

Minutes of April 25, 2009 SBNF Cabin Coalition Meeting – Big Bear Discovery Center

The meeting was called to order at 10:08 am by Roy Glauthier, acting as moderator.

There were a total of 27 cabin representatives present, representing the following 11 residence tracts: Barton Flats, East Lakeview, Falls, Lakeview, Metcalf, Minnelusa, Pine Hill Drive, Polique Canyon, Seven Oaks, Southwest Shore, and Stetson Creek. Two Forest Service representatives were also present: Scott Tangenberg, Acting District Ranger, and Betty Hartenstine, Special Uses Administrator for the Big Bear Lake area.

Forest and District Update

Organization: Scott began by bringing us up to date with personnel changes. Mountaintop District Ranger Kurt Winchester has moved to Fire Manager in the Forest office in San Bernardino. Scott is Acting District Ranger probably until some time in June, when someone on detail will be assigned and Scott will resume his usual position as Deputy DR. Veronica Magnuson, Special Uses Manager for the Forest has taken a 1 year detail assignment as Deputy District Ranger on the Shasta Ranger District and will depart for that position in late May. Fran Colwell, Recreation officer on the Forest has been temporarily assigned as special American Reinvestment and Recovery Act [ARRA] coordinator to overview the use of ARRA funds coming into the Forest. Various reassignments will be made on the Forest to back-fill all these positions. Scott and Betty promised to get a staff listing out indicating who should be contacted for cabin issues from each tract.

In reply to a question, Betty confirmed that the FS has no funds for removal of dead trees or hazard trees. These are the responsibility of the cabin owner if they are endangering a cabin.

Permit Reissuance [CRCD]: New 20-year permits have been sent to all those in compliance and 1-year permits to those with remaining compliance issues. About 134 permits have been fully-executed and returned to holders. Although there was no specific deadline for return of the signed permits, Betty pointed out that cabin owners are basically operating without a permit until a signed permit is returned, so she encouraged permit holders to get their permits back as soon as possible.

She did note that no handwritten changes are allowed on the permit [with the exception of "to be determined" or "tbd" in the annual fee blank] so asked permittees to email her if there are mistakes in addresses, square footage or other data. [Betty's email is bhartenstine@fs.fed.us.gov] A corrected permit will have to be sent to the permittee for execution.

In general, Betty said that the major compliance issues were associated with "midnight construction" where additions or other changes and major maintenance were done without formal written Forest Service permission. [[Note== Doing work without prior approval isn't worth it. The FS can require the work to be ripped out or can revoke a permit for such violations.]]

2009 Fee Invoices Most were mailed on Friday, April 24. Invoices for the Big Bear Tract will be mailed within the next two weeks. The 2009 fees are implementing the base fees determined by the 1998 appraisals, escalated by the annual IPD factors (an explanation accompanies the invoice).

2009 Appraisals

Appraisals on our Forest will begin with site visits in each tract over the Labor Day weekend, September 5-7. Each permittee will receive certified notice of the site visit for their typical lot at least 30 days prior to the visit date. At that visit, cabin owners will have the opportunity to meet the appraiser, hear a description of the process to be followed and to present any information that they believe is important for the appraiser to know in order to properly value the typical lots.

Tracts are advised to prepare information on their tract and typical lots for the appraiser to give themselves the best likelihood of an acceptable appraisal result. This tract data should address the inventory of improvements which was prepared for each typical lot by the Forest Service. Some tracts indicated that they don't have their inventories, so Roy and Betty will figure out how to get those inventories out to the tracts. [Roy has a sample appraisal package that he will provide upon request.]

It is also recommended that tracts provide the appraiser with suggested comparable sales that might be considered. Roy related that work on such comparable sales is being done by several tracts and such sales data will be shared before the next Coalition meeting in August.

CUFFA and Appraisal Situation

Roy showed and talked about a PowerPoint presentation on the problems being encountered with the CUFFA appraisal process and the actions being taken to remedy these problems before cabins are lost to outrageously high fees. Results of the new appraisal completed through March showed that about 20% of the cabins would have annual fees of \$5000 or higher and 8.6% would have fees in excess of \$7000. Fees at these levels are unaffordable by many cabin owners and there is a real danger of many permittees selling their cabins if they can or just giving up their permits and removing their cabins.

Information about the efforts being undertaken by the Cabin Coalition 2 and the options being considered for correcting the problems can be found on the NFH website at www.nationalforesthomeowners.org Cabin owner letters to Congress have been successful at getting the attention of Congress to this issue. Present efforts are focused on obtaining a Congressional hearing sometime this summer. More cabin owner letters and calls will be needed before this fight is done.

Issues with New Permit Language

Cabin owners may have noticed major changes in their new permits. Changes to the permit were made seemingly without notice to the holders and NFH is addressing this with senior Forest Service management. It appears that changes may not be able to be reversed, in which case permit holders are advised to carefully read their permits and be aware of questionable terms if problems arise.