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**Congressman Doc Hastings**  
Serving Central Washington

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**Hastings to Introduce Cabin Fee Fairness Legislation**

**Yakima, WA** –Today, House Natural Resources Committee Ranking Member Doc Hastings (WA-04) announced that he will introduce legislation to address volatile yearly fees for families who own cabins in our National Forests.

The bill would establish a fair fee-setting system that would institute a tiered yearly fee structure based on current appraisals and tied to increases in inflation. The new fee-setting system would replace the existing volatile system that’s based on subjective appraisals and is causing sharp spikes in fees charged to cabin owners, and which may force some families to abandon and tear down their cabins.

“Family-owned cabins in our National Forests are being put at risk by soaring fees,” said Hastings. “Many of these cabins have been in families since the early-20<sup>th</sup> century and passed down from generation to generation. This legislation will provide a sensible, long-term solution that will keep these cabins affordable and accessible to the Americans, while still providing fair compensation to the federal Treasury for the use of the land.”

“Unless Congress acts to establish a fair pricing structure, families in Yakima and across our nation may be forced to tear down their cabins because they can’t afford the fees,” Hastings said. “Providing access to public lands is part of the mission of the Forest Service, and action is needed to make certain that recreational cabins aren’t priced out of existence.”

Background

In 1915, the National Forest Service established the Recreation Resident Program that set aside a small number of residential lots for Americans to build recreational cabins on federal land. The individuals own the cabin structures, and pay a yearly fee for the use of the Forest Service lot. There are currently over 14,000 recreational cabin owners across the United States – the majority in the West.

In 2000, Congress adopted Public Law 106-291 that included a change in the law to implement variable cabin fees based on a subjective appraisal system. This change in the law has resulted in much higher fees than anticipated due to the difficulty in making appraisals that fully take into consideration the uniqueness of the cabins and the many uncommon variables when compared to typical homes and real estate. With few, or no, true comparable sales, resulting appraisals are subjective and may involve arbitrary determinations.

For example, according to a recent [USA Today article](#), the Allen family, whose cabin has been in the family for more than 40 years, will see fees increase from \$1,677 in 2008 to \$10,000 a year based on current appraisals.

The [Seattle Times reported](#) that cabin owners in Lake Wenatchee recently received notice that their fees will increase more than 1,000 percent - from \$1,400 to more than \$17,000 by 2011. The [Cashmere Valley Record wrote](#) about a family who is worried they will lose their cabin due to rising fees.

Ranking Member Hastings’ legislation, which is supported by the National Forest Homeowners Association and the Cabin Coalition<sup>2</sup>, would establish the following fair, predictable and tiered yearly fee structure. Cabins would be placed in the tiers based upon current appraisal values with the lowest in Tier 1 and highest in Tier 5. Fees would be adjusted annually for inflation.

Tier	Yearly User Fee
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1	\$500
2	\$1,000
3	\$2,000
4	\$3,000
5	\$4,000

A new transfer fee would be assessed when cabins are sold or ownership is transferred within a family. A flat transfer fee of \$1,000 will be applied to all cabin sales, with an additional 5% assessed on any transfer sales of between \$250,000 and \$500,000, and an additional 10% assessed on any amount that exceeds \$500,000.

Establishing this new structured, tiered fee system should also reduce the costs of overseeing and managing the cabin system for the Forest Service by eliminating the time-consuming and costly appraisal process.

*To listen to audio of the press conference, please click [here](#). The press conference begins at the 4:30 mark.*