



Forest Service

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News Release

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Kaibab National Forest recognized for historic cabin restoration project

WILLIAMS, Ariz., June 5, 2019 — Kaibab National Forest employees, partners and volunteers are being honored by the [Arizona State Historic Preservation Office](#) and the [Arizona Preservation Foundation](#) for rehabilitation efforts on the historic 1911 Kendrick Mountain Fire Lookout Cabin.

The years-long rehabilitation project is one of the 2019 recipients of the prestigious [Governor's Heritage Preservation Honor Awards](#), which are given annually to recognize excellence in historic and cultural preservation efforts in Arizona. The honor awards are intended to promote public awareness of historic preservation in the state, publicly recognize contributions by organizations and volunteers, and identify heritage projects that demonstrate excellence in design and execution.

"I am absolutely thrilled about this award, which recognizes the remarkable challenges of conducting historic preservation within a high-elevation wilderness area and on a structure that is now 108 years old," said Neil Weintraub, an archaeologist with the Kaibab National Forest. "Our partners and volunteers have worked tirelessly to ensure that Kendrick Mountain Fire Lookout Cabin can be enjoyed by the public for another 100 years."

The cabin, which is located on the Williams Ranger District of the Kaibab National Forest, was built in 1911 and is one of the oldest structures associated with early Forest Service wildfire detection. Seasonal personnel were housed in the cabin until the 1930s, and in 1988 it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, establishing it firmly as a treasured site to be preserved.

Today, the cabin serves almost as a time capsule for the thousands of hikers who make the trek up the mountain annually, providing glimpses into what life would have been like in the early 1900s and offering insight into historic construction techniques and the Forest Service legacy in northern Arizona.

"I first started working on Kendrick cabin more than 33 years ago, so I guess I'm part of history myself now," said Teri Cleeland, former historian on the Kaibab National Forest and the author of the site's



National Register nomination. "Kendrick Cabin is a historic landmark, one of the few human markers in the wilderness, which has served generations as shelter from the harsh mountaintop climate. It has always been a special place where I have felt a kinship with those forest pioneers who looked from the doorway and said, 'This is a place worth saving.'"

While Forest Service fire crews once maintained the cabin by driving or flying materials to the site, Kendrick Mountain was designated a [wilderness area](#) in 1984. Preserving a historic site in wilderness added extra challenges for forest managers, as the designation required that all materials be packed in and work accomplished through non-mechanized means.

When a Douglas fir tree fell on Kendrick cabin's roof in winter 2016 destroying five of the six support beams, Kaibab National Forest managers needed to get creative to save the structure. Through partnerships with [Northern Arizona University](#), Davey Mac Studio and Workshop, [American Conservation Experience](#), and many dedicated volunteers, the Forest Service launched an extensive rehabilitation project that would take the next two years to complete.

"To see such a large partnership of different people and organizations come together was very rewarding," said David McKee of Davey Mac Studio and Workshop, who has served as a long-time volunteer on the restoration project. "I don't think the cabin would have remained standing through the past winter if everyone hadn't worked together to make it happen. To have finished this phase literally as the sun was setting and snow was coming felt very gratifying."

Forest Service employees, partners and volunteers ultimately carried thousands of pounds of materials and supplies up the steep slopes of Kendrick Mountain. McKee designed a padded backpack to carry the 8-by-3-foot, 70-pound steel panels that were needed to replace the original roofing. The project required 16 separate trips, each necessitating a 2,600-foot climb up a 4-mile trail to the cabin. Volunteers also packed hand tools up the mountain to rebuild the cabin's support system and make other repairs. Mule teams were coordinated to bring in items like water and mortar.

Partners on the rehabilitation project took care to maintain the original historic fabric and aesthetics of the cabin. McKee and Weintraub worked with crews to harvest local timbers, treat the replacement roof so that its patina would appear historical, and reuse as much original material as possible. The extensive work was documented by Northern Arizona University students on a [Facebook page](#) about the project, which has accumulated more than 12,000 views.

"I'll always be grateful that the Forest Service valued its own history enough to preserve and interpret these vestiges of the past so that others can learn about how these public lands were protected for future generations," said Cleeland. "It has taken generations of people who care, each doing what they could to



contribute to Kendrick cabin’s preservation. Recognition from the State of Arizona for these efforts is an honor and tribute to everyone who helped make it happen."

Kaibab National Forest representatives and partners will be presented with the honor award at the Preservation Awards Ceremony during the 17th Annual Arizona Historic Preservation Conference on June 13.

Kaibab National Forest information is available through the following sources:

- Kaibab National Forest Website: www.fs.usda.gov/kaibab
- Twitter: www.twitter.com/KaibabNF
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/KaibabNF
- Flickr: <http://bit.ly/KaibabNFPhotos>

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Kaibab National Forest employees, partners and volunteers have worked together for more than two years to rehabilitate the historic 1911 Kendrick Mountain Fire Lookout Cabin. Photo courtesy Neil Weintraub.