

# SBFC: STEWARDING MOOSE CREEK SINCE 2010



Photo Credit: Van Emerson, Moose Creek Ranger Station cir. 1926

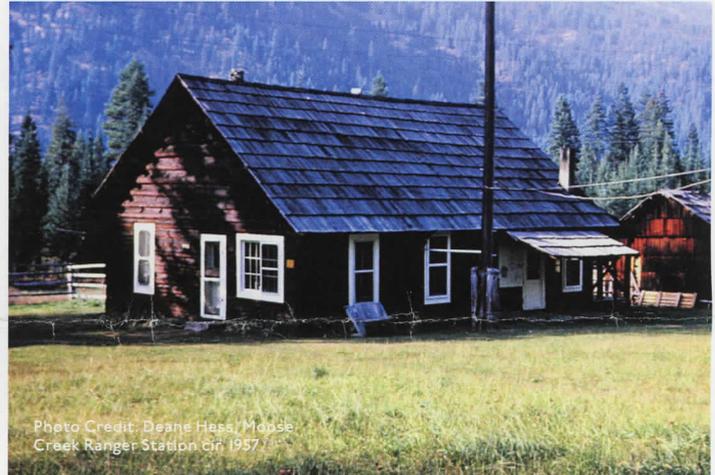


Photo Credit: Deane Hess, Moose Creek Ranger Station cir. 1957

“There was no better place for a working young person in the 1970s and 1980s than the Moose Creek Ranger District -- at the time the only all-wilderness ranger district in the Forest Service. Aside from refining a person's self-reliance and outdoor skills, the Moose Creek experience back then created dozens of close friendships that continue to this day, molded by a shared affection for a unique place, hard work, and an uncommon wilderness mission.”

– Bruce Farling, Moose Creek Wilderness Ranger, 1980-88

In 2010, the Selway Bitterroot Frank Church Foundation began providing support for the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest Cabin Stewardship volunteer program.

The Forest Service asked SBFC for help caring for Moose Creek and other cabins in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, and SBFC has been stewarding Moose Creek ever since. The Foundation helps with recruiting, scheduling and other administrative tasks for 20-25 volunteers each season. Volunteer cabin hosts assist with backcountry communications and greet, educate, and help backcountry visitors, including pilots and backpackers. Volunteers also provide maintenance and general upkeep of these historic structures, as well as assist with seasonal openings and closings.

“Many people grasp for the words to describe the peace they feel at Moose Creek. I always feel a full embrace by nature while there. the complete sense of being a part of it all, sitting in that little crook in the Selway, 30 miles from the nearest light bulb. Connie Saylor Johnson once said she thought Moose Creek might feel so special because so many people have loved the place over the years, and I believe that too. It is my favorite place on our planet.”

– Bill McGlynn, SBFC Moose Creek Cabin Host

“To quote John Muir “In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks.” For over 20 years, in all seasons, we have been blessed with the beauty and simplicity of the Selway and Moose Creek. We are better humanitarians because of the challenges we have encountered and rewards we have received!”

– Ronnie & Chris, SBFC Moose Creek Cabin Hosts



# CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF MOOSE CREEK RANGER STATION

BY CINDY SCHACHER,  
ARCHAEOLOGIST FOR THE  
MOOSE CREEK AND LOCHSA-  
POWELL RANGER DISTRICTS

Moose Creek Ranger Station is located in the heart of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness at the confluence of Moose Creek and the Selway River. Its beautiful log buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and have played an integral part in the history of the Moose Creek Ranger District and the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. This unique ranger station has been vital to the back country management of the area since 1921.

The actions that resulted in the establishment of the Moose Creek Ranger Station began in 1891 when Congress authorized the President to withdraw public lands and create forest reserves. The Bitter Root Forest Reserve, within the boundary of which the Moose Creek Ranger Station was located, was one of the earliest of 12 reserves nationally. In 1907 the Forest Reserves were changed to National Forests and in 1908 the Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forests were established.

The first assignment given to the rangers of the Bitter Root Forest Reserve was to select desirable administrative sites. Ranger Stations were to be reasonably accessible to the forests and to the settlements, to have ample horse feed, a good water supply and be situated on either flat land or land with a gentle slope. In order to locate administrative sites, trails had to be opened up to gain access to the remote backcountry. The long and pain staking work of constructing the Selway River trail to the Moose Creek area began in 1907

The large flat on which the present day ranger station exists was an ideal spot for an administrative site. The ranger station was specifically constructed to accommodate crews for trail and phone line maintenance and also for the important task of the Forest Service at the time, fire protection.

Ranger Jack Parsell built the first cabin at the station in 1921. He and his new bride Julia occupied the "honeymoon" cabin now known as the cookhouse/office. Over the next few years the ranger station expanded to accommodate the larger crews that worked in the area. All of the buildings were built

using local materials and blend in with the rugged wilderness setting. Materials that could not be obtained locally were either packed in by mule or flown to the site. One of these items was a cast iron tub packed in by mules over 27 miles of treacherous trail along the Selway River

The ranger station was designated early as a training center. In 1923 Forest Service personnel taught employees how to become smokechasers and lookouts. They learned to orient and read a contour map, use an azimuth circle and alidade, run a compass line, pace distances, and how to put out forest fires.

In 1931 the short runway was constructed with muscle power, mules and a little dynamite when back country flying was in its infancy. Construction of the long airstrip began in 1957 and was completed in 1958. One of the first Forest Service smokejumper bases was established at Moose Creek in 1940. It was from this base that the first and now historic smoke jump was made by the Forest Service.

This year we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the establishment of Moose Creek Ranger Station and its rich history. You can learn more about the history of the ranger station and the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness by visiting the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests History and Culture web page at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/nezperceclearwater/learning/history-culture>.

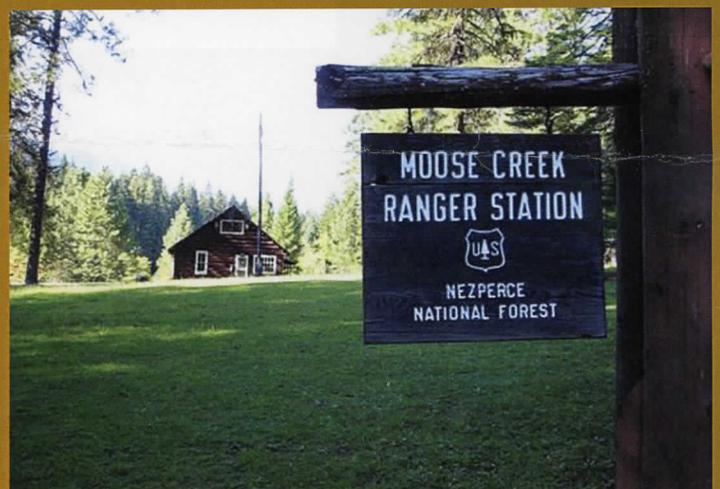


Photo Credit: Stan & Ellen Hall, SBFC Moose Creek Cabin Hosts, Moose Creek Ranger Station cir. 2019