

BENEFITS OF THE USDA FOREST SERVICE RECREATION RESIDENCE PROGRAM

WHAT IS THE RECREATION RESIDENCE PROGRAM (RRP)?

This 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 in family recreation activities on our National Forests. The cabin program brings old and young alike outdoors, with about 44% of those visits by youth 19 and under.

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.
- 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 local rural communities: purchasing meals and groceries, buying items for their cabins, enjoying the outdoors and hiring local contractors. This spending results in cascading benefits, supporting jobs and contributing to the local tax base. Cabin owners, their families and guests annually bring **\$141.3M** to local businesses and pay almost **\$19M** in local property and use taxes for their cabin, which in turn support services such as fire departments, schools, search and rescue teams and community programs. For every dollar cabin visitors spend in rural communities, there is a **multiplier effect of 1.5 times** from 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 OF THE PROGRAM

The Recreation Residence Program is facing risks that are already eroding the program. Over 3% of the cabins in the program were destroyed by wildfires in the last four seasons. Multiple challenges, from Forest Service decisions to lack of insurance prevent full replacement of these lost cabins. Additionally, the Forest Service has proposed permit changes that could negatively affect the widely enjoyed benefits of the RRP and make the program less sustainable. If this program is diminished, not only the cabin community, but local surrounding communities and the Forest Service will suffer economic and cultural loss.

The future of the RRP is uncertain. Without aggressive advocacy by cabin owners and action by leaders in Congress and the Forest Service, this economically sound and century-old piece of American heritage will continue to decline.

