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Comments: Northwest Forest Plan Amendment: NFH Public Comment

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This comment is being submitted on behalf of National Forest Homeowners, which represents and advocates for permit holders in the Recreation Residence Program on all but two of the seventeen National Forests impacted by this Plan amendment. Established by Congress in 1915, Forest Service policy states that the Recreation Residence Program is a valid use of National Forest System lands and an important component of the overall National Forest recreation program [59 FR 28727].

We appreciate the intention of the Plan amendment to support and protect local communities both on and in proximity to National Forest System lands. Managed recreational use of the public lands is a widely-recognized rural economic driver. As part of our public comment, we respectfully submit the results of an economic benefits study (see attachment) of the Recreation Residence program. As documented by our recent research, cabin communities bring significant economic benefits to the local rural businesses and communities by which they are supported.

Representing the Recreation Residence stakeholders on forest lands, we are especially concerned about wildfires and other disasters which severely impact rural and cabin communities. We appreciate the intention of this Plan to apply up-to-date climate and forest health science toward achieving a more fire resilient forest. We also encourage the inclusion of forest landscape restoration practices that will reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfires, including thinning and prescribed fire when used in a well-staffed, responsible way. Based on our experience nationally and within the Plan bioregion, we ask that the Plan Amendment provide FS staff with a framework that establishes standards for timely planning and implementation of project, notification of impacted communities, and timelines for project completion, such as removal of slash piles and log decks.

As a national organization, we recognize notification of local entities and stakeholders as a challenging yet essential element with projects on National Forests. Wherever the Plan seeks to implement projects for forest health, we request that all stakeholders including Recreation Residence permit holders on those National Forests receive direct and timely notification to the address (or email address) of record on file in the Forest Service Special Uses Database (SUDS).

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. We look forward to following the development of the Northwest Forest Plan Amendment and to further opportunities to provide comments on specific content.

Sincerely, Sharon Leach, NFH Executive Director www.nationalforesthowners.org

*The attached one-pager on the Economic Benefit Study can be seen at https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.nationalforesthowners.org/resource/resmgr/docs/economic_benefits/at_a_glance_rrp_final.pdf