

Recreation Residence Special Use Permit

Appendix B:

Operation and Maintenance Plan

Mt. Hood National Forest Zigzag Ranger District Recreation Residence Program



Last Updated 04/16/2025

Information and forms posted on the website will be updated as changes in policy or direction occur. Please check the website for updated forms, requirements, and information.

Appendix B: Operation and Maintenance Plan is part of your Special Use Permit.

The construction and maintenance standards found in Appendix B define the appearance and characteristics that represent the recreation residence experience in the northwest forest environment.

In addition, all remodeling, rebuilding, reconstruction etc., must be approved in advance by the Forest Service and adhere to the [Mt. Hood National Forest Design Guidelines for Recreation Residences](#).

It is recognized that many cabins now exceed or deviate from these standards and guidelines. **Existing improvements that exceed these standards, unless otherwise directed here or on an individual permit, can currently remain but will be brought into compliance with these standards during replacement, maintenance, and/or change of ownership occur or during permit reissuance.**

Information and forms posted on the [Recreation Residences webpage](#) will be updated as changes in policy or direction occur.

All work to the exterior of the cabin or outbuilding, or any ground disturbance on the lot, must be approved in writing by the Forest Service. All plans and proposals must be submitted in writing using the current [Project Proposal form](#) and sent to the Permit Administrator.

Per the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and the Northwest Forest Plan, the Mt. Hood National Forest is legally mandated to manage our ESA- Critical Habitat and riparian reserves in a way that maintains and restores the ecological health of watersheds and aquatic ecosystems within the forest boundaries. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is the regulatory agency that oversees, enforces, and sets these regulations.

For recreation residences on the Zigzag Ranger District, this requires restricting certain activities that could threaten the ecological health of Critical Habitat or riparian reserves, including projects that involve excavation, grading, land filling, construction of a new structure, or construction of an enlarged structures. Certain projects may require additional consultation.

All project proposals which are accepted and approved will either be authorized by the Line Officer through an Amendment to the permit or through a written “Notice to Proceed” from the Permit Administrator.

Part I: Responsible person(s) and other contacts

1. The permit holder is responsible for implementing the provisions of this plan, and for ensuring that all cabin guests and any hired workers or contractors comply with the provisions of the Special Use Permit and this Operation and Maintenance Plan.
2. The permit holder will provide the Forest Service with their current address, telephone, and email contact information.
3. The permit holder will provide the Forest Service with contact information of individuals to be notified in case of emergency at the cabin, such as break-ins or damage due to windstorms.
4. For additional information or questions, you can contact the Recreation Residence Permit Administrators at sm.fs.mthcabins@usda.gov.

Part II: Inspections

1. The Forest Service will conduct compliance inspections at each recreation cabin at least once every five years. Permit holders are responsible for complying with specific items listed on the inspection form. The permit holder shall contact the Permit Administrator to request a time extension if needed.

Part III: Site Plan Maps

1. Permit holders must update, and submit to the permit administrator, their site plan map whenever changes are made to lot improvements, including below-ground and above-ground improvements such as: power lines and waterlines, propane tanks, septic systems and drain fields, in-ground cisterns or holding tanks, and other improvements.

Part IV: General Standards for Improvements

A. Cabins and Outbuildings

1. Recreation cabins and outbuildings must be designed to meet simple and rustic standards and be compatible with the natural setting. All additions and exterior improvements must match the original buildings as much as is practical. This includes siding, windows, doors, roofing, and the general architectural style, and must be approved by the Forest Service in writing.
2. Exterior colors shall harmonize with the surroundings without strong contrast between the walls and trim. Earth tones and forest colors shall be used to blend in with the natural environment. Darker greens and browns are recommended; subdued greys are also acceptable. Bright colors should not be used for exterior or trim. The entire building shall be painted one color with appropriate trim. All colors must be approved in advance (in writing) by the Forest Service.
3. The maximum permitted cabin footprint is 1,200 square feet measured on the outside of the foundation. A loft may also be permitted, but the loft and base square footprint shall not exceed 1,600 square feet. Loft square footage shall be two thirds or less of the ground floor square footage. The loft shall be open without intervening partitions or bathroom. An open deck or porch is not included in the allowable total square footage of the building. An enclosed porch attached to a cabin will be included in the maximum 1,200 square foot standard.
4. Not every cabin will be approved at the maximum 1,200-square-footage, depending on environmental and other factors.
5. On reasonably level lots, homes shall be no more than 26 feet tall from the ground to the peak of the roof (no more than one story and a loft above ground level). A full second story is not permissible. Basements are not permitted. Crawlspace and below deck areas will not be converted to storage or living spaces.

6. All roofs shall be designed to support the local snow load. The entire roof shall be one material. Roll roofing is not acceptable. The roof shall have adequate pitch to support the roofing materials. Roof colors shall be darker tones of greens or browns and should harmonize with the cabin siding and natural environment. Written approval for roof material and color is required from the Forest Service prior to implementation. Metal roofs are generally not approved for tracts or cabins that are eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.
7. Metal buildings shall not be permitted.
8. Mobile homes or modular structures shall not be authorized for use on a recreation cabin lot.

B. Outbuildings

1. Only one storage building and one outdoor toilet are permitted. Buildings with more than one storage building and one outdoor toilet will be phased out as opportunity allows, such as in (1) change of ownership; (2) expiration of the permit; (3) a request for new construction; or (4) destruction of the structure. All outbuildings on the lot must be authorized on the face of the permit and shown in the site plan.
2. Authorized storage buildings shall be low profile, measuring no more than 12 feet in height from ground level to peak, and with a footprint no greater than 130 square feet measured on the exterior of the outbuilding. Outbuilding piers, supporting overhangs, and coverings are included in the 130-square-foot permitted size total. Outbuilding plans must be approved in writing by the Forest Service prior to any construction.
3. Existing guest cabins must be converted to storage structures or removed. Exceptions may be made for the preservation of National Register eligible historic guest cabins on a recreation residence lot at the discretion of the Forest Service and approval must be in writing.
4. Outbuildings cannot be used to expand the living space of a cabin. Outbuildings must not be converted into sleeping quarters, guest cabins or

office spaces. As such, furniture such as beds, desks, and chairs are not permitted in outbuildings.

C. Decks and Porches

1. Decks are defined as unroofed structures, generally raised above ground level. 400 square feet is the maximum combined size that will be permitted for all decks at a cabin. In some cases, approval of the maximum of 400 square feet will not be granted. The outer edge of the deck must be set back at least five feet from the escarpment leading to the nearest body of water. Deck location, size, materials, and configuration must be approved in advance and in writing by the Forest Service.
2. Porches and patios (roofed structures, generally not raised above ground level) shall be limited to 25 percent of the total square footage of the building. They will not be enclosed without prior approval of the Forest Service. If enclosed, the porch is included in the square footage of the cabin.

D. Hot Tubs and Saunas

1. Hot tub design and installation must be approved in writing by the Forest Service. Please contact the Permit Administrator for guidance when submitting a project request.
2. If a sauna is approved by the Forest Service, it must be installed either in the dwelling or in the storage utility building, and not in another structure.

E. Signage

1. One sign may be permitted for each cabin. Rustic, routed type signs on boards approximately 18 inches x 8 inches x 2 inches in thickness may be approved. No signs may be attached directly to trees.
2. Permit holders will maintain a lot number mounted on a post or in conjunction with a name sign at the intersection of their driveway with the main access road to their cabin.

F. Other Improvements

1. Septic systems and drain fields must be approved in writing by the Forest Service and generally require a 60-day environmental review. When the existing septic systems and drain field system do not meet current code replacement of the system will be required within one year.
2. When feasible, all water, power, or other utility transmission lines shall be buried. Where practical, water systems (including wells) shall be incorporated into building design and screened from public view or buried. All projects that involve ground disturbance require prior approval from the Forest Service.
3. Most of the recreation cabins in the Zigzag District are served by the Lady Creek or Rhododendron Water Systems. Permit holders who wish to install an alternate system are required to obtain written approval from the Forest Service and a state-issued water right prior to proceeding.
4. Yard lights for safety or security must be approved by the Forest Service. Such lights shall be mounted on buildings or treated posts/poles. All yard light electrical lines shall be buried and shall be approved prior to installation. No lights that illuminate automatically with darkness are permitted. Motion-activated sensors are permitted but must be turned off when the cabin is not in use.
5. Fences are permitted only to provide protection against a steep drop-off or cliff, and only after obtaining written approval from the Forest Service.
6. Gate installation is approved on a case-by-case basis. They must be approved in writing by the Authorized Officer prior to installation. Chain and cable gates are not permitted. Reflectors must be amber in color. Gate and lock specifications and requirements are available from the Permit Administrator.
7. Propane tanks shall be incorporated into the building design or screened from public view in accordance with State and other agency laws and regulations.
8. Small satellite dishes may be approved in writing by the Forest Service on a case-by-case basis on non-historic and ineligible cabins. The Forest Service

may require removal of existing dishes upon roof repair, replacement, or change of cabin ownership.

9. Inconspicuous whip antennas and wire antennae may be approved by the authorized officer on non-historic and ineligible cabins. They must be placed on outbuildings or the cabin in a location approved in writing by the Forest Service. One antenna will be permitted per dwelling.
10. A temporary firewood rack may be permitted but requires written approval by the Forest Service.
11. Fire rings, normally of a temporary nature, may be approved at the discretion of the Forest Service. No new, permanent, outdoor fireplaces are permitted. Existing, permanent, outdoor fireplaces should be removed when they fall into disrepair or upon transfer of the permit. Exceptions may be made for the preservation of unique historic fireplace features on a recreation residence lot at the discretion of the Forest Service. All fire rings must be located on the lot.
12. Off-lot improvements will generally not be permitted. This includes fire rings and streamside benches and tables and use areas. However, unique conditions in local situations may be considered by the Forest Service for allowing specific improvements. Requests and approvals must be in writing.

Part V: Plans and Procedures for Cabin Projects

1. **All work to the exterior of the cabin or outbuilding, or any ground disturbance on the lot, must be approved in writing by the Forest Service.** All project plans must be submitted in writing using the current [Project Proposal form](#), and sent to the Permit Administrator. Proposals will be processed in the order they are received during the “Open Season” (see #2 below). An Environmental and Archaeological/Heritage review process will be completed prior to projects receiving written approval. The timeline for project approval is generally 60 days.
2. **All project proposals should be submitted for review during a period called “Open Season,” which lasts from August 15 – November 15 every year.**
 - If you have a complex project (such as a rebuild, addition, or major infrastructure project), it’s advised that you submit it during the

Open Season *the year before* you would like to begin work. Keep in mind that some projects will only be authorized for completion during the “dry season.”

- Emergency repairs are an exception and can be submitted year-round – and will be reviewed in the month that they are submitted (with the expectation of a 60-day service standard from request to authorization).
 - There can be exceptions to these norms, but it’s best to err on the side of caution and submit a project proposal as early as possible.
3. County and State building codes must be observed.
 4. County building permits must be obtained when required.
 5. The permit holder will provide the Permit Administrator with copies of any building permits, county approvals, electrical permits, or other authorizations issued by other agencies for proposed or approved projects.
 6. Improvements must be located within the lot boundary. If there is a question of the lot line locations, lot boundaries may be reestablished by a survey conducted by a licensed surveyor at the expense of the permit holder and shared with the Forest Service.
 7. Projects such as a cabin rebuild or additions to existing structures must be completed within two years, or the approval is expired/void. The plan may be resubmitted, but approval will be subject to review under policies and guidelines in place at the time your request is re-submitted.

Part VI: Maintenance Standards

1. Permit holders will maintain the lot in a sanitary and orderly manner and keep the cabin and outbuilding in good condition.
2. All roofs shall be kept reasonably clear of debris.
3. Sheet plastic and blue tarps shall not be used on any buildings for walls, roofing, screening, or protection from the elements. Seasonal plastic storm windows are acceptable.

4. Attachments or nails are not permitted on trees. These attachments include but are not limited to gates, yard lights, power lines, fences, benches, signs, clotheslines, dog runs, and wires. Clotheslines and dog runs will be temporary in nature and removed when the cabin is not in use.
5. Maintenance of roads and/or driveways providing access to recreation cabin areas is normally the responsibility of the permit holders being served by the road. The Forest Service will provide an approval with specifications to permit holders or the Homeowner Association for road work in the recreation residence tracts. Gravel and other material used for surfacing must be certified to be weed-free.
6. The permit holder shall dispose of all garbage and refuse in an appropriate manner off National Forest land. Garbage may not be left outside the cabin or in an outbuilding when the cabin is not being used. Food garbage will not be stored outside the cabin or outbuilding even on an overnight or temporary basis to avoid attracting bears and other animals.
7. Miscellaneous Items Stored or Installed on the Lot:
 - Building supplies and materials must be removed from the lot within two weeks of project completion.
 - No more than two cords of firewood may be stored on the lot outside of a woodshed or storage building. One cord is 4 feet x 4 feet x 8 feet. Wood piles may be covered by earth tone tarps (green or brown). Blue tarps are not permitted.
 - Items such as wheelbarrows, wagons/carts, tools, and toys must be stowed inside the cabin or outbuilding when the cabin is not in use.
 - Playground equipment must be authorized before it is installed. Such structures will only be approved if they blend in with the forest setting and are easily removable wood structures that are rustic in appearance.
 - Decorative yard items such as plastic flowers, plastic animals, wooden signs, figurines, or show lawn ornaments are not authorized and must be removed.

Part VII: Occupancy Standards

1. Incidental renting of recreation cabins may be permitted for up to **14 days** per calendar year when approved in advance in writing by the Forest Service. Rent collected shall not exceed the total cost of cabin maintenance for the year. Any use above this level will be considered commercial use in violation of permit terms and conditions. The permit holder is responsible for ensuring that renters comply with all terms and conditions of the Operation and Maintenance Plan. The application to rent out a recreation cabin and further information is available on the [Recreation Residences webpage](#).
2. Permit holders must notify the Permit Administrator upon placing their cabin on the market for sale and must provide a copy of the Forest Service pre-sale inspection, the permit, and Operation and Maintenance Plan to realtors, interested buyers, or their real estate agents. One “For Sale” sign may be placed in a visible window inside the cabin.
3. No advertising is permitted in the recreation cabin tracts, including signing posted by contractors that are working on recreation cabins.
4. The Forest Service will not normally approve the plowing of Forest Service roads due to resource concerns. Permit holders must request and receive plowing approval from the Forest Service.
5. No animals, other than common household pets, shall be kept on the premises. Pets shall not be left unattended. Permanent pet enclosures are not permitted.
6. Tents, canopies, and recreational vehicles (RV) may be used on the lot on a short-term basis such as holiday weekends, family reunions, and other social occasions not to exceed two weeks. No motor homes, trailers, boats, vehicles, or similar items should be stored at the recreation cabin or within the tract.
7. Use of internal combustion power equipment is discouraged within the recreation cabin tracts. When this type of equipment is used, it must be during daylight hours only and must not impact other users of the National Forest.

Part VIII. Natural Resource Standards (vegetation, soils, wildlife, and water)

1. Lawns and/or ornamental shrubs, trees, or flowers not native to the area are not permitted. Native species may be planted (contact the Zigzag District for a list of true native area species before planting). Any existing lawns and/or non-native plantings will be removed, and the area rehabilitated. The Zigzag Ranger District will provide information on native plants that are appropriate for rehabilitating lawns and bare areas around recreation residences upon request.
2. Permit holders will take measures to eradicate and control the presence of invasive plant species on their lot.
3. Cutting, trimming, or removing streamside vegetation for any purpose, including for “view” improvement, is strictly prohibited.
4. Large trees, streamside vegetation, and woody debris must be left in place to provide shade and protection to the stream.
5. It is not permissible to remove logs or woody debris from streams, or to use debris, rocks, or any other material to create artificial dams in streams.
6. Lot vegetation must be maintained to resemble the natural forest conditions. The removal or damaging of any trees or other vegetation is not permitted unless provided for in written approval from the Forest Service.
7. Bird and animal feeders, including salt licks, are not permitted on recreation residence lots.
8. Parking areas must be limited in nature. The permit holder will be required to reduce the size of excessively large parking areas as identified by the Forest Service.
9. Vehicles must be kept on existing driveways and parking areas. Vehicles will not be driven over or parked on vegetated areas.

10. Permit holders will take measures to prevent erosion from occurring from their lot by covering exposed soil with weed-free mulch or by planting native vegetation (contact Permit Administrator for acceptable native plant list).
11. The use of pesticides, including poison meant for rodents, is not permitted on National Forest lands. Permit holders may use limited amounts of pesticides in the interior area of the cabin only.
12. No waste or byproducts shall be discharged that might result in substantial harm to fish and wildlife, or to human water supplies.
13. Storage facilities for materials capable of causing water pollution if accidentally discharged shall be located in a manner to prevent any spillage into waters or channels leading into water. Contact the Permit Administrator for an acceptable location.
14. Permit holders will pump and inspect the septic tanks/systems that serve their cabins every five years and will ensure that these systems are always in good working order.

Part IX: Hazard Tree and Safety Standards

The permit holder is responsible for inspecting the lot for dangerous trees or other hazards that may be present and for requesting to remove or mitigate the hazard. The permit holder is responsible for removing or mitigating the hazard tree or other hazard after receiving written approval from the Forest Service. The form for requesting hazard tree removal and the guidelines for dealing with downed trees are both available under the “Tree Issues” section of the [Recreation Residences website](#).

1. The Forest Service will consider the assessment of a qualified silviculturist or other knowledgeable professional trained in tree defects and disease in determining the degree of hazard that an identified tree poses.
2. The permit holder must follow Forest Service written instructions on the disposition of a hazard tree that has been approved for removal once it is on

the ground. Generally, the tree must be left on the ground, uncut, as large woody debris for the benefit of wildlife and watershed values.

3. If a tree has fallen on a cabin or outbuilding, the permit holder may remove the tree without written approval from the Forest Service. The permit holder will notify the Forest Service as soon as possible regarding the incident and obtain instructions and approval for the disposition of the wood.

Part X: Fire Safety Standards

1. It is the permit holder's responsibility to manage slash and other fire hazards on their recreation cabin lot. Permit holders must take the following fire precautions:
 - a. Maintain spark screens that comply with current applicable codes on all chimneys.
 - b. Keep roofs reasonably free from leaves, branches, and other debris.
 - c. Keep crawl spaces and above and below ground deck areas free of burnable materials.
 - d. Store combustible and flammable material in an appropriate manner.
 - e. Observe all fire restrictions.
 - f. Keep campfires small, and in established fire pits located in safe areas.
 - g. No fireworks shall be used or stored on the land and/or structures covered under this permit, or on any National Forest lands.
 - h. Clear readily burnable vegetation such as dry grass, dead vegetation, and forest needles ten feet away from the cabin and outbuildings.
 - i. Pile and burn slash annually (see below).
2. Campfires: The Forest Service will attempt to notify permit holders by email when campfire closures within the Zigzag Ranger District are in effect. Permit holders may also call the Zigzag District Information Office at 503-622-3191 to check on campfire closure status. Ultimately, it is the cabin owner's responsibility to check fire restrictions and changes in Industrial Fire Precaution Levels (IFPL). This information can be found on our website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/r06/mthood/fire/info>

3. Campfire closures on state or county lands do not apply to National Forest land.
4. Permit holders must remove or burn yard debris such as fallen branches on an annual basis. Permit holders should establish a single burn pile per lot, placed away from trees, overhanging branches and other burnable materials or vegetation. The permit administrator will assist permit holders in the identification of a safe burning area if requested.
5. Slash burning requires a burning permit from the Hoodland Rural Fire Department at 503-622-3256.
6. Power equipment: This includes internal combustion engines such as chainsaws, power tools, and generators. This type of equipment should be used during daylight hours only and in a manner that does not impact other users of the National Forest. All power equipment must have an approved and properly installed spark arrestor.
7. Power equipment operators must comply with Industrial Fire Precaution Level (IFPL) requirements such as observing allowable hours of operation. Information about [the current IFPL is available online](#) or by calling the Zigzag District Office at 503-622-3191.