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**Opening Statement of**  
**Chairman Doc Hastings**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Before the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands**  
**Legislative Hearing on**  
**H.R. \_\_\_\_\_, The Cabin Fee Act of 2011**  
**Friday, September 9, 2011, at 10:00 a.m.**

Thank you Mr. Chairman for holding this hearing on today's bills, including the Cabin Fee Act legislation.

The goal of this bill is to create a simple, straightforward and predictable fee schedule that benefits cabin owners nationwide, as well as taxpayers and the Forest Service. It would replace the current complex and unfair payment system by assigning cabins to tiers based on appraised value.

The fees would rise with inflation, but would otherwise remain fixed so families would no longer face sudden, unexpected jumps to unaffordable levels.

Last year, a similar measure I introduced passed the House Natural Resources Committee, but due to expiration of time of the last Congress, was not considered on the House floor.

This year's legislation improves upon last year's bill in two significant ways.

First, it modifies the fee schedule to include additional tiers that will keep the fees reasonable while also ensuring sufficient revenue to implement the program.

While the Congressional Budget Office has not yet provided its score for the bill, and turmoil in the real estate market has created uncertainties in the data used to score it, I remain optimistic the bill will be "revenue neutral" with the new fee schedule.

Second, this bill text expands coverage to include private cabins located in all National Forests, not just those derived from public lands.

Many private cabins on Forest Service land are simple, rustic structures hand-built by the grandparents or relatives of the current owners early in the last century and passed down from generation to generation. The overwhelming majority of these cabins are modest family retreats.

During these tight economic times, the intent of this bill is to keep the fees affordable for people such as teachers, factory workers and retirees, not just millionaires – which is what will happen if we don't address the problem now.

The current system has resulted in unrealistic, arbitrary fee hikes that are completely unaffordable for average families. For example, last year, the *Seattle Times* reported that Lake Wenatchee cabin owners received notice that their fees would increase more than one thousand percent, from \$1,400 to more than \$17,000 this year.

Skyrocketing fees also make these part-time homes unmarketable, leaving families who are unable to pay the high fees, also unable to sell their cabins.

Having family owned cabins encourages wholesome outdoor recreation which is an important use of our vast system of public lands -- particularly today when many youth are increasingly distracted by Ipods, video games and computer screens.

By encouraging a broad and diverse range of activities in our National Forests, we foster the kind of sound stewardship that allows us more fully to obtain the many benefits these lands can contribute.

Thank you, again, for scheduling this hearing and I look forward to hearing from the witnesses.