



Committee on Natural Resources U.S. House of Representatives

Chairman Doc Hastings

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House Acts to Keep Cabin Fees Fair and Affordable

WASHINGTON, D.C.,– The House of Representatives today passed the National Defense Authorization Act of 2014 by a bipartisan vote of 300 to 119, which included a provision authored by House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (WA-04) to establish a fair, predictable fee-setting system for families who own cabins in our National Forests.

“This provision will provide certainty and fairness to thousands of families, including a number in Central Washington, who own cabins on Forest Service land by creating a fair and stable pricing structure,” said Hastings. “Many of these cabins have been passed down for generations, and this bill will allow that tradition to continue.”

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. Hastings’ Cabin Fee Act of 2014, which was the basis for this provision, establishes a simple, predictable fee-setting system under which cabin lots are assigned a place on a six tiered fee structure based on current appraisal.

The bill is expected to be promptly considered on the Senate floor.

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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