

Buying and Owning a Recreation Residence on the Shasta-Trinity National Forest

Will a recreation cabin on National Forest System lands be the right fit for you? Cabin owners like owning a recreation cabin on National Forest System lands because of the scenic setting, the rich history and sense of tradition, and because they appreciate the standards and regulations regarding the use and maintenance of the cabins and lots. The following information should give you a good idea of the nuances of recreation cabin ownership.

The Forest Service Recreation Residence program gives private citizens the opportunity to own a single-family cabin in designated areas on the National Forests. They are commonly called "summer homes" or "recreation cabins". These privately owned cabins (improvements) are located within formally established "tracts" on "lots" designated for that purpose and are authorized and administered under the terms and conditions of a special use authorization (SUA) called a permit. The Forest Service will not authorize new recreation residences.

- 15,570 recreation residences occupy National Forest System lands throughout the country.
- 6,314 are in the Pacific Southwest region (California).
- 166 are located on the Shasta-Trinity National Forest.

Recreation Residence cabin owners own only the improvements situated on the land. The land itself belongs to the United States and is managed by the Forest Service. The Forest Service issues Special Use Permits to authorize the maintenance and use of the recreation cabin on National Forest System lands. The permit requires the payment of an annual rental fee based upon fair market value of the land, not including improvements, as determined by an appraisal. It is important to understand the terms and conditions of the Special- Use Permit before making a commitment to becoming an owner of a Recreation Residence on National Forest System lands.

Purchasing a cabin and obtaining a Special-Use Permit

Cabin sales transactions are handled through real estate agents or are completed by the owners themselves. The Forest Service is not involved in the actual sale of the cabins, and does not maintain a list of cabins for sale.

The Forest Service will conduct a transfer inspection when notified of intended sale or change in ownership of a cabin. The owner must bring the cabin and lot into compliance with the permit terms and conditions before a permit will be issued to a new owner. Or, certain compliance items may be transferred to a new owner. It is important that you check with the Forest Service to determine the status of the cabin and lot. In some cases a new permit will not be issued until non-compliant conditions are remedied at the cabin or on the lot.

The selling cabin owner or their realtor should provide you with a copy of the Special Use Permit that has been issued to the seller. Contact the Forest Service to learn more about the specific cabin you are considering for purchase.

Special Use Permits for Recreation Residences can only be issued to individuals, married couples or a qualified representative of a trust. LLC's and commercial entities do not qualify for a Special Use Permit for a Recreation Residence.

A Forest Service representative will meet with new cabin owners before a permit is issued to discuss the details of the Special-Use Permit and answer new owner questions, and both the new owner and the District Ranger then sign the paperwork to make the permit official.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR NEW or PROSPECTIVE CABIN OWNERS –

KNOW THE RULES BEFORE YOU BUY

Please read the sample Special-Use Permit in order to understand the terms and conditions that apply to Recreation Residence owners. These documents, and other information are available on the web at [Shasta-Trinity, Special Use Permits](#). Once this site opens, click on "Recreation Residence".

Some of the important conditions included in Recreation Residence Permits are as follows:

1. All modifications to the cabin or lot, including but not limited to changes to roofs, siding, windows, doors, decks and porches and outbuildings, including paint color must be authorized in writing by the Forest Service before implementation. The authorization process takes from a couple of weeks to several months depending upon the proposed alteration and the workload of Forest Service personnel. Not every request can be approved.

If the cabin has historic status, is located in an historic tract, or has not yet been surveyed for historical significance, there may be tighter restrictions on the type of modifications that can be allowed, and the time frame for their approval may be longer.

2. The Special-Use Permit allows use of the recreation cabin for recreation only. The cabins may not be used for one's primary place of residence. Commercial use of or conducting business from a Recreation Residence is prohibited. Permits cannot be granted to LLC's. Permits cannot be granted to Living Trusts without review.
3. The cabins must be used at least 15 days per year.

4. The annual permit fee is determined by using a fee table established by the [Cabin Fee Act \(CFA\)](#). The CFA established a method for determining special use fees for the Recreation Residence Program using a tiered fee structure. The value of the cabin structure does not factor into annual permit fees. Fees are billed in November and are due January 1st. For more information refer to [The Cabin Fee Act \(CFA\) Frequently Asked Questions](#)
5. The area covered by the Special-Use Permit, including the improvements, must be maintained in good repair. Improvements are inspected periodically to insure compliance with the terms of the Special-Use Permit. The [Self-Inspection](#) form posted on the website explains the details of items that are inspected through this process.
6. Trees, vegetation, or soil cannot be removed without permission from the Forest Service. The lots should resemble natural forest conditions, with healthy vegetation and large woody debris on the ground. Trimming or removing vegetation to improve the view is not allowed.
7. Maintaining fire clearances are a high priority and are the responsibility of the cabin owner. Refer to [Fire clearance](#) for specific direction.

Historic Cabins and Historic Tracts

The Forest Glen, Campbell Creek, and Didallis tracts have not been surveyed to determine eligibility for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. Until Historical Evaluation is completed and a determination has been made, these tracts will be managed as historical.

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 requires the Forest Service to protect and enhance the qualities that qualify historic properties for listing on the National Register. For these cabins, modifications must meet the general guidelines for residences, and also must be done in a manner that does not adversely affect the historic integrity of the cabin or tract. District staff work with cabin owners to achieve this outcome whenever possible. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) must also concur with decisions on alterations to these historic properties. Cabin owners should know that approval of alterations for cabins that are in historic tracts can take up to several months.