

## **CABIN FEE ACT OF 2011: A NEW DAY DAWNING FOR CABIN OWNERS**

Following nearly two years of intensive effort – during which cabin owners have received an education in the twists and turns of the legislative process in Congress –the Cabin Fee Act of 2011 (CFA) will soon be introduced in both the House and Senate. CFA 2011 will be very similar to the Cabin Fee Act of 2010, which was introduced in the Senate last fall by Senator Jon Tester (D-MT) as S. 3929, too late in the session for passage. A slightly different version, championed by Representative Doc Hastings (R-WA) was approved earlier in 2010 by the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands. Senator Tester and Representative Hastings are expected to introduce CFA 2011. Both House and Senate bills last year received strong bipartisan support and were found by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) to have zero impact on the Federal budget. Such a CBO “budget neutral” judgment is essential to passage of any legislation due to the intense concern over the deficit.

CFA 2011 will be changed slightly from last year’s version but is still expected to have bipartisan support and to receive a passing grade from the CBO. The main change in the bill may be the addition of a cap on fee increases after the CFA passes Congress. This is intended to prevent any substantial fee increases caused by implementation of the 2000 Cabin Users Fee Fairness Act (CUFFA) from suddenly hitting cabin owners under the CFA. The CBO is now examining the budget impact of these changes.

CFA 2011 will replace the CUFFA appraisal based fee system, which cabin owners have found to be so inconsistent, unfair and costly. Instead of basing fees on inappropriate appraisals that fail to value fairly the unique circumstances of cabins subject to a wide range of limitations and restrictions on use, a tier-based fee system will be followed. There will be nine fee “tiers” with a low annual fee of \$500 and a top fee of \$4500. Cabin owners believe the new CFA system will preserve the cabin program as a cherished source of family recreation for future generations.

Once introduced, CFA 2011 will be considered in the next few months by the respective Congressional Committees. If all goes well, by the end of this year, a new day will arrive for all cabin owners with an improved, fairer and more reasonable fee system.