

Owen Hills lookout restored and made into rec site



Volunteers from the Houston community help with the restoration work on Owen Hills Lookout

Photo submitted

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With a \$15,000 government grant and lots of volunteer work, Houston Hikers are restoring Owen Hills Lookout to be a recreation site usable next summer.

The Owen Hills Fire Lookout was built in 1957 to watch for man-caused fires in the Morice corridor, and was last used in 1983, said Forest Protection Officer Jim Highsted.

They did some cleanup at the lookout in 2000 and there was talk about making it into a recreation site, but they didn't have the budget for it, said Highsted.

But this year, in honour of the centennial birthday of B.C. Forest Service, the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, gave five grants to restore lookouts near Terrace, Enderby, Kaslo, Boston Bar, and Houston.

With the grant, the Houston Hikers started work on Owen lookout in June, hiring Dale Friesen, a local carpenter, to get the project started.

"The great thing about Dale is that he's a retired carpenter, but he's very interested in the project, and so he's done a lot of extra work," said Kelly Favron, a Houston Hikers director.

The Hikers and other community volunteers have worked all summer, redoing the roof, repairing the floor, fixing the porcupine eaten walls with cement board, and repainting, said Favron.



They also built an eight-foot deck around the lookout that people can tent on, said Hikers director Jonathan Van Barneveld, adding that although it won't be usable until next summer, the lookout will have beds, a new outhouse and new picnic tables by the time it is done.

The restoration cost more than the grant money, but with volunteer work from Friesen and others from the community and a few donations, they got done most of what they wanted, said Andy Muma, the Hikers director who was in charge of the project.

For the finishing touches, Muma says they hope for community donations, such as new windows and a cast iron wood stove to replace the small one in the lookout.

As a non-motorized site, it will be a good place for hiking, pedal biking and horse riding, as well as snowshoeing and skiing in the winters, said Van Barneveld.

After the Owen Lookout is done, the Hikers plan to also renovate Story Lookout and Nadina Lookout - both in better shape than Owen was - but that will be whenever funds become available, said Van Barneveld.

Houston Hikers will update their website soon with directions and details about Owen Hills Lookout, which will be ready for hikers, bikers and horse-riders next spring.

