

BENEFITS OF THE USDA FOREST SERVICE RECREATION RESIDENCE PROGRAM

WHAT IS THE RECREATION RESIDENCE PROGRAM?

It is a national program authorized by Congress in 1915 to facilitate family recreation on National Forests. About 13,800 cabins are permitted on USDA Forest Service lands to cabin owners who pay an annual special use fee.

WHO BENEFITS? *All of us do!*

CABIN OWNERS, FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Cabin visitors spend over 6.5 million visitor days annually at their cabins and in the local communities enjoying the unique recreational opportunities on our National Forests. About 44% of those visits are by youth.

USDA FOREST SERVICE

- Beginning in 2025, all special use permit fees will be retained by the Forest Service to fund the costs of administering the program and to provide support for other recreational programs such as campgrounds, picnic areas and trails — a total of **approximately \$376M over a ten-year period!**
- Recreation residence special use fees generate **over \$4,700 per acre annually**, one of the highest returns to the Forest Service (and the U.S. taxpayer) for recreational use of National Forest lands.
- The cabin owners also provide volunteer services to the Forest Service in a variety of ways:
 - ~ Collaborating on fire mitigation
 - ~ Maintaining trails and roads
 - ~ Removing trash
 - ~ Assisting other forest users
 - ~ Eradicating noxious weeds
 - ~ Preserving American heritage on National Forests

LOCAL BUSINESSES, ORGANIZATIONS AND GOVERNMENTS

Cabin owners participate in volunteer activities and spend money in the local rural community purchasing meals and groceries, buying items for their cabins, enjoying the outdoors and hiring local contractors. Their purchases result in cascading benefits, supporting employment and contributing to the local tax base. Cabin owners, their families and guests bring **\$141.3M annually** to local businesses. They pay **\$18.9M annually** in local property and use taxes for their cabin, which in turn support local and state services such as fire departments, schools, search and rescue teams and community programs. For every dollar cabin visitors spend in the rural communities, there is a **multiplier effect of 1.5 times** from the secondary spending by businesses and employees.

ANNUAL ECONOMIC BENEFITS FROM RECREATION RESIDENCE PROGRAM

\$141 Million Benefit to Local Rural Communities | 145 Thousand Volunteer Hours & \$3 Million Cash Donations

- \$33M USFS Permit Fees
- \$19M in Property Taxes
- 6.5M Visitor Days



- \$24M Recreating
- \$59M Retail and Dining Out
- \$54M Maintenance and Improvements

CHALLENGES AND THE FUTURE

The Recreation Residence Program is facing risks that are already eroding the program and threaten its existence. Over 440 cabins have been destroyed by wildfires in the last four seasons alone. Rebuilding cabins is hampered due to unclear regulations and some jurisdictional questions between federal, state and local agencies. Additionally, the Forest Service has proposed permit changes that could adversely affect the program by imposing expensive and burdensome terms, making cabin ownership less desirable and decreasing the overall positive impact of the Recreation Residence Program. If the Program is diminished, the cabin owner community suffers personal and family losses and local communities and the Forest Service also suffer economic and cultural loss.

The future of the RRP is uncertain. It is certain that without aggressive advocacy by cabin owners and action by leaders in Congress and the Forest Service, this century-old piece of American heritage which provides economic benefit to rural communities and to the American taxpayers may be facing a collapse.