

## Brian M. Powell

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**From:** Andy FitzGibbon [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 09, 2010 3:35 PM  
[REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Barton Knob tower  
**Attachments:** bartonknob06 (Large).JPG

Hi guys,  
Sounds like bad news for the Barton Knob tower (photo from 2008 attached). One of the few within the Mon still standing.  
Andy

Hi, Andy -

The Barton Knob fire tower was originally built and used by the State, and has not been used by the Forest Service since the Forest acquired the property it sits on in the 1980s. It is one of the oldest towers in the State, but unfortunately with age comes deterioration. The roof, windows, and other materials are now gone or lying in rubble at the base of the tower, leaving essentially a steel skeleton. The bottom two risers of steps have been removed to discourage people from climbing the tower. There are holes in the steps and the cabin platform, increasing the potential danger for anyone considering what the view might be from the top. The shelter that once existed on the tower site is also in rubble and would be cleaned up as part of the Barton Knob radio repeater project.

When we first started looking at the Barton Knob site for a new radio repeater, Forest Service radio technicians proposed attaching the radio antenna to the existing fire tower on site. After visiting the site, they later changed their proposal to have a free-standing antenna. There were safety concerns about long-term maintenance of the antenna and also concerns about the structural integrity of the tower.

On a subsequent field trip to the site, the Forest recreation manager expressed concerns about the safety and liability of the fire tower, especially as we were proposing to build a new road to the site and this road would likely lead to increased public visitation.

Our engineers were consulted and they confirmed that the tower had no known safety inspections in decades, and thus must be considered unsafe to climb or use. Both the Forest recreation manager and Forest engineer have recommended removing the tower.

The Forest archeologist evaluated the fire tower for its eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). His evaluation noted that the tower was old enough to qualify but lacked the integrity of setting and materials, and it did not have research potential. For those reasons, it is not considered eligible for the NRHP.

The Forest fire management officer was consulted and responded that the fire program has no plans to use the tower in the future. Construction and use of the new radio antenna and shelter would also be somewhat facilitated by prior removal of the fire tower, as they would occupy portions of the same general site.

The Forest Service professionals noted above, as well as the responsible official for this project, have agreed that removal of the fire tower would be a good management decision. We have not yet officially made that decision, and we have not yet determined how the tower would be removed if or when that decision is made. That decision may be part of the Barton Knob EA decision notice (which should be released to the public in the next couple of weeks), but we could also do a separate analysis/decision that would likely be categorically excluded from documentation under an EA or EIS, as removal would not likely have any substantive environmental effects.

Thanks for your interest in this project, Andy. I hope I have answered your questions.

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Hello David,  
I was reading about the proposed radio repeater project for the Barton Knob fire tower site. Does this project dictate that the fire tower will be removed, or will it be used to mount the antennas to?  
Thank you,  
Andy FitzGibbon  
