

Written Testimony of Maureen E. Barile,  
A California cabin owner and a member of National Forest Homeowners.

Date of Hearing: April 22, 2010

Title: Hearing on H.R. 4888: "To revise the Forest Service Recreation Residence Program as it applies to units of the National Forest System derived from the public domain by implementing a simple, equitable, and predictable procedure for determining cabin user fees, and for other purposes."

My name is Maureen Barile. I live in Fresno, California. I am a Recreation Residence Permittee. My family and I are here today as representation of multi-generation cabin permittee families (accompanying statements attached as Exhibit 4A, 4B and 4C).

My cabin is located at Huntington Lake in Eastern Fresno County in the Sierra National Forest. The Sierra National Forest is geographically located between Kings Canyon & Sequoia National Parks to the south and Yosemite to the north. The Sierra National Forest has a land mass of approximately 1.4 million acres of which 750,000 acres is designated wilderness and protected activity centers.

The first cabins permitted at Huntington Lake were in 1916. Many early cabins were constructed of salvaged lumber from the Big Creek Hydro Project which began in 1911 with the 3 dams at Huntington. Most of those cabins remain today in the original families. For the next 40 years the US Forest Service continued to encourage and invite the public to come to the forest and build a recreation residence.

My family has a long history with the cabin program and the Forest Service. My late husband Tom's family came to Huntington Lake in the early 1950's when the USFS announced a lottery for lots. They had camped at Huntington and loved the Sierras so they entered the lottery. My husband, as a young boy, worked alongside his father (a printer for the Fresno Bee) in building the cabin. The cabin was built of salvaged lumber from an old air base in Fresno. It was definitely a labor of love. Materials were hauled up the mountain in a small trailer behind the family jeep.

My husband Tom, as a young man, worked for the Forest Service in tree planting, fire and recreation. In 1965 he was the Huntington Guard, housed at the old Forest Service guard station (now the Billy Creek museum). My association with the Recreation Residence Program began in 1965 when Tom proposed.

In 1982 Tom and I were able to purchase a tiny cabin in disrepair, and thus our sons Paul & David as young teens now worked alongside their dad in building "The Cabin". They mixed the cement on site. All materials were hauled up in the

family pick up or trailer.

We like so many recreation residence families have a great love for the mountains and are eager to share with family and friends. Cabins are always buzzing with activity. While having fun, folks are always learning about the forest and how to give back and be good stewards.

What do Recreation Permittees provide to the community and the public with their volunteer work and financial support?

Recreation resident permittees led the "Save Kaiser Ridge" campaign. This volunteer work resulted in the Congressional Designation of the Kaiser Wilderness.

\*In 1989 we learned the Forest Service intended to demolish the Huntington Guard Station. A group of cabin owners initiated a project to restore the guard station for use as a museum. It was a 12 year process. We had to appeal the original decision to demolish the station, the USFS wanted new science, environmental studies had to be done, historic evaluations were required, and hours of research were needed. The buildings were restored, and in 2001 we were issued our permit. The "Historic" Billy Creek Guard Station Museum opened its doors to the public on July 28, 2001. This was and continues to be a great example of volunteers working in partnership with the US Forest Service.

The museum now has three separate restored historical structures which are a portrait in time of the socio-economic history of the Huntington Lake Basin communities which encapsulate man's historic contributions to the area along with the building of the Big Creek Hydro-system and recreation. Tom and I were involved in this project from the onset. I proudly acknowledge my grandson Thomas, who is with us here today and who at the age of 8 years old began volunteering as a junior docent. My grandsons Kristjan 14 and Matthew 9 also volunteer. The museum is open to the public free of charge and serves summer visitors. Most visitors are campers, day use visitors and other members of the general public. Congressman Jim Costa came and visited the museum last year.

\*In 1999 Recreation Resident Permittees recognized the need for a trained and well equipped volunteer fire dept. The Huntington Lake Volunteer Fire Dept. (HLVD) in ten years has become a 911 first responder that services 150 square miles. The volunteer firemen & women are cabin, resort and camp permittees. During peak times there are over 14,000 visitors to the forest whom they are ready to serve. There is no cost to the public for these services rendered. The Volunteer Fire Department operates from community donations and grants.

\*We co-sponsor campfire programs at the museum free of charge.

\*We provide historic programs for the public at no charge

.

- \*We partner with the US Forest Service in National Public Lands Day activities.

- \*We write grants for forest fire prevention working in partnership with the US Forest Service.

- \*We save and preserve historic buildings, i.e. USFS Huntington Guard Station, USFS Kaiser Diggings work center, and the Pine Logging Camp.

- \*We serve as winter trail patrollers.

- \*We write grants in partnership with the USFS to clear trails, construct bridges, develop snowmobile trails and ski trails.

- \*We Protect and preserve the history of the World War II B-24 bomber that crashed on December 6, 1943 into Huntington Lake.

- \*Family heirlooms are donated to the museum.

- \*Old photo collections are donated to the museum.

- \*We participated for 7 years in the Big Creek Hydro Power Relicensing. As stakeholders we were able to obtain outstanding conditions and funding from the utility for the good of the public.

Tom died suddenly on the last day of his work after 31 years as an educator for the Madera Unified School District. As part of the 108th Congressional Record of Monday, June 16, 2003 it is stated that Thomas C. Barile was honored in the House of Representatives for his visionary work as an educator and for his volunteer work to the Fresno County's Sheriff's Dept. and the Sierra National Forest.

For most of Tom's adult life he volunteered his services using his experience as an educator to teach youngsters about the forests, mountains and their unique attributes. His philosophy, and one that he instilled in his children, was "if you take something out you must put something back". He took his role as a Steward of the Forest seriously, as have I. Among the many volunteer projects in which Tom participated was the coordination of the Fresno County Sheriff's Dept. winter snowmobile Search and Rescue team which he served as a volunteer Commander for 18 years and also served on the Mountaineering Team. When asked by the Sheriff's Department to take on this responsibility Tom looked to our sons, Paul & David and fellow cabin families for this volunteer team. A highly skilled team of volunteers donating, their time, expertise and equipment came together and assist in the saving of many lives.

I have been left with the responsibility for the recreational residence permit and the cabin. I am very concerned about the future of this Program. Fees have progressively increased and I know many cabin owners who are of modest means who will have to leave their cabins if this trend continues. I too am of modest means living off of my husband's teacher's pension. My sons are both law enforcement officers, David a deputy with Fresno County and Paul a deputy with Merced County. We do not want to be driven out of the forest because of the inability to pay escalating fees. If I and my fellow cabin owners have to leave the forest it will be a great personal tragedy as well as a loss to the public of those many volunteer cabin families from forests throughout the nation who give so much of their time, efforts, talents and support.

Fees that drive out the modest American will create a change in National Forest use. The US Forest Service will have created a system that is affordable only to the very wealthy. The sense of community and partnerships will end.

My son Paul, grandson Thomas and daughter-in-law Kim are here with me today. We thank you for the opportunity to address the committee. It is my hope and belief that Congress will recognize the threat posed to the Recreation Residence Program and not let unreasonable fees force us out of our cabins. We request your support of HR 4888.

## Exhibit 4A

Statement of Diane Dreher, Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Our family cabin is located in Chequamegon National Forest in Wisconsin. Many would consider it a “rag tag” cabin but it is a family treasure to my family. I am Diane Dreher and our cabin built in 1948 has been in the family since my uncle acquired it in 1996. It is a rustic cabin, 750 square feet including one small bedroom and kitchen. Our water comes from a primitive water system and our heat from a propane heater and fireplace. When my uncle died my family obtained the permit to make certain that it was maintained and the family could continue to use it.

Our use of the cabin is confined to the summer months due to extreme weather in the winter and limits on year round use imposed by our permit. My children, grandchildren and I use the cabin in the summer months. My 92 year old mother continues to regularly visit the cabin in the summer and guests are welcome despite the small size of the living area.

I am a divorcee, living on social security, limited investments and income from a part time job at Barnes and Noble. I was working 20 hours a week but I have just been reduced to 5 hours a week due to hard economic times. We struggled to pay the yearly use fees when they were approximately \$3000 per year. They now are \$7000 a year. We cannot afford such high fees and will be forced to abandon the cabin. It is unlikely that anyone would purchase this cabin considering the high fees and many restrictions on its use especially when other privately owned residences free of many government regulations are available.

It will be sad to leave this cabin. My children and grandchildren have grown up in the summer time learning about the outdoors, the quality of nature and all the forest has to offer, from wildflowers to the infrequent bears that visit us. The grandchildren have learned to swim in the local lake diving off a simple portable dock we install each summer.

I cannot help but believe that the appraised value of our small, rustic cabin has been influenced by many privately owned cabins and residences in the area which are simply not in the same league. In fact, our cabin and others in our tract serve as a buffer between larger cabins and the dense forest and we believe that we are responsible stewards of that forest.

It is the hope of the Dreher family and our fellow cabin owners that Congress will act swiftly to reform the fee system and provide for fair fees before it is too late for us.

Diane Dreher

## Exhibit 4B

Statement of Cindy Sims Langley. Clovis, California

My name is Cindy Sims Langley. My family has owned a cabin for over 70 years at in the Sequoia National Forest at Hume Lake in California. The cabin was built in 1926. It was known as the "hunter's shack" when my grandmother acquired it in 1938. My grandmother, Dorothy Seele, was one of the first cabin owners on the recreational permit side of the side of the lake, the other side being occupied by a public Forest Service camp.

My grandmother was a single mother from Southern California. All her life she made great sacrifices first to acquire the cabin then to maintain the cabin for her family. She worked as waitress in the Los Angeles area arranging to hire a woman and her son to stay at the cabin and care for her daughters there all summer long while she remained in the hot valley working. This way Grandma had peace of mind as she worked long hours to provide for her family knowing her children were safe at the cabin enjoying the forest.

After working a full day my grandmother would make the arduous trip to the cabin. This was a 6 hour trip which she would drive alone, at night, arriving around 11 PM Friday evening. She would wash her uniform and go to bed anticipating Saturday with the girls fishing, exploring, hiking and swimming before turning around and heading back to Los Angeles to work.

Every spare cent grandma had she spent to protect that cabin for her family. As children, my mother and aunt spent summers with other cabin owners' children playing on and around Hume Lake. They also spent their evenings at the Forest Service camp singing with the forest rangers and roasting marshmallows and drinking hot chocolate- they were having a grand time. When the (then) new Christian camp was built at Hume Lake they also participated in the fun with the residents.. It was a wonderful life. Over the years our cabin became the center of our life away from home. We learned the mysteries and value of life in the forest. My mother met my father frogging on Hume Lake and my uncle met and married the head Ranger Paul Spivey's daughter Kathy Spivey. My father spent summers splitting fence posts my grandfather had logged. Everyone joined in to maintain our cabin in the woods.

Eventually grandchildren came along and we grew up and roamed these mountains lakes and streams as did our cousins from all sides of the family. We all enjoyed the cabin life and sometimes there would be 14 or more sleeping on the floor and deck just to be together. As we grew we married and had children of our own who have also learned to swim fish and roam the mountains around Hume Lake. The cabin is only 900 square feet with a sleeping loft. It's cozy; however we have always found room for the expanded family to enjoy the cabin experience. We have had over 30 years of family reunions at the cabin- that's a lot of togetherness! My 74 year old father continues to enjoy the cabin. I am not embarrassed to say that all three of my children were conceived at the cabin. The cabin means so much to my own family that we moved to Clovis, California to be several hours closer to the cabin.

My grandmother understood the importance of the cabin to her family and for over 70 years provided a wonderful place for all of us to gather and stay close as a family. When she died she insisted the cabin be left in trust to her grandchildren and great

grandchildren to keep the tradition alive. Unfortunately, the threat of substantial Forest Service permit fee increases threatens our ability to continue to keep our cherished cabin.

We are not a wealthy family. I am disabled but receive no source of disability pension, ; my husband is a plumber at the local hospital, my oldest son a firefighter and with budget cuts his job is in jeopardy, the middle son works for delx films, which may sound like a high paying job but when you expect to get laid off 3 to 6 months out of each year it is not. Our youngest son is in college-need I say more? We are your average middle class family and this cabin means everything to us. Our “wealth” is found in memories and our family life at the cabin is an integral part of that. I am hopeful that our children and grandchildren will be able to continue to fulfill my grandmother’s dream. We hear from fellow cabin owners and the Forest Service that yearly cabin permit fees under an appraisal system will likely rise by thousands of dollars. This will put the fee beyond our means. We urge Congress to change the permit fee system to assure a more affordable one for families such as ours.

Cindy Sims Langley

## Exhibit 4C

Statement of Jo Musser-Kraus Tucson, Arizona

My name is Jo Musser-Krauss and I am a resident of Tucson, Arizona. I have a cabin subject to a U.S. Forest Service recreational residence special use permit. My cabin is a "piece of heaven" located in Willow Canyon in the Coronado National Forest in Arizona. I consider it so not because it is luxurious but because of its importance to me, my family, friends and community, as I will explain. I am submitting this statement because I am very concerned I am going to have to give up the cabin due to the likelihood of increased yearly fees.

I am 87 years old, a widow and a retired educator. The lot for my cabin was originally acquired by its first owner shortly after World War II in a lottery conducted by the government. My husband and I purchased the cabin in 1973. The cabin is one room, approximately 360 square feet, plus a small bathroom, the only addition we have been permitted to make. Our septic system is an outhouse with a vault, we obtain water from rainfall or transport it in ourselves and our heat is from a fireplace. The cabin is rustic and we access it over a 1 ½ mile rough road which we have to maintain. Provisions are hauled in from the city. The Forest Service limits the days each year we can use our cabin. We use our cabin for 4 months, May through August. My husband and I attempted to use it one winter, a difficult experience. It is too isolated for winter use at my age, even if it were permitted.

Mine is in every sense a family cabin available to my 3 daughters, 5 grand children and 2 great grand children. It is also a community meeting place. We have approximately 150 visitors to my cabin each year. Church groups regularly meet there and the church youth group helps me clear the land around the cabin to protect from wildfires. In fact, we have had two recent wildfires in the vicinity which destroyed several cabins. Mine survived in large part due to this effort. I am a docent at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum in Tucson and the docents regularly meet at my cabin over the summer months. "Jo's" cabin is the site of the yearly 4<sup>th</sup> of July party for my fellow cabin owners and guests.

If I have to let my cabin go it will not only be a loss to me but to the many friends and groups who use it as well. The cabin has a special attachment for me. Located at 7000 feet in the Catalina Mountains it is a sanctuary from the heat of Tucson. Much of the work on it we do ourselves and its style is unique. For example, after we acquired the cabin my husband and I paneled the inside with scrap wood salvaged from wooden packing boxes. I have attached some photos of the cabin.

I live on a pension and pay the current fee, personal and property taxes myself. We hear that the permit fees will soon be approximately \$4000 a year which will be about 10% of my income. I will be unable to afford such fees and will have to let the cabin go.

I am no stranger to the difficulties encountered in changing the law and implementing such changes. In the mid 1970's I attended a meeting in California with 2 local Board members, including then member and now Congressman Raul Grijalva; to address school desegregation. After that meeting we came up with a workable plan implemented in the Tucson Unified School District which included a magnet school. I

was appointed Principal of Borton Primary Magnet School, one of the 9 schools in the desegregation plan. I know that things can be made to work if people work hard to make them work. I hope that Congress will make the effort to make certain that the yearly fees for our cabins are kept reasonable and affordable.

February,20, 2010

Jo Musser-Krauss  
2910 E. Malvern St., Tucson, AZ 85716