



The Cougar Pass Lookout in the Elliott State Forest as seen on February 21, 2020.

About CougarPass.Org

This website encourages restoring and reconstructing the Cougar Pass Lookout Tower as an education center. In its present dilapidated condition it has no apparent purpose and is unsafe for visitors. We began putting this website together in February 2020 to promote this proposal for general public consideration and, in part, as an educational opportunity for the Southwestern Oregon Community College (SWOCC) spring term Forest Recreation class (see [Education](#) page).

The Cougar Pass Lookout Tower has not been used since 1985 and is managed by the Department of State Lands (DSL) on behalf of the Oregon Common School Fund. It is the last remaining lookout in the Elliott State Forest, and perhaps the last remaining on any State Forest land. These lookouts were — and are — an important part of Oregon forest history and management, and particularly for the years 1910 to 1975. The Cougar Pass Lookout Education Center would provide an excellent student and visitor destination and opportunity to learn more about these important topics.

This proposal and website are still evolving. If you would like to learn more or assist with these efforts, contact details can be found on the [About Us](#) page.

-- Dave Sullivan and Bob Zybach





Barb Sullivan created this logo to capture the spirit of what we hope to accomplish.

Overview

Oregon should celebrate its history with fire lookout towers and forestry by rebuilding the last remaining fire lookout in the Oregon State Elliott Forest and converting it into a world-class Lookout Education Center.

We want the Cougar Pass Lookout Education Center to become a well-known Oregon destination similar to the Oregon Gardens, High Desert Museum, and Willamette Heritage Center. Obviously it will be smaller and less expensive than these other destinations, but it will be equally unique and distinctly Oregonian.

The Cougar Pass Lookout Education Center should provide a wonderful resource for educating Oregon students and others regarding the 1910-1969 period of Pacific Northwest forest management history...and it should be a popular tourist attraction as well.



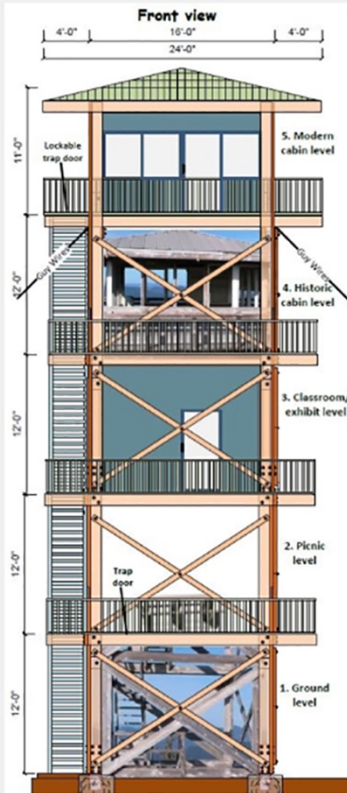
A 3-minute, silent video of drone footage showing the current deplorable condition of Cougar Pass Lookout.

Why Save the Cougar Pass Lookout?

The Cougar Pass Fire Lookout is the only remaining lookout in the Oregon State Elliott Forest, and is listed on [the National Historic Lookout Register](#). It is located about ten road miles west of Scottsburg and a little more than fifteen miles east of Reedsport. It can be reached by way of the Umpqua River Scenic Biway (Highway 38), Loon Lake County Road (No. 3), and two miles of good rocked forest road.

The Elliott is Oregon's first State Forest (1930), and the only one owned by Oregon's schoolchildren, through the Common School Fund. This gives it a special role to play in providing educational opportunities about forestry and our environment.

Sadly, the Cougar Pass Lookout is in terrible shape and is unsafe for the public to visit. Without a better plan, it is likely to be deliberately removed -- just as many other fire lookout towers in Oregon have silently disappeared. Oregon used to have 805 fire lookout towers -- substantially more than any other state in the nation -- but only 205 towers remain, and many of those are in awful condition. This part of our history is rapidly disappearing, and we don't have anyplace in Oregon specifically dedicated to preserving and celebrating this part of our heritage.



Front view of the Cougar Pass Lookout Education Center.

Overview of the Basic Plan

Taking all this into consideration, a group of dedicated volunteers has begun planning how to rebuild the Cougar Pass Fire Lookout and operate it as the Cougar Pass Lookout Education Center. The basic plan is to:

- Use a crane to remove the existing cabin and set it temporarily aside.
- Cut off the existing base at the 12-foot level.
- Build a replacement tower of similar height and general appearance that meets current safety and building codes and has a wider base. Each level in the replacement tower will have decking so it can serve a different purpose as follows:
 - **1. Ground level:** A playground area that lets people interact with the first 12-feet of the original tower's base structure.
 - **2. First-floor level:** A picnic area with with tables, chairs, countertops and BBQ.
 - **3. Second-floor level:** An interpretive sign level with historic photographs and information about fire towers in Oregon. This level should have exterior walls to it can be heated, stackable chairs so it can function as a classroom, and a ceiling-mounted video projector to play documentary movies.
 - **4. Third-floor level:** The renovated historic cabin fills this level so visitors can see what a 1930s fire lookout tower cabin actually looked like. This cabin would be entirely surrounded by a catwalk, so visitors could look in all its windows just like a museum exhibit, but when there wasn't a docent on duty, its door could remain locked.
 - **5. Fourth-floor level:** A modern cabin level. This level might be rented so visitors could stay there overnight. Alternatively, this level might be made available to volunteers on a no-cost basis in exchange for having them oversee the lookout tower.

Later development might add restrooms, running water, improve the quality of exhibits, add another lookout tower on a bluff 200 yards away, expand parking, or make other improvements.