



Advocacy, Education & Stewardship  
Strengthening the Cabin Program

November 2023

Greetings NFH Member Tract Leaders!

Mark your calendars, on **Wednesday, November 15 at 5:00 pm Pacific**, NFH will host a tract leaders virtual meeting. Details below.

**IMPORTANT. Permit Fee Bills.** I received my permit fee invoice for 2024. Did you receive yours? If you didn't, and are not one of the unfortunate cabin owners who lost your cabin in a wildfire or other disaster, then contact the Forest Service National Billing Team at 208-765-7279 and ask for it. Your fee must be paid on time, January 1, 2024. Failure to pay by the due date constitutes non-compliance with your permit. If there is a human or machine error (Forest Service or yours) and your payment is not recorded by January 1 then you will be non-compliant. Sadly, permit holders lost their cabins this year because of avoidable billing issues caused by the Forest Service (FS) and the cabin owners. The National Billing Team will send overdue bills to the Treasury who will use their authority to garnish wages. Even if you think your bill is wrong, pay it. Do not withhold payment in protest. NFH can help you with Forest Service challenges, only if your fee has been paid.

Closely related to paying the permit fee is understanding the permit fee amount. The [Permit Fees page](#) on the NFH website has been updated with the 2024 fees. Our annual permit fees are adjusted for inflation based on a rolling 5-year average of the Implicit Price Deflator for Gross Domestic Product (IPD-GDP) index annual rate of change which is published by the U.S. Department of Commerce. Since it is a rolling average, the change in our fees will not be the same as the current year rate.

**Dues Increase.** NFH will be increasing dues for Member Tracts by \$5 effective January 2025, slightly over a year from now. Dues for a Regular Tract member will be \$55 and \$35 for an Associate Tract member. Dues for the Cabin membership, which is one Regular and up to four Associates, will be \$110 and a Lifetime membership for a Regular member in a Member Tract will be \$1,200. The last time NFH raised dues for Member Tracts, it was by \$10 in 2019. Our operational costs from vendor services to office supplies have increased. This slight increase enables us to continue to provide appropriate salaries to our knowledgeable and dedicated employees. If you have questions about the dues increase, contact NFH Membership Administrator Melody Knox at 541-708-1434 or [mknox@nationalforesthowners.org](mailto:mknox@nationalforesthowners.org).

**Retained Fees.** Our permit fees will be retained by the Forest Service beginning in 2025. This means the agency receives direct financial benefit for every cabin. The total estimate for 2025 is \$35M where about 85% of the total from a given National Forest will be used locally. It must all be used for recreation and NFH thinks about two-thirds are needed for proper administration of the cabin program with the remaining third used for other recreation. NFH is guiding cabin associations on ways to influence how those fees are spent. We hosted an Advocacy 101 breakout session at our 2023 Conference. Then, in July, NFH Past Presidents Doug Gann and Jay Tripathi hosted a virtual meeting to encourage communicating with your local Forest Supervisor about your priorities for using the fees. Information from both sessions can be found on our [Advocacy page](#). Some of you wrote a letter to your Forest Supervisor. Many got no response, while others got

acknowledgement but no material interaction. A few of you started a dialog or got a positive response. As Jeff Vail, US Forest Service Washington Office Director for Lands, Minerals and Geology (Acting), said at the NFH Conference, every year the Forest Supervisors will be working with staff and stakeholders on the use of the fees and priorities will shift as projects are accomplished or circumstances on the ground change. We will all continue the conversation; and engagement from your local Forest should improve.

**Forest Service Relationships.** A strong partnership at all levels of the Forest Service is essential. Cabin associations do their part by being organized and providing a central point of contact for communications regarding tract and forest issues such as tract-wide fuels reduction, tract security, forest stewardship, and upcoming permit reissuance. NFH encourages you to invite your Permit Administrator, Recreation Officer, District Ranger and Forest Supervisor to your annual meeting or social get together. Relationships with FS personnel are difficult to maintain because of their frequent job changes, but having a good reputation with a departing person helps start the new relationship off on a positive note. NFH Executive Director, Sharon Leach, is the cornerstone for our relationship with the Special Use Program Managers in the FS Regional Offices. Her open lines of communication at the Region often resolve issues at the Forest level.

**Turning to Congress for Legislation.** In spite of broadening and deepening our relationship with the Forest Service, NFH and cabin owners often find the FS cites policies and regulations as reasons they can't do something. Consequently, NFH is working with our attorney on alternate legal interpretations of those same policies and regulations. We are advocating with friends in Congress on a legislative solution that will protect our cabins and restore the hundreds of cabins lost this century. Soon, we will be asking Member Tracts as invaluable partners with NFH to join in this advocacy. Legislation is the best way for the cabin program to remain a top priority within the FS. The cabin program brings in \$4,700/acre which is the most revenue per acre for any special use program.

**Tract Leader Virtual Meeting.** Please join us on Wednesday, November 15 for an hour and a half Tract Leader virtual meeting, 5:00 PM Pacific/6:00 PM Mountain/7:00 PM Central/8:00 PM Eastern. We hope a leader from each and every NFH Member Tract attends. Register [here](#). Our agenda includes:

- Advocacy - retained fees, adjusted fees for impaired access and restricted occupancy, permit holder rights and our legislative solution.
- Dues - funding needs and the value of NFH.
- Communication - Sending NFH updates to Member Tracts and getting input from you.
- Q&A - Send me topics ahead of time, [meredithrandall14@gmail.com](mailto:meredithrandall14@gmail.com).

All the best,



Meredith Randall  
NFH President