

Note to Editor: See attached press release from National Forest Homeowners.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACT: [Jill Strait](#)
202-226-2311

Hastings to Introduce Cabin Fee Fairness Legislation

Bill sets fair, predictable fees to ensure continued public access to public lands

YAKIMA, WA – Today, House Natural Resources Committee Ranking Member Doc Hastings (WA-04) announced that he will introduce legislation to address volatile yearly fees for families who own cabins in our National Forests.

The bill would establish a fair fee-setting system that would institute a tiered yearly fee structure based on current appraisals and tied to increases in inflation. The new fee-setting system would replace the existing volatile system that's based on subjective appraisals and is causing sharp spikes in fees charged to cabin owners, and which may force some families to abandon and tear down their cabins.

"Family-owned cabins in our National Forests are being put at risk by soaring fees," said Hastings. "Many of these cabins have been in families since the early-20th century and passed down from generation to generation. This legislation will provide a sensible, long-term solution that will keep these cabins affordable and accessible to Americans, while still providing fair compensation to the federal Treasury for the use of the land."

"Unless Congress acts to establish a fair pricing structure, families in Yakima and across our nation may be forced to tear down their cabins because they can't afford the fees," Hastings said. "Providing access to public lands is part of the mission of the Forest Service, and action is needed to make certain that recreational cabins aren't priced out of existence."

Background:

- In 1915, the National Forest Service established the Recreation Resident Program that set aside a small number of residential lots for Americans to build recreational cabins on federal land. The individuals own the cabin structures, and pay a yearly fee for the use of the Forest Service lot. There are currently over 14,000 recreational cabin owners across the United States – the majority in the West.
- In 2000, Congress adopted Public Law 106-291 that included a change in the law to implement variable cabin fees based on a subjective appraisal system. This change in the law has resulted in much higher fees than anticipated due to the difficulty in making appraisals that fully take into consideration the uniqueness of the cabins and the many

uncommon variables when compared to typical homes and real estate. With few, or no, true comparable sales, resulting appraisals are subjective and may involve arbitrary determinations.

- For example, according to a recent [USA Today article](#), the Allen family, whose cabin has been in the family for more than 40 years, will see fees increase from \$1,677 in 2008 to \$10,000 a year based on current appraisals.
- The [Seattle Times reported](#) that cabin owners in Lake Wenatchee recently received notice that their fees will increase more than 1,000 percent - from \$1,400 to more than \$17,000 by 2011. The [Cashmere Valley Record wrote](#) about a family who is worried they will lose their cabin due to rising fees.
- Ranking Member Hastings' legislation, which is supported by the National Forest Homeowners Association and the Cabin Coalition 2, would establish the following fair, predictable and tiered yearly fee structure. Cabins would be placed in the tiers based upon current appraisal values with the lowest in Tier 1 and highest in Tier 5. Fees would be adjusted annually for inflation.

Tier	Yearly User Fee
1	\$500
2	\$1,000
3	\$2,000
4	\$3,000
5	\$4,000

- A new transfer fee would be assessed when cabins are sold or ownership is transferred within a family. A flat transfer fee of \$1,000 will be applied to all cabin sales, with an additional 5% assessed on any transfer sales of between \$250,000 and \$500,000, and an additional 10% assessed on any amount that exceeds \$500,000.
- Establishing this new structured, tiered fee system should also reduce the costs of overseeing and managing the cabin system for the Forest Service by eliminating the time-consuming and costly appraisal process.

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NATIONAL FOREST HOMEOWNERS

“ To ensure continued enjoyment of forest homes ”

PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACT: MARY VER HOEF 916.359.5279
AUBREY KING 301.464.8060

NFH HAILS HASTINGS INTRODUCTION OF CABIN FEE ACT OF 2010

National Forest Homeowners President Geoffrey Anderson today hailed the introduction of the Cabin Fee Act of 2010 by Representative Doc Hastings (R-WA), declaring: “This historic legislation will establish a new fair and reasonable structure for determining the annual permit fees paid by cabin owners throughout the country. In the past few years, sharply escalating fees have threatened too many with the loss of cabins that have been in their families for generations. The Cabin Fee Act of 2010 will preserve a program that for nearly a century has provided outdoors recreation for thousands of American families.”

The Cabin Fee Act of 2010 will replace the Cabin Fee Fairness Act of 2000, which requires that permit fees for cabins on the National Forests be determined by appraisals that compare them with fee simple private property. Such appraisals fail to consider fully and fairly the extraordinary limits and restrictions on the use of these cabins and recent appraisals have resulted in many annual fees suddenly increasing more than 500%.

Representative Hastings’ bill will combine a simple, fair and predictable tiered fee structure with a new transfer fee that would be based on the actual value of a cabin as demonstrated by the price paid when the cabin permit changes hands. The transfer fee will therefore accurately capture for the government the fair value provided by the cabin’s location on a National Forest. The result will be a positive outcome for everyone concerned as the cabin owner will be able to continue enjoying this superb family recreation opportunity, the National Forests will continue to benefit from the historic stewardship contribution of cabin owners, local communities near the national forests will continue to benefit from the purchases of cabin owners, local governments will continue to benefit from the related tax revenue and the U.S. taxpayer will receive a fair return for this use of their land.

According to NFH President Anderson, “On behalf of cabin owners everywhere, the NFH thanks Representative Hastings for realizing the threat they face from excessive fee increases and for his vision in introducing this historic legislation. We pledge our full support and look forward to working with him and others in Congress to get the Cabin Fee Act of 2010 passed into law.”

National Forest Homeowners represents the interests of cabin owners who have special use permits for recreation residences on National Forests. For more than forty years, NFH has informed and advised its members about issues affecting their recreation residences and advocated on their behalf with the National Forest Service and Congress.