

NFH PROPOSAL FOR ALLOCATION AND EXPENDITURE OF RETAINED RECREATION RESIDENCE SPECIAL USE FEES

Foreword

Section 3024 (j) of the Cabin Fee Act¹ specifies that “...Beginning 10 years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary may retain, and expend...any fees collected under this section... to administer the recreational residence program and other recreation programs carried out on National Forest System land. “

National Forest Homeowners, representing the nearly 14,000 recreation residence permit holders on National Forest lands, wishes to submit the following proposal for consideration by Forest Service management as it determines how the retained special use fees will be expended pursuant to the guidance in the law beginning in 2025.

In developing its proposal, NFH applied the allocation structure precedent of other fee retention programs within the Forest Service and has listed its suggested uses in order of priority of importance. We strongly support use of these funds both to improve the administration and support of the Recreation Residence Program and, to supplement other recreational needs and services on National Forests. Program administration has long-needed attention and adequate resources to ensure oversight and support; fee retention was enacted to address these needs.

NFH appreciates this opportunity to contribute our input.

WASHINGTON OFFICE – 5% of Retained Fees

1. Establish a dedicated management-level position in the WO office with specific Recreational Residence Program oversight duties and responsibilities.
2. Undertake program-wide and permittee-specific outreach and education activities.
3. Travel costs for attendance and participation of Special Uses staff in regional and national meetings of recreation residence permittees.

REGIONAL OFFICES – 10% of Retained Fees

1. Establish a dedicated* staff position in each Regional Office, whose specific responsibility is Recreational Residence Program oversight and liaison with cabin owners/cabin organizations regarding Program regulations and administration. [*In Regions with small numbers of Recreation Residence permits, these could be positions with shared responsibilities.]

¹ Public Law 113-291, NDAA Subtitle B, Section 3024

2. Training of special uses staff in administration of recreation residence permits.
3. Travel costs for attendance and participation of Special Uses staff in regional and national meetings of recreation residence permittees.
4. Additional periodic costs of conducting Consistency Review/Continuation Determination activities prior to permit renewals.

FORESTS ON WHICH RECREATION RESIDENCES ARE LOCATED – 85% of Retained Fees

1. Administration of the Recreation Residence Program: On a per cabin basis, an amount to be determined by the Forest Service*, indexed annually, which represents the estimated cost to administer each cabin and the recreation residence program. (*This amount was estimated in 2010 by the USFS to be \$600-700 per cabin. Indexed by inflation, this amount would increase to approximately \$900 by 2025.)
2. On forests and districts with sufficient numbers of Recreation Residence permits, establish dedicated staff positions with responsibility for administering the Program.
3. Fuels reduction and removal of hazard trees within recreation residence tracts and those threatening access roads.
4. Emergency clean-up following wildfires and other natural disasters to expedite permittee access for recovery purposes.
5. Expedited Recreation Residence Permit issuance and review/approval of improvement requests.
6. Training of special uses staff in administration of recreation residence permits.
7. Improvement and maintenance of tract access roads and bridges.
8. Funding of mutually agreed upon special projects nominated by local cabin groups. Such projects may include infrastructure improvements or support services with an approval process similar to the USFS grants or cooperative agreements process.
9. Completion of the Section 106 historic surveys of recreation residence cabins and tracts.
10. Travel costs for attendance and participation of Special Uses staff in regional and national meetings of recreation residence permittees.
11. Additional periodic costs of conducting Consistency Review/Continuation Determination activities prior to permit renewals.

We also recognize that most Forests will be able to meet the needs of the Recreation Residence program and have remaining funds available to support other recreation programs. We propose each Forest identify specific local forest recreation improvements to support using this funding and periodically report on how these funds were utilized.