

Lookout Restoration Training Workshops – 2024

Sand Mountain Society, in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and the White Pass Country Historical Society, will offer two lookout restoration training workshops in 2024. The Sand Mountain Society (SMS) is a non-profit historic preservation volunteer organization that has partnered with the Forest Service in the restoration and rehabilitation of historic fire lookouts since 1989. SMS is currently engaged in the restoration/rehabilitation of High Rock Lookout, on National Forest system lands north of Packwood, in Lewis County, Washington.

The 2024 workshops are oriented toward the training of volunteers with an interest in joining the High Rock project or participating in other SMS projects around the region. The training sessions will offer a general background in the principles and philosophy of historic preservation, and an overview of specific treatments as applied to fire lookouts. Classroom sessions at the Cowlitz Valley Ranger Station will provide historical context on the use and development of fire lookouts within the Forest Service, and a detailed look at the architecture of these unique and highly specialized structures.

Building on this foundation, the training will shift to a consideration of preservation methodology and the application of standards developed by the National Park Service. Experienced preservation specialists will discuss materials, deconstruction and reconstruction techniques, repair and maintenance, and appropriate tool use. Demonstrations and hands-on work experience will take place at the Randle Work Center, Cowlitz Valley Ranger District, Gifford Pinchot National Forest.

Workshop activities will include the preparation of architectural materials for the upcoming rebuilding of the historic High Rock Lookout, now scheduled for the summer of 2025. This will include repair, priming and painting of interior and exterior cladding, trim, and flooring, reconstruction of lower wall units, and the assembly of new window shutters from salvaged “in-kind” period materials and hardware. Additional work may include preparation of materials for use in reconstruction of the lookout foundation structure and exterior catwalk.

Two training sessions will be held in 2024. Each session runs three days: Friday-Sunday, July 12-14 and October 11-13. Attendance will be limited to eight (8) participants per session. There is no charge to attend, but participants must commit to the full three days of training. Primitive camping will be available on site for those needing overnight accommodation, with portable toilets provided. There are also several motels available in the Packwood/Randle area.

If interested in joining the workshop training, please complete the application form attached here, and return by email to Rick McClure, Sand Mountain Society, at rhmcclorecrm@gmail.com. Please return applications by May 1, 2024. Participants will be selected and notified by May 15th.

