



The National Museum of Forest Service History

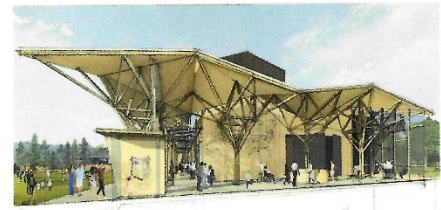
Sharing the rich history and stories of America's conservation legacy

EXTRA EXTRA, READ ALL ABOUT IT!!

We Broke Ground on the National Conservation Legacy Center!

September 6, 2024, Missoula, Montana

We sincerely THANK YOU for making this possible! The Museum is forever thankful to our dedicated volunteers, generous donors, and staff. September 6 brought us together for a superb groundbreaking celebration. President Tom Thompson said, “it’s almost surreal” to finally know it will happen. So much work, persistence, and patience were required. Tom also noted that over half the funding for the Center has been donated by USFS retirees. The USFS “can do” spirit is alive and well at the Museum! THANKS AGAIN for your incredible support!



Groundbreaking

National Conservation Legacy Center
September 6th, 2024 – 3pm
6305 Highway 10 West, Missoula, MT

Please enjoy this video of the ceremony

<https://youtu.be/pcKbVudQt78>

and the *Missoula Current* article by Lara Lundquist (next page).

We continue to fundraise (~\$1 million needed) to cover costs for our opening exhibition, which will be world class! We welcome your additional donations and any connections you may have (or people you know), who would introduce us to a company or individual that could become a major donor-investor.

Please contact:

- **Lisa Tate**, lisa.tate@forestservicemuseum.org,
- **Tom Petersen**, tom.petersen@forestservicemuseum.org, or
- **Call the Museum at (406) 541-6374. You may also call Lisa at (208) 484-6667 (mobile).**

Program

- Lisa Tate – Executive Director, National Museum of Forest Service History
- Tom Chung – Architect, Leers Weinzapfel Associates
- Christine Murray – Content Director, Art Processors
- Allan Frankl – Vice President, Dick Anderson Construction
- Keith Lannom – Acting Associate Deputy, US Forest Service
- David Strohmaier – Chair, Missoula County Commissioners
- Arthur Pettit – Senator Tester’s Representative
- Kristin Kuiken – Senator Daine’s Representative
- Tom Thompson – President, National Museum of Forest Service History

Thank you for celebrating with us!

Construction begins on national Forest Service Museum



Missoula County Commissioner Dave Strohmaier and National Museum of Forest Service History executive director Lisa Tate, center, join museum board members in a ground-breaking ceremony Friday for the new National Conservation Legacy Center west of the USFS Fire Laboratory.

As Tom Thompson walked to the front of the crowd gathered on the grounds of the National Museum of Forest Service History on Friday afternoon, he was finding it hard to believe that the day had finally come.

Within a few minutes, he and other museum board members and partners would hoist the 12 golden shovels waiting behind him to break ground on the new National Conservation Legacy Center. As more than 200 supporters braved the afternoon heat, Thompson thanked them for the seven years of support.

“This is such a special day, a day we envisioned many years ago. But it really wasn’t ready to happen until today,” Thompson said. “It happened because of hard work. Hours upon hours, days upon days, of trying to figure out not only how to do it, and where to do it and how to bring about the funds to do it, but also to keep a focus on why we’re doing it. Why we’re doing it is not because of us. It’s because of tomorrow.”

The board and people associated with the National Museum of Forest Service History, including executive director Lisa Tate, envisioned the National Conservation Legacy Center as a world-class museum and learning center to highlight the history and conservation efforts of the U.S. Forest Service.

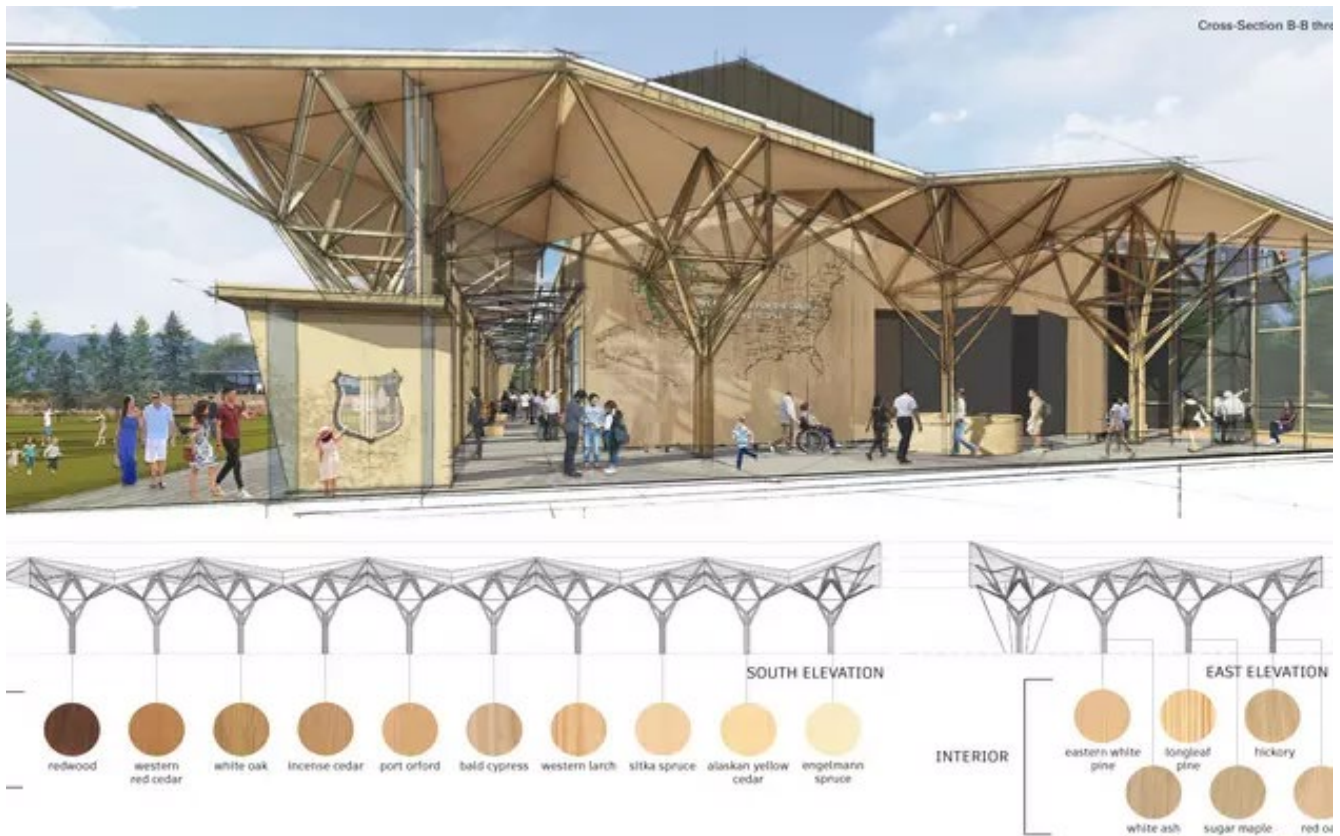
Up until now, the National Museum of Forest Service History - a nonprofit organization founded in 1988 - has had only a small cabin for a visitor’s center and a fire lookout mock-up on its 31-acre campus leased from the Forest Service. There’s been no central repository for Forest Service artifacts or exhibition halls for those artifacts to be displayed and explained for the public.

But now, after almost a decade of work and fundraising, Dick Anderson Construction will begin building the Conservation Legacy Center, with the opening planned for a year from now, in time for the national gathering of Forest Service retirees, said Kim Pierson, USFS Region 1 director of public and governmental relations.

Montana’s Sens. Jon Tester and Steve Daines helped allocate \$3.5 million for the project but Tate and her staff have raised the majority of the funding with Forest Service retirees contributing more than half of the cost, Thompson said.

Tate said the nonprofit and the board wanted the museum to be unique inside and out. To highlight the products that come from national forests, the building itself will use mass-timber construction. Architect Tom Chung said his design was inspired by a Monte Dolack painting commemorating the Forest Service Centennial.

“The iconic image of the forest ranger on a horse on top of a mountain overlooking one of the national forests. Really being a reminder of being a steward of this great gift of a national forest that we have that is to be for all of the people of our county. That image really stuck in our minds,” Chung said. “The signature elements of the design are these tree-shaped columns and the folded-roof canopy. That became a way to render that in 14 different species of different woods that are emblematic of the national forests.”



A rendering of the new museum.

Inside, the exhibits will be as striking as the building itself. Australia-based Art Processors were hired in 2021 to design the exhibits and a space to ‘create an immersive experience that would put the visitor in the middle of everything,’” said Christine Murray of Art Processors.

For example, one wall will digitally display various forest landscapes. Or visitors can walk up to a tree and move their hand across the tree rings to display stories from throughout time.

“Imagine walking into a forest of stories, and they are everywhere around you, everywhere to explore, and there are all kinds of ways to learn about those stories,” Murray said. “The museum itself will be full of this rich, immersive storytelling.”

Having worked for the Forest Service in his early years, Missoula County Commissioner Dave Strohmaier agreed that the Forest Service has many stories that need to be told, and he looked forward to seeing what the Center would portray.

“It’s a complex story. It’s a story of great successes, of colossal failures at times, but of an evolving sense and understanding of what it means to conserve resources in this country for the benefit of the greatest number of people. And of being model land stewards for this nation,” Strohmaier said. “I remember decades ago, sitting in meetings, talking about this vision, and thinking to myself, is this ever really going to be possible? What the hard work of all of you demonstrates is we can dream big, we can accomplish big, bold visions, and that is what is happening here today.”

Although Friday was a day of celebration, Thompson said the work isn't finished, because more funding is still needed for some of the exhibits. But enough of the work was done that the museum will soon be a reality.

"Most of us realized if it doesn't happen now, it likely will never happen. It just had to happen," Thompson said. "This is so important for the United States Forest Service to have a place to celebrate, to have a place to remember, to have a place to learn, and to have a place to really focus on all the good work that's been going on for the past 120 years."

Contact reporter Laura Lundquist at lundquist@missoulacurrent.com