

SBNF Cabin Coalition Meeting of December 8, 2007

Minutes of December 8, 2007 Cabin Coalition Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 10:10am at the Big Bear Discovery Center. Due to extreme winter weather and the closure of Hwy 18, attendance was limited to representatives of 5 tracts [Lakeview, Metcalf, South Fork Santa Ana River, Stetson Creek and Southwest Shore] and no Forest Service staff.

Because two of the seven in attendance were not familiar with the SBNF Cabin Coalition, the meeting began with a discussion of the origin of the Coalition and its objective: to facilitate representation of the cabin community and communications both among cabin tracts and between cabin owners and the U.S. Forest Service.

New Permit Issuance

One issue that had been raised for discussion with the Forest Service was the timely issuance of permits to new permit owners and on transfers within families. At least two situations have been identified where new owners have been waiting for up to 10 months for the issuance of a new permit. This delay in permit issuance can create problems with insurance coverage among other things and places the cabin owner at risk if there were to be a loss during the time when they do not hold a valid permit.

It was reported that one of these issuance delays appears to be close to resolution and that this was achieved by being persistent. The discussion identified the following tactics for addressing this problem: 1. Make sure to keep meticulous records and a paper trail of your calls and communications; 2. Be polite but persistent; and 3. If you don't get a response in a reasonable time, ratchet the request up to the next level of authority.

CRCD Process: Without Forest Service representatives, there was no new information on the permit renewal process.

Questions were raised regarding the ability of the Forest Service to meet the December 31, 2008, deadline for issuance of new permits for those in compliance in the event that 2008 is another bad fire season and key permit staff are elsewhere on fire duty. Someone asked where the new permits would actually be produced and if there might be some way that cabin representatives could provide administrative assistance.

As in past meetings, a discussion developed over what will happen if the FS cannot prepare the new permits by December 31, 2008, as well as what will happen to permit holders who come into full compliance after the deadline of July 31, 2008, or aren't able to achieve full compliance by December 31 for reasons beyond their control. We referred to the Forest Service position stated at the August 25 Coalition meeting where it was stated that such situations will be handled on a case-by-case basis, but that they will issue a new permit based on the holder's good faith efforts.

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2008 Appraisals: Roy noted that new appraisals will begin in the spring and early summer of 2008 for all residence tracts on the San Bernardino NF and that tract organizations need to begin now to prepare for those appraisals.

The deadline has already passed on October 1 for tracts to request a change in typical lot groups and lots and it is believed that the Regional Office has already awarded the contracts for our appraisals. Between now and next summer, tracts should be preparing descriptions of their tracts and the typical lots, analyzing the inventoried improvements on each typical lot, and searching for private land sales that could be recommended as possible comparable sales. Roy handed out copies of Metcalf Tract's 1998 appraisal package as an example of their documentation provided to the appraiser and also recommended that people review Chapter 4, "The Next Appraisal Cycle" of the Cabin Owners Guide to Setting Cabin Fees prepared by NFH and available on the NFH website at www.nationalforesthomeowners.org. Roy recommended that a discussion of special restrictions or limitations on cabin use be added to the sample format.

Group Discussion: No additional topics were raised.

Next Meeting: It was agreed to schedule the next Cabin Coalition meeting for early May 2008, depending on the schedule for appraiser site visits.

Roy noted that the National Forest Homeowner's Convention will be held in Riverside at the Mission Inn on April 17 – 19, 2008 and that all cabin owners should plan to attend.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:50 am.

Roy Glauthier
12/13/07