

Minutes of May 5, 2007 Cabin Coalition Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 10:10am at Mary Ann and Bruce Patterson's cabin on Pine Hill Drive in the Big Bear Tract. In attendance were 20 cabin representatives from 10 different tracts [East Lakeview, Falls Tract, Lakeview, Metcalf, Pine Hill Drive, Snow Valley, South Fork Santa Ana River, Barton Flats, Seven Oaks and Southwest Shore] and 6 Forest Service staff, Acting Forest Supervisor, Dick Markley, Veronica Magnuson, Betty Hartenstine, Sommer Moore, Steve Loe, USFS Wildfire Biologist, and Steve Seltzner, USFS Fire.

Following introductions, Dick Markley expressed Jean Wade-Evans apologies for her unexpected absence due to a family emergency. Dick announced the appointment of Kurt Winchester as the new Mountaintop District Ranger and that he should be on-site about May 27. Kurt is coming from the Plumas National Forest. Dick then talked a bit about the FY 07 budget, which is still not finalized. Funding for recreation is expected to be down from last year, however, funding for fuels treatment may be increased, which will allow more fuels clearance work.

Dick also briefly mentioned the work being done on the Off-Highway Vehicles route-designation process. An OHV map should be produced in July, but will not have a lot of changes from current available roads.

CRCD Process: Veronica Magnuson led this discussion as leader of the interdisciplinary team that has been carrying out the Consistency Reviews and Compliance inspections. The Forest Service visited all 22 residence tracts and completed their Consistency Determinations about December 18. From January through March, all cabins were inspected for compliance. All permit holders should have now received a letter informing them of the results of these inspections. Any permit holder who has not received their inspection letter should contact their Special Uses staff.

In mid-April, the Forest Service mailed the project Scoping Letter to 58 environmental and other local groups informing them of the proposed issuance of new permit to 750 cabins and asking for their comments and input on this action. The comment period will close June 1, following which submitted comments will be taken into consideration.

Here's the planned timeline for the CRCD process:

- July 31 Follow-up inspections to begin for cabins that have achieved full compliance
- October 31 Target for first NEPA decision letter based on Categorical Exclusion as a continuing forest activity, listing cabins then in full compliance
- July '08 Second round of follow-up inspections for cabins then in full compliance
- January '09 Permit holders in full compliance should have new permits in hand.

The Forest has created a new website for the CRCD process at: www.fs.fed.us/r5/sanbernardino/projects/crcd.shtml. This website contains copies of the Consistency Findings, NEPA Scoping letter, the Old and New permit forms and maps showing the general tract locations. FS staff will try to add maps showing the cabins in each tract.

Discussion ensued regarding compliance issues that may not be completed before 12/31/08, specifically water and sanitation issues. Roy mentioned discussions with the Washington Office regarding a new directive that would not penalize permit holders for inability to achieve compliance for reasons beyond their control so long as they are working in good faith to achieve compliance. Concern was expressed over the use of term permits to allow a holder additional time past 12/31/08 to come into compliance as the term permit does not contain protections that are in the Recreation Residence Special Use Permit.

Veronica summarized the inspection results across the forest:

Forest Area	Total Permits	Total In Full Compliance	# in Non-Compliance Minor	Major
Big Bear Tracts	444	161	253	15-30
Barton Flats	216	26-30	183-190	26-33
Lake Arrowhead Falls	13		9	4
Lytle Creek	15	7-8	7-8	0
San Jacinto	34	3-4		25-30
	3	1	1	1

Veronica said that permit holders should notify their Special Uses staff once corrections have been made so that cabins are scheduled for re-inspections. The Forest Service will be requesting tract assistance to carry out the reinspections. Veronica will coordinate this assistance with Roy. [[Unless someone would like to become the Coalition's new **Volunteer Coordinator!!**]]

Questions were raised about getting approval for cabin improvements, including compliance work. Veronica noted that the SBNF is back under the Programmatic Agreement with the State Historical Preservation Office, which means that many maintenance and minor improvement projects can be done with only FS approval – but cabin owners still need to request formal FS approval and wait for documentation before proceeding. FS staff are stretched, so be prepared to wait for approval.

Fire Situation: Steve Seltzner, FS Battalion Chief for the East BB Valley spoke to the present fire conditions and the summer ahead. He noted that this is a “fire prone ecosystem” and that fire is part of our environment. He said that we’re on the threshold of a very serious fire season. Following the driest winter on record, fire moisture levels are presently where they normally are in August. “If ever there was a time for cabin owners to engage in fire-safe clearance work, this would be the year.”

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Steve listed clearance work that is being done across the forest. Projects are being prioritized to emphasize those with the most potential impact. Steve concluded by noting that fire protection will be a long-term effort. The FS is committed to working with cabin groups to make a difference in fire safety within the residence tracts.

CUFFA Implementation: Roy handed out copies of the Cabin Owners Guide to Setting Cabin Fees prepared by NFH. This document is also available on the NFH website at www.nationalforesthomeowners.org This booklet summarizes the appraisal process, the changes made by CUFFA, the transition to the new CUFFA procedures, and how to prepare for your new appraisal. Roy noted that our appraisals will begin in 2008. Before then, tract associations should review their typical lot groups and the selected typical lot. Typical lot groups are created to reflect market differences between cabin lots within a tract. If changes are needed, these need to be done before the appraisals begin in summer 2008.

Betty Hartenstine informed the group that the FS will be changing our billing cycle from March-February to January-December [to a calendar year] sometime in the next two years. Noticeable impact will be that the transition billing will only be for 10 months.

Water/Sanitation Issues: Jack Donovan of Santa Ana River Cabin Assn and Chuck Myers of Barton Flats brought the group up to date on their discussions with the FS and search for solutions to the order to remove their water pipes from their creeks. Barton Flats has a tentative solution in tying into a licensed water system of the summer camp and SARCA is exploring individual storage tanks. Discussions of water and sanitation issues continues and work on these issues does not look like it will be completed by 12/31/08 for a host of reasons.

Group Discussion: No topics were raised.

Next Meeting: There was general consensus that the next Cabin Coalition meeting should be in August before Labor Day tract meetings, but no date was set.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:10pm.

Roy Glauthier
5/6/07