equipping them with minimal improvements. Between 1922 and 1928 a handful of log and frame cupola-style lookout structures were built at lookout points in the Bitterroot Valley, from east of Stevensville to south of Darby.<sup>2</sup> However, the most remote and difficult to access terrain was in Idaho, in the Selway River country, on what was known historically as the Bear Creek (Moose Creek) and Salmon Mountain districts.<sup>3</sup> Both districts transferred to the Bitterroot National Forest’s administration from adjacent forests in the late nineteen-teens. Forest examiners’ reports from the early 1920s indicate the challenges in developing fire protection infrastructure in the remote Idaho backcountry. In a 1920 memo, Elers Koch described the area as follows:

The Bear Creek (Moose Creek) and Salmon Mountain Districts are probably the most remote and virgin wilderness country in the Northwest, possibly in the United States. A great deal has been done in the last five years to explore and open up this country.<sup>4</sup>

While trails, phone lines, and even detailed mapping of the country remained to be completed, Koch found that the Salmon Mountain District appeared to be fairly well covered by lookouts “... at least there are as many as the present protection allotment would justify.” Koch had visited three, Spot Mountain, Burnt Knob, and Salmon Mountain, all of which he described as “well selected and first-class lookouts.” However, none had any improvements other than a map board; lookout men resided in tent camps located at the closest water source.

Koch acknowledged that the Bear Creek District was more difficult to cover with lookout points, noting that “... the country is so cut up by deep canyons that it is very hard to see it without an excessive number of lookouts ...” In 1920, the district had only two lookouts in use (Moe Peak and Wylies Peak). While the district’s organizational map showed

<sup>1</sup> Elers Koch, Forest Inspector, “Report on Bitter Root Reserve, Montana,” December 1906. Folder: Bitterroot NF 1933-1938 2 of 3; Box 2 Bitterroot – Cabinet 1931-1938, Record Group 95 (hereinafter RG 95) USFS Regional Office Missoula, MT, Inspection Reports 1906-1944 (hereinafter Regional Office Inspection Reports 1906-1944), National Archives and Records Administration, Seattle (hereinafter RG 95, NARA Seattle).

<sup>2</sup> Ray Kresek, 1984 *Fire Lookouts of the Northwest*. Fairfield Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 388-389.

<sup>3</sup> 1936 Bitterroot National Forest Map. Folder: F – Plans Bitterroot Suppression, Box 21, Series: BIT05 Forest Supervisors Alpha Files ca 1900-1963 (hereinafter BIT05), RG 95 Records of the Forest Service Bitterroot National Forest NARA Seattle.

<sup>4</sup> Elers Koch “O Supervision-Inspection East Selway.” Report submitted September 8, 1920. Folder: Bitterroot NF 1933-1938 2 of 3; Box 2 Bitterroot – Cabinet 1931-1938, RG 95 Regional Office Inspection Reports 1906-1944, NARA Seattle.

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two other lookout points, one at Gardner (a.k.a. Gardiner) Peak and one somewhere on Running Creek, Koch felt that the former was unsatisfactory, and that the latter point had not yet been identified.<sup>5</sup>

Two years after Koch's trip to the Idaho side of the Bitterroot National Forest, Howard Flint conducted another inspection of the Salmon Mountain District. He examined the site of the Spot Mountain Lookout, where he found a log cabin nearing completion. The building had been built with locally available materials with time contributed by the lookouts and firemen. While Flint acknowledged that the two men responsible for the majority of the construction did a creditable job, the building was not built from a standard plan: "It will be difficult to maintain in good shape and, because of faulty design, not fully satisfactory in use. The point is that one of the accepted standards of lookout buildings should have been built and at least the man in charge of the job should have been a skilled builder with instructions to put quality within reason, into the job."<sup>6</sup>

At the Swet Lake Lookout site, men were cutting logs for lookout house, but a specific site had not been selected for its construction. He noted that the Salmon Mountain Lookout site was one of the "most commanding" lookout points in the region, and that trees were being cut locally for the construction of a "standard log lookout building." At the site of the Nez Perce Peak Lookout, he found a standard cupola-style log lookout house under construction:

The plan was being adhered to and the workmanship on the house so far as it had progressed was good. The use of the scribing and fitting method for the logs would have been an improvement but the log work being done was good. Emphasis should be placed on the need for good weather proof work on window and door frames. Mr Goodhue who is in charge on the job is a mechanic of considerable skill and can turn off (sic) good work if he is impressed with the idea that that is what is wanted.<sup>7</sup>

Flint completed his critique of the lookouts on the Salmon Mountain District by stating that he thought they were only sixty to sixty-five percent effective in detecting fires. He noted that at least part of the problem was a lack of improvements—specifically lookout houses.<sup>8</sup>

The Bitterroot continued to develop its comprehensive fire protection plan throughout the remainder of the 1920s. Like every other forest in the region, the Bitterroot acknowledged that lookout men functioned as its principal agents of fire detection, yet most districts were slow to provide them with the improvements that would aid them in their work.<sup>9</sup> In the spring of 1930, five of the forest's districts updated their fire protection plans, apparently in preparation for finalizing the comprehensive forest-wide fire protection plan, which was completed in 1931.<sup>10</sup> On the Montana side of the forest, Darby Ranger District identified Deer Mountain Lookout as its main lookout point, supplemented by firemen stations at Trapper Creek Ranger Station, Rye Creek, Bald Top, Sleeping Child Ranger Station, at the community of Grantsdale, and at Black Bear Ranger Station. Only Deer Mountain had permanent improvements—a 1926 log cupola cabin.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Howard Flint, Forest Inspector, Supervision Inspection Report 1922. Folder "Bitterroot National Forest Inspection Reports, 1933-1920 2 /3," Box 2 "Bitterroot – Cabinet," RG 95 Regional Office Inspection Reports 1906 -1938, NARA Seattle.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 4

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> "Bitterroot NF West Fork District Fire Plan, Revised 5/15/1930." Folder: F-Plans Bitterroot Prevention (1 of 2), Box 21, RG 95, Records of the Forest Service Bitterroot National Forest, Forest Supervisor's Files, Alpha Files F-Plans F – Statistic (Hereinafter Bitterroot Supervisor's Alpha Files), NARA Seattle.

<sup>10</sup> T. E. Smith "Prevention Plan Supplement", June 15, 1951. Folder: F Plans – Bitterroot Prevention CY 1948 through 1955, Box 21, BIT 05, RG 95 Records of the Forest Service, Bitterroot National Forest, NARA Seattle.

<sup>11</sup> "Fire Plan for Darby District for 1930." Folder: F-Plans Bitterroot Prevention (2 of 2), Box 21, RG 95 Bitterroot Supervisor's Alpha Files, NARA Seattle; Kresek 1984, *Fire Lookouts of the Northwest*, 388.

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The East Fork District identified two lookout points, one at Fish Lake Mountain (which served as the district's primary lookout), and another at Sula Peak.<sup>12</sup> In 1930, neither of these lookouts had permanent improvements.

The West Fork District identified three fire detection points including: Quartzite Mt., Piquette Mt., and Bare Cone. Both Piquette Mt. and Bare Cone contained lookout structures; a frame cupola at Piquette Mt. built in 1928, and a two-story log cabin at Bare Cone built in 1922. The district also proposed placing a combination lookout-fireman at Chicken Cr. Ridge.<sup>13</sup>

On the Idaho side of the Bitterroot Mountains, the Paradise District (managed jointly with the Nez Perce National Forest), had completed seen area maps for two primary and one secondary lookout points, Spot Mt., Nez Perce Peak, and Beaver Jack. All three of these lookout points contained lookout structures built in the early 1920s. The district also planned to create seen area maps for its secondary and emergency points, which included Mt. George, Burnt Strip Mt., Vance Mt., Back Luck, and Peach Creek. In keeping with the ever-changing nature of protection plans, an undated hand-written revision on the Paradise District plan noted that the Burnt Strip Mt. and Vance Mt., and a previously unidentified point, Mt. Geb, were reclassified as primary lookout points.<sup>14</sup>

On the Salmon Mountain District, the Salmon Mt. Lookout remained its only primary lookout point, with the lookout man working from a log cupola lookout structure built in 1928:

There is at present only one primary lookout on the District, Salmon MT. This is the highest point on the District and best located with best facilities for detecting and reporting fires. Headquarters and every man in the Salmon District rely on the Salmon Mt. lookout as the principal source of information for detection and follow-up on fires. In addition to keeping close watch for smoke the lookout on Salmon keeps weather records and reports each day to Red River through Burnt Knob. Anometer, psychrometer and hydro-thermograph reading(s) are given in this report. The lookout on this point will not go to fires unless relieved or given special instruction by the ranger.<sup>15</sup>

The Salmon Mountain District also stationed men at Waugh (Lost Packer), Mount Harrington, Square Top, Hells Half Acre, and Elkhorn Mt. These men were instructed to act as lookouts when not actually engaged in fighting fire. Those stationed at Hell's Half Acre and Square Top were to be replaced while away from their stations, because of the importance of the points in detecting fires.<sup>16</sup>

In 1937, the regional office dispatched Elers Koch (then serving as the Assistant Regional Forester) to conduct a general inspection of the Bitterroot National Forest. Under the heading "Lookout Development," Koch wrote "The Bitterroot is probably further behind than any Forest in the Region on lookout improvements, except for the Moose Creek District. This seems to be due to the reluctance of the former Supervisor to push this class of work."<sup>17</sup> Koch included a table that listed the number of "regular" and "first call emergency" lookout points in each district and the number that had

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<sup>12</sup> "Bitterroot National Forest, East Fork District, Fire Plan" 5/6/1930. Folder: F-Plans Bitterroot Prevention (2 of 2), Box 21, RG 95 Bitterroot Supervisor's Alpha Files, NARA Seattle. Note that the East Fork District is roughly equivalent to the current Sula District.

<sup>13</sup> "Bitterroot National Forest West Fork District, Fire Plan" revised 5/15/1930. Folder: F-Plans Bitterroot Prevention (2 of 2), Box 21, RG 95 Bitterroot Supervisor's Alpha Files, NARA Seattle.

<sup>14</sup> "Bitterroot - Nez Perce National Forest, Paradise District, Fire Plan" May 1, 1930. Folder: F-Plans Bitterroot Prevention (2 of 2), Box 21, RG 95 Bitterroot Supervisor's Alpha Files, NARA Seattle. The area referred to as Paradise District in 1930 corresponds in large part to the area described by Elers Koch as the Bear Creek (Moose Creek) District in 1920, incorporating the upper Selway River country.

<sup>15</sup> "Bitterroot - Nez Perce National Forest, Salmon District, Fire Plan" Revised 2/26/30. Folder: F-Plans Bitterroot Prevention (2 of 2), Box 21, RG 95 Bitterroot Supervisor's Alpha Files, NARA Seattle.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Elers Koch, Assistant Regional Forester, "August 19, 1937 Memorandum for Supervisor and Regional Office D (s) Supervision - Bitterroot Inspection." Folder Bitterroot National Forest Inspection Reports, 1938-1935, 1 of 3, Box 2 Bitterroot - Cabinet, RG 95 Regional Office Inspection Reports 1906-1938, NARA, Seattle.

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improvements. While none of the districts had invested in improvements at its emergency lookout points, there was considerable variation in the development at regular (primary) lookout points. On the Montana side of the forest, the “North End” district (corresponding in general to the current Stevensville District), only two of its six regular lookout points were improved. On the Darby District, three of its five regular lookout points had improvements. The East Fork and West Fork districts each had seven regular lookout points, only two of which contained lookout structures.<sup>18</sup>

On the Idaho side of the forest, the Salmon Mountain District had nineteen regular lookout points, six of which contained improvements. As indicated by Koch, the Moose Creek District had the best record of improvements, having completed lookout structures at sixteen of its seventeen regular lookout points.<sup>19</sup>

Koch pointed out that even the improved lookout points were all occupied as tent camps, a situation that did “not give full efficiency.” Most of the then-extant lookout structures consisted of small log or frame buildings (some with cupolas) not large enough to contain living quarters and a space for observation. They certainly did not meet Regional Forester Evan Kelley’s concept of a structure in which a lookout man could be constantly on duty. Koch concluded by noting that the West Fork District had started work on a tower—presumably to accommodate a new L-4 cab.<sup>20</sup> And, although two lookout house kits were stored at the Moose Creek Ranger Station, the district lacked the funds for erecting them.<sup>21</sup>

Koch filed his report with the region and the forest in August, and in September, Evan Kelly sent a letter to Bitterroot Forest Supervisor, G. M. Brandborg, offering suggestions on how to address the problem of bringing the forest up to speed on lookout improvements:

Since the development of improvements at lookout points is so far in arrears on the Bitterroot, it will no doubt prove difficult to accomplish. Careful planning will be necessary that advantage may be taken of any possible opportunity that presents itself. If careful planning reveals that there is a chance to erect some of these structures with ECW funds, it should be attempted. A man like Enders, with a small crew of CCC’s, could likely put up some of these structures, especially where they are placed on the ground or a short tower. In so doing there will, of course, be other planned jobs for CCC which will not be accomplished so soon. It involves to a large degree a matter of determining priorities based on the greatest need and in such determination Forest protection must be given its full weight as a high priority job.<sup>22</sup>

Following Kelley’s letter, the construction of lookouts did pick up on the Bitterroot. Between 1937 and 1941, the forest added thirteen new L-4 lookouts on previously established lookout points. At least one of these, Medicine Point Lookout, built in 1939, was constructed with the use of CCC labor. As in other National Forests throughout the country, the entry of the US into World War II abruptly ended the construction of all types of improvements, including lookouts.

In 1944, the regional office appealed to all forests in Region 1 to update their fire plans. The reasons for the updates were many, but focused on developing a more complete understanding of how to incorporate advances in air detection and suppression (i.e. smoke-jumping) into forests fire plans—especially in areas that straddled forest boundaries. Apparently, the Bitterroot Forest Supervisor was non-cooperative to initial requests, citing additional work load resulting from the war effort. Evan Kelly replied with a lengthy letter to Forest Supervisor Brandborg, pointing out that the success of the

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> The tower noted in Koch’s report may have been for the Boulder Point Lookout, built in 1937 on the West Fork District.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. According to information compiled by Ray Kresek in his *Fire Lookouts of the Northwest*, at least six L-4 lookouts had been built on the Bitterroot National Forest, three each in districts on the Montana and Idaho sides of the divide. This information appears to contradict Koch’s statement that all improved lookout points on the Bitterroot National Forest were occupied as tent camps.

<sup>22</sup> Evan Kelley to Bitterroot Forest Supervisor, G. M. Brandborg, September 29, 1937. Folder Bitterroot National Forest Inspection Reports, 1938-1935, 1 of 3, Box 2 Bitterroot – Cabinet, RG 95 Regional Office Inspection Reports 1906-1938, NARA, Seattle. Brandborg’s often rocky relationship with Evan Kelley is the stuff of legend, but in this instance, he appears to have taken Kelley’s advice to heart. Medicine Point Lookout, constructed in 1939, was built with CCC labor.

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smokejumper program required each forest to revamp its fire plan to integrate this new system of finding and fighting fire: "Failure to make use of new and more effective things is a more serious error in war time than such negligence would be in times of peace."<sup>23</sup> He pointed out that the Bitterroot had been one of the pioneers in using smoke jumpers noting that more than half of the eighty jumper fires in the past four seasons had been on the Bitterroot forest, mostly on the Moose Creek District. Further "in the interest of sound economy and common sense," the practice of simply superimposing smokejumper coverage over the previously existing system of fixed point detection represented a duplication of expense and effort that could not be continued:

We can no longer regard smokejumping as experimental. With no attempt to deny their shortcomings, the fact remains that smokejumpers can and do get their fires and they are not tied down to a circumscribed area which many or may not have need for their services.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, Kelley pointed out that the use of airplanes and smokejumpers blurred artificial forest and district boundaries. Because of this, the Bitterroot's plan for its backcountry areas (basically all lands that it administered in Idaho) would have to integrate with the plans for the eastern portion of the Nez Perce National Forest (the upper Selway River country), and the Lochsa drainage of the Clearwater and Lolo forests. "The principle involved is one of extreme mobility and flexibility as well as speed of attack. Hence a plan for one forest must of necessity be incorporated into a plan for all. We just cannot do the job adequately without the help of you and those of your organization that are concerned in the administration of your back county areas."<sup>25</sup>

Based upon available documentation, integrative planning for fire detection and suppression was neither quick nor easy. By 1948, the Salmon and Payette national forests in Region 5, as well as the Beaverhead National Forest in Region 1, had been added to the Bitterroot's fire program planning efforts. Major issues included: upgrading telephone and radio communications systems to improve the speed of fire reporting, providing seen area maps to adjacent forests, arranging for adjacent forests to share in the cost of manning lookout points that covered portions of two or more forests, and determining the quickest route for returning jumpers to their base in Missoula. In some cases, a primary lookout point would be abandoned in favor of another that covered more areas on adjacent forests.<sup>26</sup>

While this level of planning required substantial effort during the mid-1950s push to prioritize lookout replacements, the Bitterroot National Forest found itself in the enviable position of having fully converted to an air-ground detection system. The forest had sixteen lookouts integrated into its detection program. After the completion of the requisite inspections, only two lookouts required immediate replacement, with one each in 1956 and 1958, four in 1960, and two scheduled to be replaced in 1965. Six lookouts were classified as "indefinite," meaning that they could last fifteen years or more.<sup>27</sup>

By 1956, the number of lookouts integrated into the Bitterroot's air-ground detection plan had been reduced to thirteen. The selection of the lookout points was made after careful consideration of six factors:

- 1) Whether the lookout point provided detection in early fire season areas (south slopes and low elevations);
- 2) Whether the lookout point covered areas of high occurrence or continuing dangerous fuels where consistent ground observation was required;
- 3) The ability of the lookout to provide radio communication with airplane and headquarters stations;

<sup>23</sup> Kelley to Brandborg, January 24, 1944. Folder F: Plans Presuppression 1930-1947. Box 20. BIT05, RG 95 Records of the Forest Service, NARA Seattle.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> G. M. Brandborg to Regional Forester, 1/26/1948. Folder F-Improvements General 1936-1951, Box 20, BIT05, RG 95 Records of the Bitterroot National Forest, NARA Seattle.

<sup>27</sup> Ralph Hand "History of Region 1 Lookout System," August 23, 1954. Folder: Historical: Lookouts, Box 46, RG 95 Historical Collection, NARA Seattle. The indefinite class of lookouts likely included Salmon Mountain Lookout, built in 1949, and Gardiner Peak Lookout built in 1949. Both of these lookouts are 1936-pattern L-4 cabs on pole towers.

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- 4) The ability to take fire weather measurements;
- 5) The ability to report the path of lightning storms and concentrations in order to inform the frequency, extent, and route of the air patrol, and;
- 6) The ability to assist in tracking the airplane during flight.<sup>28</sup>

While lookouts were selected to cover the most important areas of the forest, the flight paths for the regularly scheduled air patrols covered areas not observed from the lookout points. The forest budgeted for 312 hours of flying time for regular patrols and 60 hours for patrolling after lightning storms.<sup>29</sup>

Between 1956 and 1982 the Bitterroot's presuppression plan appears to have changed very little. However, the 1982 adoption of the Automatic Lightning Detection System (ALDS) by Region 1 fire managers further limited the number of fixed detection points required to cover critical areas of the forest. In 1992, the Bitterroot National Forest intended to operate only ten lookouts. These included Spot Mountain, Salmon Mountain and Hell's Half Acre, all originally located within the old Salmon Mountain District in Idaho. By 1992, this area had been added to a greatly expanded West Fork District. On Spot Mountain, the 1934 L-4 lookout structure had been replaced by a flat top cab in 1972. Salmon Mountain retained its 1936-pattern L-4 lookout, built in 1949, while Hell's Half Acre's 1940 L-4 had been replaced in 1960 with a flat topped cab on a ten-foot concrete base. Manned lookouts on the Montana side of the West Fork District included Bare Cone and Lookout Mountain (both flat top cabs atop concrete bases built in 1962 and 1974, respectively).

The remaining manned lookouts in 1992 included: Sula Peak and Teepee Point on the Sula District (the old East Fork District); Deer Mt. on the Darby District (another flat top cab on a concrete base built in 1960); and St. Maries Peak and Willow Mountain on the Stevensville District. Only St. Maries Peak retained its 1936-pattern L-4 cab, built in 1953. The Willow Mountain Lookout consisted of a flat top cab on a concrete base, built in 1966.<sup>30</sup>

While many of the Bitterroot National Forest's L-4 lookouts were deliberately destroyed, seven remain. Salmon Mountain Lookout and Gardiner Peak Lookout, both 1936-pattern L-4 lookouts, are located on the Idaho side of the West Fork District. Volunteers man Salmon Mountain Lookout during the summer fire season with logistical support from the district. Gardiner Peak, built in 1953, is a 1936-pattern L-4 cab on a treated timber tower. It is manned sporadically, depending on the season.

The five remaining L-4 lookouts are located on the Montana side of the Bitterroot divide and include: Boulder Point Lookout on the West Fork District; Medicine Point Lookout on the Sula District; Gird Point Lookout on the Darby District; and St. Maries Lookout on the Stevensville District. Boulder Point, built in 1937 is a 1931-pattern L-4 cab on a pole tower. Although vacant, it is sometimes used by members of the West Fork Ski Club. Medicine Point and Gird Point are both 1931-pattern L-4 cabs on pole towers built in 1939. Both are offered for rent under the region's cabin rental program. St. Mary's Peak Lookout is a 1936-pattern L-4 cab atop a stone tower, built in 1953. Like Salmon Mountain Lookout, St. Mary's is manned by volunteers during the summer fire season.

The seventh L-4 lookout is McCart Lookout, located on the Sula District. This 1931-pattern L-4 cab on a pole tower was built in 1939 (the same year as Medicine Point and Gird Point lookouts). Like those two facilities, McCart Lookout is used as a cabin rental. This property was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1996.

<sup>28</sup> "Bitterroot Air-Ground Detection Plan," June 11, 1956. Folder F-Plans Bitterroot Presuppression 1956, Box 20, BIT05, RG 95 Records of the Bitterroot National Forest, NARA Seattle.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Press release dated Feb. 1992 "Seventy-Two Lookouts to be Operated This Summer Down from 800 Used in 1938" Folder: Historical: Lookouts, Box 46, RG95 Historical Collection, NARA Seattle. Note that Salmon Mountain was also counted among the Nez Perce National Forest's manned lookouts. Ray Kresek, 1984 Fire Lookouts of the Northwest, pp. 291-295 and 388-389.



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### F. Associated Property Types

The L-4 lookout houses in the Bitterroot National Forest nominated under this appended multiple property submission are associated with one of two subgroups. The subgroups remain the same as discussed in the original *L-4 Fire Lookouts in the USFS Northern Region (Region 1), 1932-1967 MPD*.

#### *1931 Pattern L-4 Lookout Houses*

The 1931-pattern L-4 Lookout House measures 14' by 14' square, with a pyramidal hip roof. Most of these lookout 'cabs' are built on towers and surrounded by a 3' wide catwalk. Those built directly on the ground, sometimes lack the catwalk. Distinctive architectural features include: the use of nine-light sliding wood window sash, drop siding on the exterior walls below the windows and sawn cedar shingle roofs. Entries contain wood panel door with four or six lights. Top hinged shutters are propped open with struts affixed directly to the exterior walls (if the house is built on the ground) or to the catwalk railings (if the house is built on a tower).

#### *1936 Pattern L-4 Lookout Houses*

The 1936 pattern L-4 Lookout House is similar to the earlier pattern in basic form and finishing materials. However, the later L-4s have four-light wood window sash; in each wall the center sash open outward casement style. This later plan also has an outrigger system of holding shutters in the open position.

### *Significance*

The areas of significance for L-4 lookout houses in the Bitterroot National Forest nominated under this appended multiple property submission remain the same as the areas of significance called out in the original *L-4 Fire Lookouts in the USFS Northern Region (Region 1), 1932-1967 MPD*.

National Register Criterion A: Under Criterion A, an L-4 Lookout may be eligible for listing in the National Register through its association with historic themes. Applicable areas of significance for lookouts include:

**Conservation:** All extant L-4 Lookouts eligible for listing in the National Register are associated with the broad patterns of conservation. The lookouts represent the Forest Service management policies and the aesthetics that guided the agency's permanent improvements program. Unlike the Forest Service's front-country facilities, these physically isolated resources reflect the principals of limited development. The importance of conserving forest resources was established in the 1905 edition of the Forest Service Use Book, which stated: "Officers of the Forest Service, especially forest rangers, have no duty more important than protecting the reserves from forest fires."<sup>31</sup>

**Politics/Government:** Several Acts of Congress led to the formation of the Forest Service, the first being the Forest Reserve Act of 1891, which authorized the federal government to set-aside forested lands for the public interest. Passage of the Organic Administrative Act in 1897 stipulated that the purpose of forest reserves was to protect watersheds and lands that were chiefly valuable for sustained timber production. The 1905 Transfer Act moved management of the forest reserves from the General Land Office under the Department of the Interior to the Bureau of Forestry within the Department of Agriculture. Within five months, the Bureau of Forestry was formally renamed the U. S. Forest Service. Protection, along with administration, and development proved the mission of Forest Service through much of its history.

<sup>31</sup> United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, *The Use of the National Forest Reserves: Regulations and Instructions* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1905). The Use Book was a pocket-sized guide containing a summary of forest service regulations designed to be used by agency employees and by the public

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Protection assumed a large piece of the agency's mission; however, it wasn't until the 1930s that a standardized lookout plan was finally developed, resulting in large numbers of L-4 lookouts constructed on forests throughout the Northern Region.

**National Register Criterion B:** Under Criterion B, L-4 lookouts may be eligible for the National Register if a historically significant person directly relates to the building. Although extant L-4 lookouts represent the standardized designs of Clyde Fickes, properties significant as a result of an architect's design or engineer's skill are generally found eligible under Criterion C.

**National Register Criterion C:** Under Criterion C, L-4 lookouts may be eligible for the National Register if they embody the "distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represent the work of a master, possess high artistic value or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction." Applicable areas of significance for this criterion include architecture and engineering.

The development of the "readicut" L-4 lookout house was instrumental in Region 1's successful completion of its system of ground- or fixed-point fire detection. L-4 "kits" solved several problems one of which was logistics. Kits arrived in bundles ready to be loaded onto mules for transport to remote lookout sites. Once on site, the buildings could be erected quickly, by people with limited carpentry experience, using just a few simple tools. After adoption of this standardized plan, the forests in Region 1, including the Lolo National Forest, were able to complete their fire detection or "presuppression" systems fairly rapidly with limited funding.

### ***Registration Requirements***

The registration requirements and significant dates for L-4 lookout houses in the Bitterroot National Forest nominated under this appended multiple property submission remain the same as those called out in the original *L-4 Fire Lookouts in the USFS Northern Region (Region 1), 1932-1967* MPD.

### **National Register Criterion A: An L-4 Lookout may be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A if it is:**

Associated with Forest Service management policies and its attempts to preserve and manage the forest resources of the Bitterroot National Forest. The L-4 lookouts in the USDA Forest Service Region 1 are a physical reminder of the agency's efforts to manage and protect the areas under its supervision from the devastating effects of wildfire. Forest protection measures played a huge role in the history of the Forest Service. After the devastating fire of 1910, the agency invested heavily in the development of fire suppression policy, a major component of which was detection from fixed lookout points. The standardized lookout designs of Clyde Fickes in 1928, followed by the updated and approved pyramidal roof L-4 in 1931, set the Northern Region on an accelerated course of fire protection through improved detection.

### **National Register Criterion C: An L-4 Lookout may be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C if it.**

Is an intact example of the original 1931 or modified 1936 standardized L-4 plan. The standardization of lookouts in the early 1930s moved the forests in the Northern Region toward significantly improved fire detection and protection capabilities. Clyde Fickes' standardized plans facilitated the construction of durable and inexpensive lookouts that could be assembled in the field by forest service employees with limited construction skills.

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### Integrity

Design, Materials, Workmanship: Eligible L-4 lookouts in the Bitterroot National Forest must retain the majority of their character-defining cab-related construction features and be identifiable as to its unique property type (i.e. as 1931 or 1936-edition lookout houses). Decades of use in an inhospitable environment necessitates maintenance of some of the wooden components. Changes made historically or appropriate preservation maintenance (including in-kind replacement of lookout cab materials) do not adversely affect a lookout's integrity of materials, workmanship and design. As the towers that support the cabs are fundamentally important to the use and safety of the lookouts, changes to these may occur without negatively affecting the overall integrity of the lookout. Ancillary structures such as outhouses may be replaced or removed without eliminating a property from eligibility.

Location, Setting, Feeling, and Association: Lookouts must remain in their original location. In addition, lookout cabs originally supported by towers must remain so; a cab removed from its tower and placed on the ground would be considered not eligible for listing in the National Register. As lookouts occur in remote areas, integrity of location strongly indicates that integrity of setting, feeling, and association would also remain strong.

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### G. Geographical Data

The geographical area covered by this multiple property submission includes federal lands administered by the Northern Region (Region 1) in the states of Idaho and Montana.

With regard to the Bitterroot National Forest's L-4 lookouts nominated under this cover form, two are located in Idaho County, Idaho, while four are located in Ravalli County, Montana.

### H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

The fire lookouts included in this appended MDP represent the L-4-style lookouts located within the Bitterroot National Forest. This appended document is based on a 1984 effort to obtain determinations of eligibility for all varieties of lookouts on the Lolo and Bitterroot national forests.

### I. Major Bibliographical References

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### Archival Collections:

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Records of the Bitterroot National Forest.  
Region 1 Alpha and Numeric Subject Files 1921-1974.  
Region 1 Division of Operations Inspection Reports 1904-1940.  
Region 1 Historical Collection ca 1905-1990.