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Thursday, March 14, 2013
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Chairman Hastings Reintroduces Legislation to Keep Cabin Fees Fair and Affordable

WASHINGTON, D.C. – House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (WA-04) today introduced [H.R. 1159](#), *The Cabin Fee Act of 2013*. The bill, which was [passed](#) by the House last year, would establish a fair, predictable fee-setting system for families who own cabins in our National Forests.

Cabin owners have recently been faced with arbitrary, skyrocketing fees as a result of a faulty appraisal system that has allowed annual cabin fees to increase exponentially. Unable to afford the mounting fees, owners are faced with the choice of selling their cabins or abandoning and tearing them down. The [Cabin Fee Act of 2013](#) uses a new formula for calculating fees to ensure the bill is revenue neutral without imposing fees that American families cannot afford.

“In Central Washington and throughout the country there are thousands of family-owned cabins that have been passed down from generation to generation. Yet this tradition is being threatened by soaring and unpredictable fees that make these cabins unaffordable. For example, some families have received notice that their fees would increase by 1,000 percent. It’s important that the public have access to public lands and these cabins shouldn’t be priced-out of existence. This bill will provide a common sense solution for cabin owners by enacting a fair and stable pricing structure that will keep these cabins affordable for future generations to enjoy,” **said Chairman Hastings.**

The bill would establish a 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 10. Fees would be adjusted annually for inflation. A flat transfer fee of \$1,200 will be applied to all cabin sales or when ownership is transferred within a family. The bill also adds a limitation on the rate of current law fee increases until all cabins are assigned to a tier.

Background:

In 1915, the National Forest Service established the Recreation Resident Program that set aside a small number of 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. Most of the cabins have been passed down within families from generation to generation.

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 limited, temporary, and highly restricted rights of cabin owners when compared to typical fee-simple homes and real estate. With few, or no, true comparable sales, resulting appraisals are subjective and may involve arbitrary determinations.

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