

Cabin Fee Act Update: June 6, 2011

Cabin Coalition 2 has remained actively engaged, but the pace of cabin fee reform has been slow so far this year. This has been due to several issues, the most significant being the new Congress and great difficulty moving legislation, regardless of its content. Secondly, we have been waiting since mid-March for the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) to give their opinion on Cabin Fee Act (CFA) revenue implications subsequent to language changes made to accommodate our sponsors' wishes and concerns (explained below). And finally, the most recent Forest Service appraisal data has raised important revenue projection concerns.

Given this background, several positive changes to the 2010 version of the CFA legislation are in process for the 2011 bill. First, a 25% annual cap on fees has been inserted to limit fee increases during and after the transition to the full implementation of the CFA that will follow the completion of all appraisals by 2013. This provision was the desire of Senator Feinstein's (D-CA) staff and helped secure the Senator's potential sponsorship of the CFA in the Senate. Secondly, the overpayment / underpayment provision has been removed, saving many cabin owners an unexpected higher fee in the first three years of the CFA implementation. Finally, with 75% of all appraisals complete, we believe previous CBO revenue estimates, based on less complete data, were overstated resulting in more folks paying higher fees. Because of this we have adjusted the percentages assigned to the fee tiers to meet this lower revenue projection. This will be a positive reduction in fees for most folks.

So where are we today? First, we continue to wait for a response from the CBO. We have been told that their informal conclusions are due soon. Second, we expect the modified bill to be re-introduced in the House by Chairman Doc Hastings (R-WA) in the next week or so. Third, as soon as we have a neutral revenue opinion from the CBO, Senator Jon Tester (D-MT) will introduce the CFA in the Senate with co-sponsorship by Senator Feinstein expected. Following this, we expect to participate in a brief House committee hearing (NR, National Parks, Forests and Public Lands, Chairman Rob Bishop R-UT) and a Senate committee hearing (ENR, Public Lands and Forests, Chairman Ron Wyden, D-OR) sometime this summer. Once out of these committees, our goal is to be ready for passage this fall. Keep your fingers crossed and please remain informed and supportive.

Submitted by:

Pete Bailey, C2 Legislative Contact, chair

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