

Minutes of May 6, 2020 SBNF Cabin Coalition Meeting

Greetings in this unsettled time. I hope you, your family and friends are staying safe. I'm sure you're like me, with thoughts increasingly turning to the mountains and getting out of our homes and back to our cabins. With the weather quickly turning from spring to summer, it's time for an email update on cabin issues since we can't yet do this in person.

Forest Service Issues

FS staff are largely doing their jobs remotely from home and other locations to comply with State "stay at home" mandates and to minimize personal exposures. Field operations are being resumed incrementally on a three-days-a-week basis, although most efforts focus on monitoring, patrolling, and documenting current conditions. Restrictions are still in place for many facilities and parking, but trails and forests are open to the public.

As the COVID-19 virus threat allows, a "new normal" will emerge, but all that's clear so far is that there will be changes in how the Forest Service operates.

Staffing As you may remember, Scott Evans was promoted late in 2019 to the Recreation Officer position on the Mountaintop Ranger District. Interestingly, this position is not responsible for administering the Recreation Residence program, which falls under the Lands staff and Special Uses. That being said, Scott remains the Point of Contact ["POC"] for all things related to cabins at this time. Use his email to contact him: scott.a.evans@usda.gov

Casey Shaffer [casey.shaffer@usda.gov] has been extended in her Resource Assistant Intern position and is expected to become full-time special uses staff perhaps later this month. Casey has been assisting Scott with cabin issues and will eventually assume responsibility for cabins and organization camps (but not yet). Additionally, efforts are under way to hire a second full-time staff to fill Scott's vacant Special Uses position, and this person will then take over administration of all the other special uses functions such as cell towers, power line access, etc.

Annual Fuels Clearance Since we've all been under "stay at home" orders, Scott Evans agrees that the usual June 1 deadline for clearing pine needles around our cabins isn't going to be actively enforced. Instead, the Forest Service asks that we make sure that clearance requirements be accomplished as soon as possible once we can access our cabins. From a practical standpoint, this should probably be interpreted as before August 1, as that when the mountain fire season kicks into high gear. With everything else that's going on, Scott doesn't expect that anyone will be writing citations, but fire safety dictates that we don't ignore this requirement.

Improvement Requests Scott has only a handful of improvement requests in process at this time, mostly from a new permittees. There are a couple big projects that are stuck on the Forest Archeologist's desk awaiting historic approvals, which have apparently been complicated by problems with the historic reviews provided with the applications. Scott noted that failure to comply with historic requirements could result in the permittee having to correct the work or, in the extreme, revocation of the permit.

New Improvement Requests need to use the Request Form (available on the Forest Cabin webpage) and emailed to Scott at scott.a.evans@usda.gov

Discovery Center Renovation Here's a surprise – the renovation of the Discovery Center is still in process, with FS staff expected now to move by summer's end. With this pandemic, the FS will have to figure out how to stay safe in a much smaller space with cubicles rather than separate offices. Scott did say that we'll be surprised at the drastic changes that have been made to the Discovery Center once it is open again.

That's about it for this update. If you're headed to your cabin, be sure to follow the State and local Big Bear social-distancing and personal protective requirements. And be smart – if you have been exposed or don't feel quite right, don't head to your cabin. The mountain communities have limited resources for their full-time residents and your cabin really isn't a good place to become a COVID-19 patient.

By mid-summer, my hope is that we're able to do in-person meetings again. In the meantime, be safe. Let me know if there are questions or if you have news to pass along to others.

Roy Glauthier