

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: West Fork Butte Lookout

Other names/site number: 24MO0159

Name of related multiple property listing:

L-4 Lookouts on the Lolo National Forest

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: _____

City or town: Missoula State: Montana County: Missoula

Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☒

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national X statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

 X A B X C D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private: ☐
Public – Local ☐
Public – State ☐
Public – Federal ☒

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s) ☒
District ☐
Site ☐
Structure ☐
Object ☐

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|
| <u>1</u> | <u>1</u> | buildings |
| <u> </u> | <u> </u> | sites |
| <u>2</u> | <u> </u> | structures |
| <u> </u> | <u> </u> | objects |
| <u>3</u> | <u>1</u> | Total |

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Government

Other: Fire Lookout

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Domestic: hotel (USFS cabin rental)

Government

Other: Fire Lookout

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Other: 1931-pattern "readicut" L-4 Lookout House

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

Foundation: STONE; CONCRETE

Walls: WOOD / Weatherboard; GLASS

Roof: WOOD / Shingle

Other:

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

West Fork Butte Lookout is a 1931-pattern L-4 Lookout House located atop West Fork Butte, overlooking the Lolo Creek drainage. Unlike most lookout houses, West Fork Butte is built directly on the ground. The area within 100 to 150 ft. of the lookout in all directions consists of bedrock talus. Dense mixed stands of even-aged lodgepole pine and mixed stands of pine and fir, end abruptly at the edge of the talus below the lookout house.

Narrative Description

West Fork Butte Lookout (contributing building). West Fork Butte Lookout is a 14 ft. by 14 ft. wood frame building with a pyramidal roof, constructed on a mortared stone foundation. Simple drop wood siding covers the lower portion of the exterior walls, and the roof is covered with sawn cedar shingles with metal ridge caps. A new stainless steel stove pipe extends above the west slope of the roof. The entry into the lookout house is located at the west end of the north wall, and contains a wood door with four lights above two panels. A ribbon of four, nine-light windows are located above the wall east of the entry. The remaining three walls each contain a ribbon of five, nine-light window sashes, two of which slide sideways allowing ventilation. Original exterior shutters cover the windows on the west and north walls and three of the five windows on the east wall. Guy wires extend from the four corners of the roof and are anchored in the talus.

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The one-room interior retains its original maple floor. The building's current furnishings reflect its use as a cabin rental. A prefabricated stone hearth has been added to the southwest corner of the building to accommodate a wood stove. Other furnishings include a small propane cook stove, two sets of bunk beds, a storage cabinet, and a wood box.

Storage Shed (contributing structure). A rectangular, wood-frame storage shed is located about twelve feet south of the lookout, adjacent to the east side of the pedestrian trail. This structure, measuring 3 ft. by 5 ft. 9 in., is built on a foundation of poles that are balanced on the underlying talus rock. The shed roof is covered with sawn wood shingles, and the exterior walls are covered with tongue-and-groove board siding with vertical corner board trim. A vertical board door at the south edge of the west wall provides access to the interior, which is used to store propane tanks that fuel the stove in the lookout. A gas pipeline extends from the rear of this small building to connect with the lookout house. Guy wires anchored in the talus are attached to both sides of the structure.

Pit Toilet (noncontributing building). A modern pit toilet is located about 250 feet south of the lookout, within a stand of lodgepole pine on the south side of the lookout spur road. This is a small, wood frame building with a front-gable roof. The exterior walls are covered with boards and battens and the roof with green fiberglass panels. A new board-and-batten door is located in the north wall. This pit toilet appears to be in approximately the same location as the one located there during the historical period.

Telephone Poles (counted as one contributing structure). In addition to the lookout house, shed, and toilet, two log telephone poles are located in the vicinity of the lookout house—one adjacent to the southeast corner of the lookout and one about 70 feet south. The latter has been sawn off, while the other appears to be its original height (about 15 ft.) The pole bases are buried in the talus rock. The poles represent the original line of communication to the lookout during the period of significance.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Politics / Government

Conservation

Architecture

Engineering

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Period of Significance

1934-1967

Significant Dates

1934 (year built)

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Clyde Fickes / designer

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

West Fork Butte Lookout is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C, at a local and state level of significance. Under Criterion A, it is significantly associated with the US Forest Service's early fire detection program, which relied on a series of fixed lookout points from which to locate forest fires. Under Criterion C, West Fork Butte Lookout is an excellent example of a 1931-pattern L-4 Lookout House displaying the engineering and architecture of the period.

West Fork Butte Lookout meets the Registration Requirements set forth in the *L-4 Lookouts on the Lolo National Forest Multiple Property Document* under the context *Role of the L-4 Lookout House in the development of the US Forest Service Region 1's Fire Detection System* and the *L-4 Lookout* property type. The period of significance identified for this property extends from its construction in 1934 through 1967, the end of the historical period; it conforms to the MPD cover context period.

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Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Lolo National Forest built West Fork Butte Lookout in 1934, possibly with CCC labor. After inspecting the lookout in 1936, R. E. Fields reported that it was in good condition, with a solid “concrete and rock foundation.” He found the lightening protection and telephone installation to be adequate, noting that West Fork Butte was connected via a spur telephone line with Skookum Butte Lookout, the latter located about twelve miles southwest on the Montana-Idaho state line.¹ The only deficiency that he noted was that the shutters had only temporary safeguards from the wind, noting that more permanent protection was required. He approved of the lookout’s location, noting that:

There are a few snags and some down timber within 200 feet of the lookout house. There is little danger of losing this observatory by fire, except by flying sparks, and I am not sure that a clean-up of small trees, logs and snags for a 200-foot radius will accomplish any purpose. The observatory is located on a mass of rock. There is not fuel within 75 feet.²

The only real problem noted by Fields was the construction foreman had dynamited the Geological Survey in order to build the lookout, and had not relocated it prior to destroying it.

In 1940, C. D. Blake conducted another inspection of the lookout:

After studying both the point and mapped seen area coverages, I consider this a good lookout for Lolo Creek drainage, especially for detection in the area north of Lolo Creek.

Although Blake stated that the point was “well improved,” he felt that the lookout house should have been built on a 15 or 20 ft. tower, which would have improved the lookout man’s ability to detect fires “under slopes close to the point.” Lightning protection was adequate as was telephone installation, other than some connections on the “telephone terminal pole.” Blake noted that the point had a new weather station that was “creditably done.”³

The Lolo continued to use West Fork Butte periodically through the end of the period of significance. However, it appears to have been downgraded to an “emergency” lookout sometime prior to 1967, as it is not included among the lookouts manned during that year’s summer fire season.⁴ Its use as a secondary lookout point continued through the 1980s.

In the mid 1990s, volunteers under the direction of Missoula District personnel replaced the lookout’s cedar shingle roof. In 2001, a new door was built for the lookout using a historically accurate pattern, and in 2012, James Davis from the Missoula Ranger District conducted a variety of preservation maintenance tasks including: priming and painting the exterior walls and

¹ Skookum Butte Lookout is reported to be a log and frame cabin built in 1928, p. 299. It is still standing. Ray Kresek *Fire Lookouts of the Northwest*, 1984 (Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press).

² R. E. Fields, Forester “Improvements memo,” August 24, 1936. Folder: Lolo 1929-1937, Box 11, RG 95 U S Forest Service Regional Office, Missoula MT National Forest Inspection Reports 1906 -1938 (hereinafter Inspection Reports), National Archives and Records Administration, Seattle, Washington (hereinafter NARA Seattle).

³ C. D. Blake, Associate Forester, “Memorandum for Forest Supervisor,” September 28, 1942. Folder: Lolo 1940-1943 (1 / 2), Box 11, RG 95 Inspection Reports, NARA Seattle.

⁴ “List of Lookouts in R 1 1967.” Folder: 5100 Lookouts Historical 2 of 2, Box 45, RG95 Records of the US Forest Service, Region 1, Historical Collection c a. 1905-1990, NARA Seattle.

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shutters, and repairing, re-glazing and repainting the lookout windows. Although West Fork Butte Lookout is included in the cabin rental program, Missoula Ranger District reserves the right to use it as a detection point during bad fire years.



1943 photo of the lookout, Mrs. Hollis Stritch, washing the West Fork Butte Lookout windows.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Kresek, Ray
1984 *Fire Lookouts of the Northwest*. Fairfield Washington: Ye Galleon Press.

RG 95 Records of the US Forest Service, National Archives and Records Administration,
Seattle, Washington.

Site form for 24MO0159, available East Zone Heritage Files, Lolo National Forest
Supervisor's Office, Fort Missoula, Missoula, MT.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☒ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

Name of repository: National Archives and Records Administration, Seattle,
Washington

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): 24MO0159

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10. Geographical Data

Acres of Property about 1.4 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 46.735788 Longitude: -114.41584857653268

2. Latitude: Longitude:

3. Latitude: Longitude:

4. Latitude: Longitude:

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☒ NAD 1983

1. Zone: 11 Easting: 697424 Northing: 5179047

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary of this property is an arbitrary line drawn to encompass the lookout and associated resources as shown on the accompanying aerial photograph.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes the primary improvements at this location, namely the lookout house and tower and associated features.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Janene M. Caywood

organization: CRCS

street & number: 1002 South 6th St. West

city or town: Missoula state: MT zip code: 59801

e-mail: crcs@montana.com

telephone: 406 728-9190

date: April 12, 2017

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

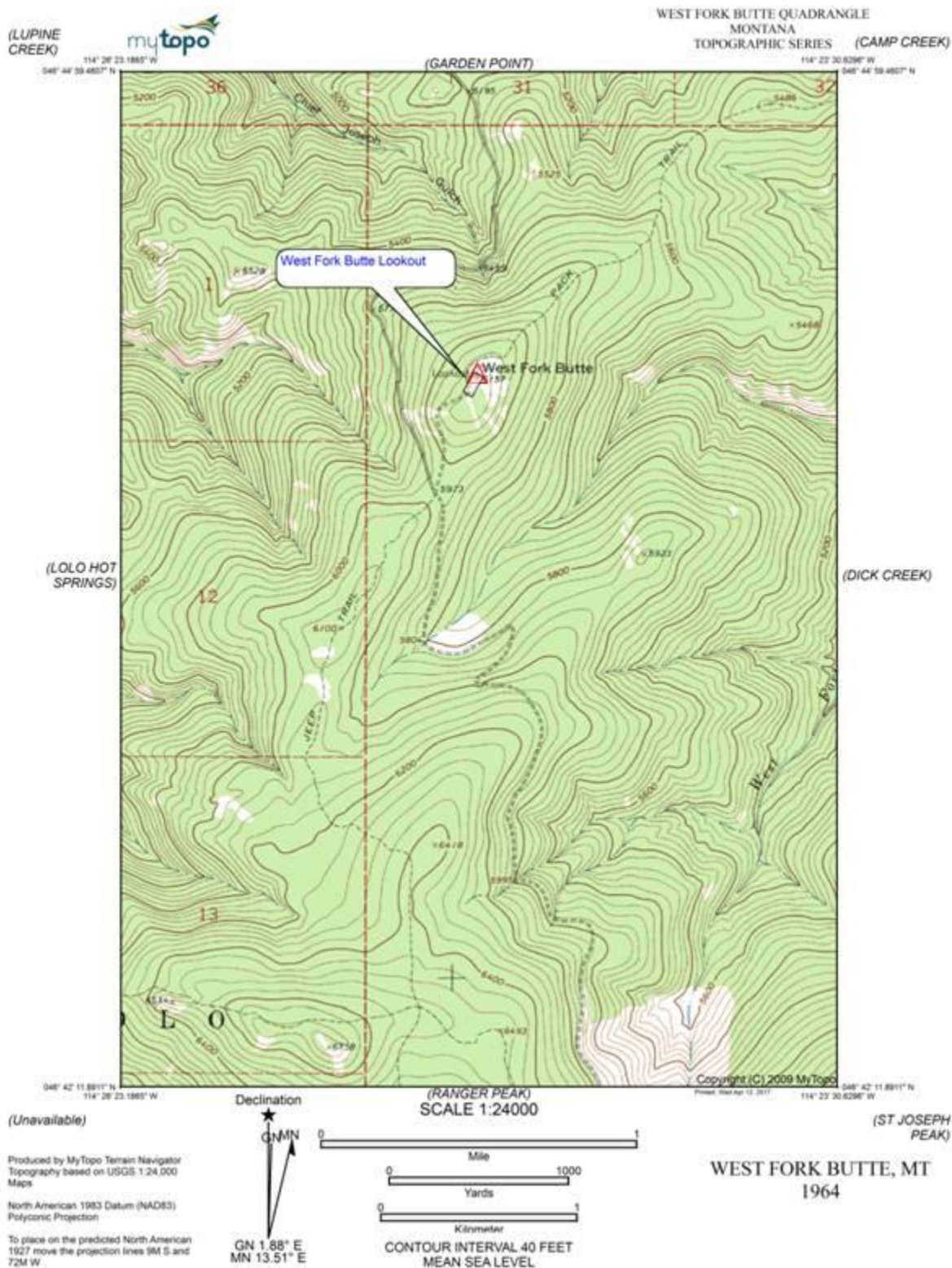
- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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2013 Aerial image of West Fork Butte Lookout Site

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Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

All Photographs

Name of Property: West Fork Butte Lookout

City or Vicinity: Lolo

County: Missoula

State: Montana

Photographer: Janene M. Caywood

Date Photographed: September 8, 2016

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of ____.

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MT_MissoulaCounty_WestForkButteLookout_0001. Looking north from the end of the lookout spur road along the path to the lookout.

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MT_MissoulaCounty_WestForkButteLookout_0002. Looking east-southeast to the north (front) and west walls of the lookout.

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MT_MissoulaCounty_WestForkButteLookout_0003. Looking northwest to the south (rear) and east walls of the lookout. Note the full-height telephone pole near the southeast corner of the building.

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MT_MissoulaCounty_WestForkButteLookout_0004. Interior: southeast corner with hearth and wood stove, firewood box and cook stove.

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MT_MissoulaCounty_WestForkButteLookout_0005. Interior view: west wall with storage box.

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MT_MissoulaCounty_WestForkButteLookout_0006. Looking northeast at the west (front) and south sides of the storage shed.

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MT_MissoulaCounty_WestForkButteLookout_0007. Looking southwest to the east (rear) and north walls of the storage shed.

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MT_MissoulaCounty_WestForkButteLookout_0008. Looking south to the modern pit toilet.

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MT_MissoulaCounty_WestForkButteLookout_0009. Looking northeast to the base of a telephone pole, east side of the trail about 70 ft. south of the lookout house.

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 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.