

## **Recommended Action for Remote Cabin Owners**

First, by “remote” we mean recreation residence cabin owners who have no or only a few cabin neighbors. This could be because there were never any nearby cabins, such cabins were destroyed by fire or other nature disaster or have been removed due to neglect.

Being “remote” does not mean that a recreation residence cabin will automatically be targeted by the Forest Service for removal, but that could be up to you, the permittee. Preventing that from happening is what these recommended actions are all about. Here are things you can do to increase your chances of a great relationship with the Forest Service and a long tenure as a permittee, and are not necessarily in any order of importance:

- **Verify that your cabin permit is for a Recreation Residence, not an Isolated Cabin.** Recreation Residences and Isolated Cabins hold different permits and are governed by separate Forest Service regulations. If your cabin is a Recreation Residence, your permit will be on form FS-2700-5a and will be titled “Term Special Use Permit For Recreation Residences.”
- **Develop a personal, face-to-face relationship with your Forest Service Permit Administrator and with the District Ranger and Forest Supervisor if possible.** While the Forest Service District office may be some distance from your cabin or full-time residence, putting a face to a name works both ways if – or perhaps, when – issues or questions arise with your special uses permit. Set up a meeting to review your permit file (every cabin has one) and take along copies of building permits, past improvement approvals and photos to add to your file. The file may have historic and other information you would like to copy and, conversely, you may have documents that need to be in the file that have somehow gone missing.
- **Create an active association with your closest cabin neighbors to share information, communications and assistance.** Whether your cabin is alone by itself or one of a small group, being informed and protecting your cabin will be much easier if you’re organized as a group. Even if your closest neighbors are miles away over a hill, joining together allows the sharing of information and facilitates communication between cabin owners and to and from the Forest Service. And such a group doesn’t need to be a formal legal organization or have elected officers, although both these may be good ideas depending on the situation. Some very effective cabin groups are organized around regular cabin dinners and social activities (which are also great opportunities to get to know your Forest Service staff, too).
- **Really small? Arrange to be “adopted” by a larger cabin tract association within driving distance of your cabin.** Being organized gives cabin owners, individually and collectively, a louder “voice” with the Forest Service and more effective communications, as noted above. If there is a larger cabin association on the same District or Forest as you, arrange to attend their meetings to

become acquainted and look for a way to become affiliated or “adopted.” Such an arrangement brings remote cabin owners under the “umbrella” of the larger group for representation with the Forest Service and breaks down that feeling of being alone out in the woods.

- **If not already designated as historic, seeking historical designation supports the long-standing presence of the remote cabin.** If your cabin can qualify, there is an advantage to having it evaluated for historic significance. Once registered as an "historic property", there are a number of regulatory steps that the federal agency must perform that will add greatly to the timeline of any removal. Cabin owners would also have the right to decision appeal above the forest at the state and national levels. The agency will be required to provide detailed, written justification for their decision, and how they plan to mitigate the loss of the historic property. Any misstep in the regulatory process opens the agency to a lawsuit, and even civil damages to personal property.
- **Be sure that the cabin is in full compliance with the Special Use Permit.** Removing *any* concern or objection that the Forest Service may identify is always in the best interest of the cabin owner. Plus it helps strengthen relations with local administrators. Concerns include taking every Firewise action that is permitted or recommended. These actions may be the protective difference should fire sweep through the cabin location. Also, any other natural events that could lead to the cabin being impacted should be identified and mitigated if possible.
- **NFH membership provides a stronger voice when issues arise.** At a minimum, joining National Forest Homeowners will enlist our organization's support and assistance should your cabin be threatened with removal. Also, being an active, participating member in NFH committee and Board work expands opportunities for widening relationships with other cabins owners and Forest Service personnel. These relationships may prove very helpful in times of need or crisis.