

Minutes of May 7, 2022, SBNF Cabin Coalition Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 10:10 am at Karin Hanson's cabin #98 in the East Lakeview Tract. 21 cabin representatives were in attendance from the following 13 tracts: Big Bear Tract #1, Barton Flats, South Fork Santa Ana River, Metcalf, Southwest Shore, Falls, Pine Hill Drive, East Lakeview, Minnelusa, Seven Oaks, Polique Canyon, Willow and Lytle Creek. Casey Shaffer, Special Uses Resources Specialist on the Mountaintop Ranger District, was present to represent the Forest Service.

Roy opened the meeting by noting how good it was to actually see everyone and that the meeting set a record for the most residence tracts represented at a single meeting.

Forest Service Update

Staffing

- The Mountaintop District Ranger, Marc Stamer, moved to the DR position on the San Jacinto District in early May. Scott Eliason has assumed the position of Acting Mountaintop District Ranger, to be followed by a temporary DR on detail while the position is posted.
- Casey Shaffer continues as the Special Uses Administrator responsible for recreation residences across the entire Forest. Casey has a significant workload and the best way to communicate with her is by email (address in table below). Casey informed us that she will be assuming a detail position on the Angeles NF as of June 1 through the end of September but will be returning to her present position at that time. She expects that her position will be back-filled during her absence.
- Casey mentioned that the Heritage Office is down to a single staff person, so any project review involving that office will likely take longer.

Staffing on the various Ranger Districts is as follows:

Be sure to note the new FS emails below with the "@usda.gov" suffix.

Forest Office

- Danelle D. Harrison [danelle.harrison@usda.gov, 909-382-2710] Forest Supervisor

Mountaintop Ranger District

- Scott Eliason [scott.eliason@usda.gov, 909-382-2830] Acting District Ranger
- Casey Shaffer [casey.shaffer@usda.gov, 909-382-2872] Special Uses Administrator

Front Country Ranger District

- Joe Rechsteiner [joseph.rechsteiner@usda.gov, 909-392-2851] District Ranger
- Cheryl Williams [Cheryl.williams@usda.gov, 909-382-2907] Special Uses

San Jacinto Ranger District

- Julie Hall [julie.hall2@usda.gov, 909-382-2921] District Ranger
- Rita Morris [rita.morris@usda.gov] Special Uses Administrator

Forest Service Dispatcher [24 Hour] 909-383-5654

Forest Service Law Enforcement: (open) Tyler Smith (temporary)

San Bernardino County Sheriff: Christian Cordoba, Deputy -- Call 911

California Dept of Fish and Wildlife: Walter Douglas, Game Warden – 760-702-1062

Or Rich Fischer, Game Warden – 951-288-7651

Forest Service Back-To-Office June 6 The Washington Office of the Forest Service has announced that the agency will return to their offices on June 6, but probably on a “hybrid” basis of mixed remote and in-office work. Email will continue to be the best way to communicate with FS staff.

Big Bear Discovery Center The Discover Center is not yet open to the public and is now addressing an issue with water service.

Fire Clearance

- Annual Fuels Clearance is supposed to be completed by June 1. The minimum clearance distances are 30 feet from structures and 10 feet from propane tanks.
- If a cabin owner wishes to clear farther than these minimum distances, submit a [Recreation Residence Proposal Request](#) to Casey by email.
- Report noncompliance with fuels clearance to Casey after June 1.

Dead Standing Trees

- Permit holders are responsible for the removal of trees threatening their cabins. Send a request to remove such trees to Casey with photos of the tree(s) to be removed.
- If dead trees are threatening another cabin and the permittee is ignoring the issue, send Casey that cabin number and photos of the tree(s). The issue will be investigated and that permit holder sent a notice to remove the tree(s) with a specified deadline for compliance.

North Shore Big Bear Lake Fuels Clearance This project is on hold until a permanent District Ranger is in place as the Deciding Officer. The Forest Service has plans for other fuels clearance projects across the forest but is hampered by lack of staff.

Cabin Inspections Casey is able to conduct only those cabin inspections needed for changes in ownership. With her going on detail for the summer, it is expected that no cabin inspections will be done by the Forest Service until Fall 2022. Roy reiterated our offer of volunteers to conduct inspections.

In the absence of Forest Service inspections, tract associations could conduct informal or “courtesy” inspections using the [FS inspection form](#), which is attached to the email version of these minutes.

Improvement Requests Casey is addressing improvement requests as time allows with priority going to emergency projects (for example, roof repairs, water or sanitation repairs, etc.).

If you have submitted a [Recreation Residence Proposal Request](#) and don't know what's happened to it, email Casey to ask.

Updated USFS Permit Fee Billing/Collection Practices The annual billing of permit fees was done by the National Billing Team for the current 2022 year. Casey reported that 10-15 permits are presently unpaid for the current year. These permits may be referred to the U.S. Treasury for collection. If that is done, those permits would be subject to revocation and the holders required to sell.

Options For Addressing and Saving Neglected and Abandoned Cabins

Almost every residence tract has one or two – or more? – cabins where the owners have disappeared or maintenance and cleanup has simply stopped, sometimes for years. Left too long and the Forest Service may have no option but to take possession of derelict cabins and tear them down, thus removing that permit from the cabin program. But it's hard to know what to do and how to approach permit holders who don't see the problem or don't think there is a problem. National Forest Homeowners has drafted this Options paper to provide local tract leaders and cabin owners with some strategies for dealing with such cabins so that the owners either bring their cabins back into compliance or sell to a new owner who will achieve compliance. This paper is attached to the email version of these minutes.

Emergency Service Directions This topic was discussed at the past two Coalition meetings and is intended to identify a means which would ensure that emergency responders can find any specific cabin should assistance be needed. The Southwest Shore Tract has done quite a

bit of work on this issue and found that developing detailed maps showing cabins and access roads was of marginal value as they were lost within a short period of time. The Southwest Shore Tract's most recent focus is an interactive geographic database being developed by the County of San Bernardino into which cabins and their access routes could be entered. More information will be forthcoming on this system.

Cabin Insurance Securing insurance on one's cabin continues to be a problem for many owners. According to the meeting attendees the following companies are writing cabin insurance: Kemper, State Farm, USAA, and the California Fair Plan. In most cases, combining your cabin and home may help secure coverage. It was also suggested that agents or brokers located in Big Bear Lake may be able to secure coverage. Big Bear Insurance Co. was specifically mentioned by one attendee.

Stewardship Projects on the Forest Roy asked that residence tracts which are planning to conduct stewardship projects contact him so that information about such projects can be collected and shared.

New Business & Open Discussion Mark von Wodtke of the Metcalf Tract expressed concern that fire clearance measures are not being aggressively pursued in cabin areas and asked Casey if there were government funding programs that the cabin community could help the Forest Service to secure. Casey indicated that there are some funds available to cabin associations, but not to the Forest Service. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, for example, has had funding available in the past for fuels clearance.

Setting Next Meeting Date -- Our next meeting will be August 6, 2022. Location and meeting details to be announced.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:47 am.

Minutes Prepared 5/10/22

Roy Glauthier

Attachments to Emailed Minutes:

- [Mountaintop District Cabin Inspection Form](#)
- [NFH Paper: "Options For Addressing and Saving Neglected and Abandoned Cabins"](#)