

Recreation Residences

San Bernardino National Forest



What are Recreation Residences?

Recreation Residences are cabins on National Forest System lands, owned and taken care of by private parties. The land is not "leased" as is often the belief, but rather "permitted" to the cabin owners (permittees). The special use permit does not convey any interest in real property, but it permits the permittee to maintain the cabin on National Forest land. Permittees are responsible for using the land in accordance with all laws and regulations that govern the land. The Forest Service continues to manage the land to protect the resources.

These cabins are not available for rent to the general public – they are privately owned, and in fact, their special use permits prevent them from being rented except with prior approval, or used for other commercial purposes. Also, the Forest Service does not sell these cabins. Occasionally, the owners will decide to sell, and these transactions are handled by the permittee or local realty companies.

There are currently 728 recreation residences on the San Bernardino National Forest. These are authorized by "Recreation Residence Special Use Permits" issued by the local District Ranger. The lots were originally designated in the early 1900's for construction of cabins to acquaint the public with the recreation opportunities of the National Forest and originally referred to as "summer homes." The Forest Service does not permit full time occupancy of the cabins, cabin owners must maintain a full time permanent residence elsewhere.

Cabin Sales

Most cabins sales are handled by local realtors. The Forest Service is to be notified when a cabin is listed for sale. We do an inspection and if there are any hazards or poor conditions known they must be corrected prior to the close of escrow. The buyer must meet with the Forest Service prior to the close of escrow to go over the terms and conditions of the Special Use Permit. In signing the permit, the new owner agrees to the terms of the permit. Each new permit is issued for the balance of time remaining on the existing permit, all permits on the San Bernardino National Forest expire December 31, 2028. The permit can only be issued to a single individual, a husband and wife, or a trust. Permits cannot be issued to corporations or businesses.

The cabins are considered personal property rather than deeded property. If involved, an escrow company may contact the office of the Secretary of State of California to check for outstanding loans and/or liens the seller may have with the previous owner. The permit is not real property, does not convey any interest in real property, and may not be used as collateral for a loan. As personal property, they are subject to annual unsecured personal property taxes (possessory interest tax). This office does not maintain this information as the taxes are based on appraisal by the County Assessor.

What is the cost?

There is an annual Land Use fee charged by the Government. These fees are based on the land value on which the cabin rests. Fees are based on appraisals which consider location, slope, cover, access and view and vary from approximately \$800.00 to \$7,000.00 annually. Land use fees are adjusted annually based on national economic indicators and have averaged a 2-4% increase per year for the past 15 years. Appraisals are conducted every 10 years, and the lots were re-appraised in 2009. These fees are billed annually.

Maintenance and Improvements



The Forest Service realizes the need for certain amenities (electricity, telephones), these requests are handled on a case-by-case basis. With respect to new or upgrading utilities (electric and telephone), these services must be installed underground. All requests must be in writing. Response time to requests for improvements varies depending on current staffing levels and work loads. After approval is obtained, permittees are required to obtain the necessary permits from the County of San Bernardino. All work on cabins on National Forest land must be done in compliance with the San Bernardino County Building and Safety Codes.

Until archaeological and architectural surveys are completed and evaluated no plans for cabin additions and exterior alterations will be accepted.

The management of the twenty-one tracts in which the cabins rest is designed to maintain the Forest environment for the use of the cabin owners and the general public. With this in mind, there are certain restrictions, for example, fences and mailboxes are not permitted. Access roads are generally narrow and winding, conforming to the natural terrain and are maintained by the permittees. Only plants and shrubs native to the local environment are allowed as mitigation measures for erosion control, vegetable and flower gardens are not permitted. Paint colors allowed on cabin exteriors are chosen based on their ability to blend with the forest environment surrounding the cabin.



It is each permittee's responsibility to keep their area in a fire safe condition. This includes pine needle and leaf removal from roofs, maintaining a 30 foot perimeter around the structure clear of dead and flammable materials, spark arresters, no wood fires outside, etc. Random fire prevention inspections are done year around. If any deficiencies are found the permittee could be subject to a citation.

For more information:

For more information, please contact the Big Bear Ranger Station (909) 382-2790, the Lytle Creek Ranger Station (909) 382-2851, or the San Jacinto Ranger Station (909) 382-2921.



Forest Service
Pacific Southwest Region
www.fs.usda.gov/r5



San Bernardino National Forest
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