

Your name, address, date

Representative "Doc" Hastings
Yakima office c/o Assistant Ryan Roderack
302 E. Chestnut Ave.
Yakima, WA 98901
RE: Forest Service fees for summer cabins

Dear Representative Hastings:

As a constituent, I need your help on a national issue directly affecting my family and numerous cabin owners in Washington State. The US Forest Service is in the process of implementing new, unrealistically high permit fees that may literally force longtime cabin owners like me out of the forest.

Negotiations between cabin owners and the Forest Service have stalemated, and it has become clear that Congressional action is needed to fix this issue. Otherwise, cabin ownership may be available only to the wealthy.

My family's cabin on Rimrock Lake, east of White Pass, has been passed down through the generations for 50 years. We are working-class citizens and responsible stewards who routinely pick up forest litter. (I can't imagine a high-class debutant doing this.) We have even doused illegal campfires left by careless campers. Our cabin is a blessing we routinely share with friends.

We understand having a cabin in the forest is a privilege, and my family is willing to pay a reasonable fee for it. However, we believe the Forest Service has misinterpreted the CUFFA legislation passed by Congress, and has used a flawed appraisal process in reaching its new fee scale for cabin owners. Under this process, annual permit fees will be 5% of a lot's appraised value.

Specifically, the Forest Service process fails to take into account 1) the property's limited use (forest rules allow only 3-month occupancy) and 2) the Forest Services' ability to terminate a lease and require property restoration at the cabin owner's expense.

Thirdly, we believe the new fees are based on over-inflated property values, as determined by faulty "comparable sales" with area properties that do not have use or improvement restrictions.

At this point the only apparent way to fix the issue is for Congress to amend the CUFFA language. The appraisal process must recognize the restrictions placed on permitted forest lots that lessen their value. We also are requesting current permit fees be frozen until this issue is fixed.

Sharing public resources, like the national forests, is one of the many things that make our country great. It is important that those resources remain available to everyone. Excessive cabin permit fees will only hurt that goal by economically limiting ownership to the wealthy.

We need your help. Please speak out publically on this issue.

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