

## WOSS FIRE LOOKOUT RESTORATION PROJECT

### FINAL REPORT

#### Completion Report

##### Project Objectives

There were three main project objectives:

1. To replace the existing, irreparable and unsafe fire lookout with a new, replica lookout structure on the same site;
2. To restore the panoramic views from the lookout (to what they were 65 years ago); and
3. To provide an enhanced recreation opportunity through improved access and signage.

All three project objectives were met.

1. Old lookout replaced with replica structure, including a lightning arrestor system.



Old structure



New structure



2012: the old fire lookout in disrepair and unsafe; visitors climbed onto bucket and hauled themselves up into the cupola (upper level).



2015: the new fire lookout; ladder easily climbed to reach the upper level/cupola

NOTE: the original design did not call for plywood on the inside of the walls. It's probable that plywood was added to the old structure in an effort to extend the life of the lookout.



2012: from the cupola looking down through the access opening to the lower level.



2015: from the cupola looking down through the access opening to the lower level.

2. Panoramic views restored.



2014: obstructed view



2015: view restored

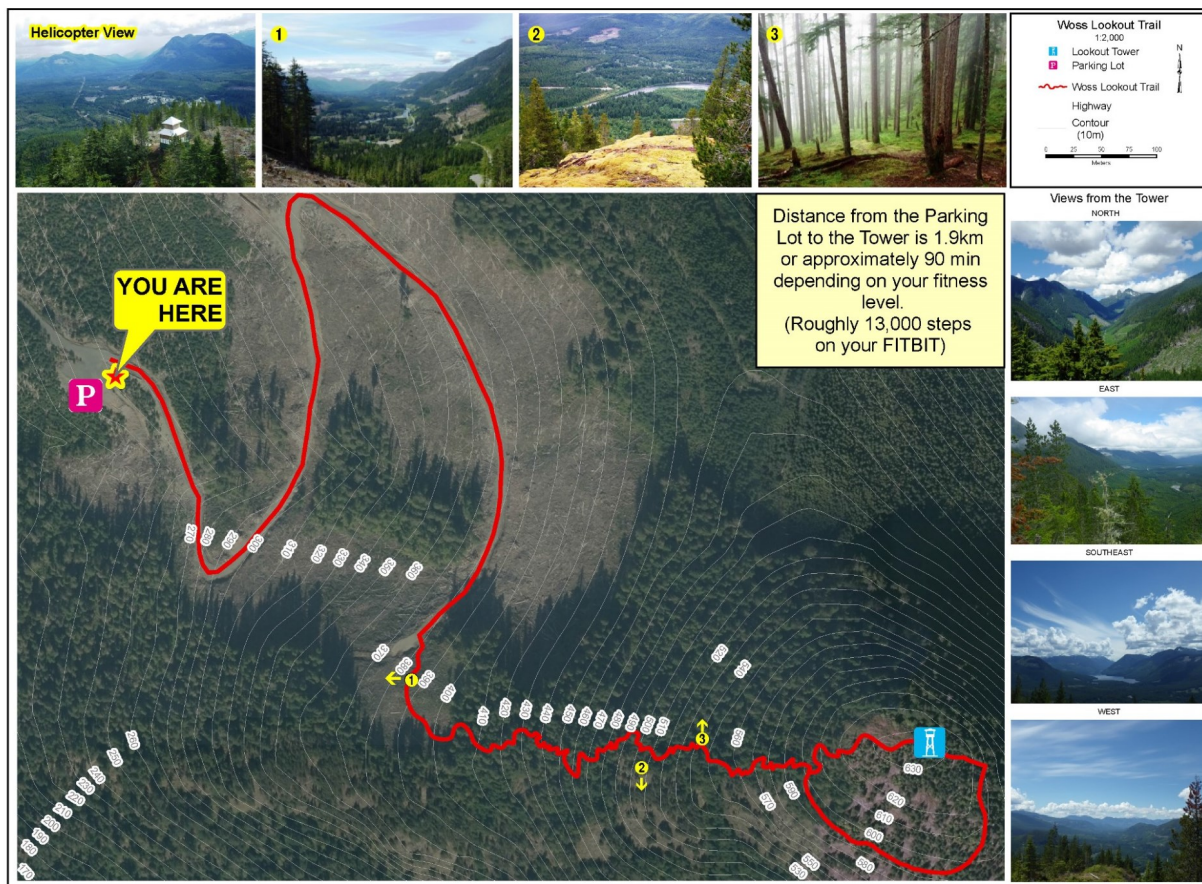


2014: obstructed view



2015: view restored

3. Enhanced recreation opportunity provided through improved access and information signs.



(Excerpt from the large sign in the parking lot kiosk)

Summary of Work and Methodology (in Relation to Project Objectives)

The lookout site is not directly accessible by road – visitors must park part way up the hill and then hike the rest of the way. The lack of road access necessitated the use of a helicopter to transport garbage and debris, materials, tools, and the pre-fabricated panels for the replica lookout structure. Crew members and volunteers hiked up and down each day. Coordination of work parties and helicopters was paramount. Wildfire crew members trained in working around helicopters and with slings, and in falling and bucking of trees, were invaluable to the project.

The most labour-intensive aspects involved: 1) the dismantling of the old lookout structure and clean-up and removal of the debris; 2) the falling of trees and clean-up of slash to restore panoramic vistas and alleviate fire hazards; and 3) the re-assembly/construction of the replacement lookout on site.

Physical works were completed from June 2013 through May 2016 (outside the winter months), using a combination of summer students, contractors, volunteers, seasonal fire-fighting crews, and company personnel.

Listed below is a summary of the main project accomplishments and the year completed.

### 2013

- landing cleared and levelled for the parking lot
- heli-pad area cleared, along with the approach and departure paths
- old lookout structure dismantled, and the debris slung out by helicopter
- Statement of Significance completed through the Regional District of Mount Waddington; the lookout site was added to the BC Register of Historic Places on Northern Vancouver Island



Old structure dismantled



Debris slung out via helicopter

### 2014

- construction of pre-fabricated replica lookout completed (individual panels were constructed and the complete unit assembled in town; then the structure was dismantled and taken to Woss where the panels were painted before being transported to the parking lot/helicopter access point)
- pre-fabricated components slung up to the lookout site by helicopter
- replacement structure assembled on site
- construction of cupola roof and stairs completed
- more work done to restore views from the lookout
- most of the structural work for the new fire lookout completed



Building the new foundation on the old lookout site



Preparing to transport panel

Pre-fabricated panels slung in by helicopter and re-assembled by crew on site



## 2015

- directional signs installed
- finishing touches to the lookout and surrounding area completed
- large kiosk and information sign installed at the parking lot
- lookout tower secured by attaching guy wires/cables from the structure to the original anchor bolts set in bedrock
- log book installed inside lookout to help track the number of visitors to the site
- signage installed at lookout: information sign on the outside, and 4 photo panoramas on the inside



Exterior info sign installed



Sign kiosk installed in parking lot



Volunteers clearing slash and brush from the lookout site

## 2016

- remaining directional and trail signs/markers installed
- additional site clean-up and slash removal work completed

### Delays or Changes in Methodology, Scope or Project Staff

As per the Stage 2 application, the following activities were identified:

1. Blueprint and statement of significance
2. Heli-landing and view corridors
3. Dismantling the old fire lookout
4. On-site construction of the replica lookout
5. Parking lot, installation of outhouses and finishing touches
6. Fabrication and installation of signs

### Changes to Methodology

The only real change to the proposed methodology related to the blueprint. The construction company contracted to fabricate the replica structure was convinced it could be done using existing information and on-site measurements. Therefore, an engineered drawing or blueprint was not produced as originally identified in the project proposal.

There was also a slight change made (for safety reasons) to the design and placement of the stairs and doorway of the new lookout structure. This was done to avoid the steep drop-off at the front of the building. (Plywood was used for the skirting instead of bevelled cedar siding.)



2012: the original entryway faced downslope



2014: safer location for entry into lookout

### Changes to Project Scope

There were no changes to the scope of the project – all objectives were met.

There were, however, a few changes to the deliverables:

- Glass panes were not installed in the windows. Besides being costly and a maintenance issue (we're still picking up broken glass from the old lookout) it's much easier to see out the windows, which are located high enough so as not to be a safety concern. Plexiglass was not considered, as it scratches easily and discolours over time. Window shutters, designed to extend the life of the lookout, were part of the original design and have been incorporated into the new lookout. The shutters are stored on site in the crawlspace, and are installed over the windows in late October/early November each year and removed in April.
- A pit toilet was not installed at the parking lot. Due to a reduction of resources and relatively low visitor use at this particular site, RSTBC did not support the installation at this time. A toilet can easily be installed in the future as public use increases.
- Fewer signs were installed than originally planned. The founding father of the brass plaque supplier passed away, so no plaque was installed at the lookout site. (A commemorative plaque of some sort could still be installed in the future.) The establishment of the Woss Heritage Park is behind schedule, so we were not able to include a lookout sign at that location. Plans are still in the works to include Woss Lookout signage at the Heritage Park and at the Hoomak Rest Area – the signs will be covered by another funding source.
- Upon project completion, a formal grand opening did not take place. Adverse weather was the main reason, although there were other contributing factors (such as key invitees not being available or well enough to attend).

These changes in deliverables are reflected in the final project costs – a surplus has been identified. (See financial reports for details.)



Inside the lookout with the shutters on (over the windows)

### Project Delays

Throughout the duration of the project, there were times in the summer months when local forestry operations were shut down due to extended periods of extreme fire weather. During that period, no power tools could be used on site which resulted in some short-term delays. (Cutting and installing the cupola roof panels, for instance.)

### Project Staff

There were no changes to key project personnel.

### Employment Created

Estimated man-days/man-months of employment created during project construction:

- Supervisor and labourer: 45 man-days
- Summer students: 24 man-days
- Wildfire Crew: 13 man-days
- Contractors (carpenters, labourers, electrician): 29 man-days
- Total of 111 man-days or 5.6 man-months of employment

Other labour was provided by several enthusiastic volunteers at no cost to the project: Woss and North Island residents, Western Forest Products' staff, and contractors who did not bill for all hours worked.

- Estimate an additional 2.0 man-months of volunteer labour

Project administration was provided by volunteers, members of the Woss Residents Association (the proponent) and/or people already employed, but not specifically for this project.

Number of permanent new jobs created:

- 0 permanent jobs created
- Seasonal maintenance will be required on an annual basis: estimate 2 to 3 people each year (in addition to committed volunteers)
- There may be opportunities for interpretive trail development in the future, and/or the installation of amenities as site and trail use increases

### Economic Impact of Project

Although we're already seeing an increase in use locally and regionally, the economic impact of the project is hard to quantify at this point.

- Since the log book was installed, 132 visitors have signed in (May 9, 2015 to May 7, 2016).
- The majority of visitors are from Vancouver Island (Victoria to Port Hardy and all points in between), a few from the lower mainland and Alberta, and one from Ireland.
- Sayward's infamous H'Kusam Climb participants have also discovered the Woss Lookout access trail and have begun to use it as a training ground.
- Public use will no doubt increase, with the community of Woss receiving the immediate economic benefits as visitors purchase fuel and food en route. In future, the benefits may be more wide-spread, although they'll be difficult to quantify if tourism opportunities on the North Island are marketed as a whole.

### Other Pertinent Project Information

Two key aspects of the project were not identified in the initial application for ICET funding and were therefore not considered eligible expenses. However, they have and will contribute greatly to the project and are therefore worth mentioning.

- WFP funded a Danger Tree Assessment of the access trail corridor and area surrounding the lookout. Hazard trees identified have been removed. The Woss Lookout has been placed on WFP's list of recreation projects requiring an assessment on a regular basis.
- As part of a provincial initiative and series of lookout publications, RSTBC funded a Woss Lookout brochure, which is currently in the queue at the Queen's Printer. Once produced, copies of the brochure will be distributed to local tourism outlets, and made available in the lookout and on the internet.

Contact was made with the last lookout man to work out of the Woss Lookout until its closure in the late 1980s. Manfred Stief (Peter) provided a photo of himself on site years ago. (In the off-season, Peter worked for Canfor as a welder.)



### Project Sustainability

Recreation Sites and Trails BC (RSTBC) and Western Forest Products Inc. (WFP) are still committed to maintaining the Woss Lookout over the long term, but not as projected in the project proposal. With the recent amalgamation of WFP's Englewood Forest Operation with Gold River and Mid Island, and the resulting changes and location of staff, WFP will not be entering into a formal Partnership Agreement with RSTBC to cooperatively operate and maintain recreation projects in the Woss area. Instead, RSTBC will maintain the lookout on a contract basis as and when required and as per available funding. WFP will continue to grade the access road now and then. Volunteers will also continue to play an important role in the maintenance of the access trail and lookout site.

RSTBC has also been dealing with an administrative issue that has not allowed them to make the Woss Lookout information available on the public website. The issue is being resolved and the website will be updated as soon as possible.

## Financial Report

Project started: June 1, 2013

Project completion: May 31, 2016

Total actual spent (by categories as defined in ICET reimbursement reports/requests)

| Category                                            | Actual \$ Spent  | Budgeted \$      |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
|                                                     |                  |                  |
| Site Preparation & Dismantling of Old Fire Tower    | 10,478.30        | 18,400.00        |
| Construction of New Fire Tower                      | 51,676.78        | 31,000.00        |
| Clearing of Parking Lot & Installation of Amenities | 4,440.01         | 13,436.00        |
| Signage                                             | 5,208.14         | 16,975.00        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                        | <b>71,803.23</b> | <b>79,811.00</b> |

In addition to the change in deliverables, some of the differences in the actual spent versus the estimated budget may be attributed to the following:

- some sign installation costs may have been reported in the *Construction of New Fire Tower* category
- the layout of the large kiosk sign was completed by a WFP employee at no charge to the project
- the costs associated with the production and installation of the large kiosk sign was included/reported in the *Clearing of Parking Lot & Installation of Amenities* category
- the *Construction of New Fire Tower* category also included costs associated with the cleaning up of the lookout site and surrounding area; a lot of time was spent on clean up and remedial work to reduce risk of fire, address public safety and improve aesthetics; some of this work may have originally been budgeted under the *Site Preparation & Dismantling of Old Fire Tower* category
- actual sign costs may have been lower than estimated
- there was lots of volunteer labour

### Surplus/Deficit

The completed project came in under budget by \$8,007.77 (\$79,811.00 minus \$71,803.23).

The surplus ICET dollars amounts to \$9,654.58 (\$39,886.00 originally requested/budgeted minus \$30,231.42 actually reimbursed).

### Changes to Budget or Sources of Funding

There were no changes to the funding sources, but there were minor changes to the dollar amounts provided and actually spent. The surplus (roughly 10% of the total projected project cost) can be attributed to the change in deliverables. (See page 11 for details.)

### Total of all funding received from other sources (matching funding)

| FUNDING SOURCE                            | ACTUAL           |              | ORIGINAL COMMITMENT |              |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------|---------------------|--------------|
|                                           | \$ Amount        | %            | \$ Amount           | %            |
| Recreation Sites & Trails Branch (RSTBC)  | 26,147.11        | 36.4         | 24,714.00           | 31.0         |
| Wildfire Management Branch (FLNRO)        | 5,782.70         | 8.1          | 4,255.00            | 5.3          |
| Western Forest Products Inc. (WFP)        | 8,242.00         | 11.5         | 8,706.00            | 10.9         |
| Regional District Mount Waddington (RDMW) | 1,400.00         | 1.9          | 2,250.00            | 2.8          |
| <b>SUB-TOTAL</b>                          | <b>41,571.81</b> | <b>57.9</b>  | <b>39,925.00</b>    | <b>50.0</b>  |
|                                           |                  |              |                     |              |
| Island Coastal Economic Trust (ICET)      | 30,231.42        | 42.1         | 39,886.00           | 50.0         |
|                                           |                  |              |                     |              |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                              | <b>71,803.23</b> | <b>100.0</b> | <b>79,811.00</b>    | <b>100.0</b> |

Bev Webber  
Tourism & Trails Coordinator  
Woss Residents Association

Submitted to Denice Regnier, Project and Corporate Administrator, ICET  
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## **APPENDICES**

1. Appendix 1: Summary of Claims Submitted to ICET
2. Appendix 2: Detailed Financial Summary