

Minutes of April 20, 2019 SBNF Cabin Coalition Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 10:03 am in the Community Room of the Big Bear Discovery Center. 25 cabin representatives were in attendance from the following 8 tracts: Barton Flats, Falls, South Fork Santa Ana River, Metcalf, Lytle Creek, Minnelusa, East Lakeview and Seven Oaks. Also attending from the Mountaintop Ranger District were Scott Evans, Special Uses Administrator, and Casey Shaffer, Special Uses Resource Assistant Intern.

Forest Service Update

Staffing Scott and Casey are pretty much it for all special uses on the Mountaintop District. Sonny Rivera on the Front Country is split between special uses and the billing officer position in the Forest Office. Be patient with any requests. There is presently no plan to fill the second administrator position on the Mountaintop and the FS budget has just taken a double hit: it won't be refunded the FY19 "fire-borrowing" monies and has just been told of an additional 5% budget cut.

An important change that will affect all of us is that the Forest Service emails are all changing over the next several months, though not all at the same time. The familiar "@fs.fed.us" suffix is changing to "@usda.gov" and, for some, their whole email address will change. I will change the emails for our Forest staff in future minutes as they become available. Scott and Casey's emails are changed below

Staffing on the various Ranger Districts is as follows:

Forest Office

- Jody Noiron [jnoiron@fs.fed.us, 909-382-2710] Forest Supervisor
- Thad Chavez [thadchavez@fs.fed.us, 909-382-2772] District Fire Mgmt Officer
- Dan Grijalva [dsgrijalva@fs.fed.us] Forest Archeologist/Tribal Liaison

Mountaintop Ranger District

- Marc Stamer [mstamer@fs.fed.us, 909-382-2728] District Ranger
- David Kotlarski [dkotlarski@fs.fed.us, 909-382-2815] Public Services Manager (oversees the Special Uses Administrators, among other duties)
- Scott Evans [scott.a.evans@usda.gov, 909-382-2808] Scott is the primary administrator for cabins. Scott prefers emails.

- Casey Shaffer [casey.shaffer@usda.gov, 909-382-2872] Special Uses Resource Assistant Intern

Front Country Ranger District

- Joe Rechsteiner [jrechsteiner@fs.fed.us, 909-392-2851] District Ranger
- Santiano (Sonny) Rivera [santianomrivera@fs.fed.us, 909-382-2929] Special Uses Permit Admin.

San Jacinto Ranger District

- Acturo Delgado [adelgado@fs.fed.us, 909-382-2921] District Ranger;
- Heidi Hoggan [hhoggan@fs.fed.us, 909-382-2945] Special Uses

Forest Service Dispatcher [24 Hour] 909-383-5654

Cabin Inspections Casey has divided the cabins on the Mountaintop into 5 groups, and at least one group will be done each year to ensure that each cabin is inspected every 5 years. Among other tasks, three interns on the Forest have begun inspecting cabins in the Lakeview Tract. Scott is not sure that staff time is available to let permittees know that they've been inspected unless noncompliant issues are found in the inspection. Discussion during the meeting emphasized the importance of communicating inspection results regardless of the outcome, so Scott will explore ways to communicate completed inspections, possibly through the Coalition's tract representatives.

The Forest Service is also considering asking for volunteers to conduct inspections and allowing self-inspections. Watch for future emails on this issue.

Fuels Clearance Projects The North Shore area from about Pine Hill Lane to the dam is out for bid right now and work could start this summer. Many cabins in the Big Bear Tract are within this area.

Road Damage from Valentine's Day Storm Scott told the group that this storm has been labeled a 50-Year Storm -- or even higher -- and resulted in major damage across the forest to roads and bridges, particularly in the Santa Ana River basin. The Barton Flats Tract, for example, lost 2 major culverts while the South Fork Tract lost 1 of its bridges, in both cases cutting off access to cabins in those tracts. Damage is still being assessed.

The Forest Service has received some emergency funding from the Federal Highway Administration, but this funding is restricted to use on only the higher classification Forest System roads. It is not expected that any funding will be made available to repair interior cabin access roads that are the responsibility of the permittees. It has been suggested to Scott that the FS be encouraged to find some source of fill material that can be accessed at no cost by cabin owners and tract associations. Scott has passed this suggestion along, but nothing has come of this idea yet and no obvious source(s) have been identified.

If your access roads have been damaged, a work request will need to be submitted to Scott using the Improvement Request form available on the Forest's Cabin website at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/sbnf/recreation/camping-cabins/>.

Scott told the group that he is working to develop a standard road approval letter which will provide information on basic road standards, allowable fill materials and plant protections. For more information on Forest Service road requirements, Scott recommended we contact Josh Direen, Assistant Forest Engineer at jdineen@fs.fed.us

Discussion of specific damage ensued. Because of the widespread damages to access roads, Scott indicated that minor repair work needed on a driveway to access a cabin could go ahead without formal approval. More serious repairs necessitating heavy equipment or significant fill must still have formal FS approval.

One comment described the need for signage along Tulip Lane adjacent to the Metcalf Tract to warn snow play visitors about blocking emergency vehicle access. It was pointed out that this road is in the City of Big Bear Lake, so this suggestion should be made to the City. Scott asked that this issue be raised again at the August Coalition meeting in anticipation of the 2019/20 winter season.

Improvement Requests Scott and Casey noted they don't have any Improvement Requests in process at the present time. Requests should be submitted on any significant cabin maintenance and all exterior improvements.

In Lieu Lot Pilot Project

Under the terms of our special use permits, if a cabin is destroyed and cannot be rebuilt in-place, the Forest Service may offer an in lieu lot on the same or an adjacent forest for construction of a replacement cabin. Although this clause has been in our permits for many years, it has been applied in only a few situations and is not well-understood. In an effort to clarify how in lieu lots are to be identified, a pilot project has been initiated on the San Bernardino National Forest to clarify this policy, develop guidelines by which possible in lieu lots could be identified and undertake to identify 8-10 potential in lieu lots for use in the event of a future destruction of cabins.

In support of this pilot, two documents have been developed and were distributed for comment either at the meeting or afterward to rqlauthier@aol.com:

- ***Frequently Asked Questions About In Lieu Lots*** and
- ***In Lieu Lot Selection Criteria***

Copies of these documents have been uploaded to the Coalition's Yahoo Group website.

Efforts are under way to identify a limited number of possible in lieu lots based on the defined criteria. Once identified, these lots will be reviewed with the Forest Service for their concurrence and comment. Lots that meet Forest Service approval will be discussed with San Bernardino County to determine how and if some level of agreement can be reached that candidate lots are basically "buildable," contingent on approved building plans.

Reconsidering the Cabin Coalition's Organization – Last August I mentioned my intention to transition the Coalition moderator position to a successor effective with this August's meeting and asked for suggestions/nominations of possible candidates. My intention in this announcement is not to bail on the organization, but to act on my feeling that others need to get involved in cabin leadership on our forest. So far, the response has been zero. There will continue to be Coalition meetings, but others needed to get involved.

Setting Next Meeting Date -- Our next meeting is tentatively set for August 10, 2019. This will be our traditional BBQ Picnic meeting, location and time to be announced.

And, in case you haven't heard already, National Forest Homeowner will be holding its annual conference at the Dana Resort on Mission Bay in San Diego on May 3-4. Details are available on the NFH website at www.nationalforesthowners.org. All cabin owners and their families are encouraged to attend to gain a better understanding of the cabin program and the challenges it faces.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:35am.

Minutes Prepared 4/26/19

Roy Glauthier