

USFS cabin fees on the rise

By Kathryn Reed

People who own cabins on U.S. Forest Service land are getting a notice in the mail telling them to pay the government more money.

The use fee is going up based on appraisals of the property, which is done every 10 years. The fee is 5 percent of the appraised value of the lot – the vacant lot, not including the structure, according to the Forest Service.



The cost of owning a USFS cabin is going up.

The fees are actually 10 years overdue because of ongoing discussions since 1999 between cabin owners, the Forest Service and Congress.

Some fees are increasing by more than 100 percent because appraisals were not done between 1979 and 1999.

The irony is that with appraisals happening every 10 years, 2009 represents another appraisal year – so the increases are not likely to over for most people.

– For the most part, fee increases range from several hundred to several thousand, again depending on the value of the lot, – Cheva Heck, USFS spokeswoman based in South Lake

Tahoe, said of the increase now being doled out. "On the other hand, the value of some lots went down and their fees will decrease to reflect that."

For the owners who are hit with a 100 percent increase or more, it will be phased in. Heck said about a half dozen cabin owners in Lake Tahoe will be see a substantial increase in fees.

Recreation residences have a value of \$150,000 to \$500,000. Those right on the shore of Echo and Fallen Leaf lakes are prime real estate.

"Fees go back to the U.S. Treasury and a quarter of the funding from these fees and other Forest Service fees comes back to the states through the Secure Rural Schools initiative, for road and school projects primarily," Heck said.

The Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit oversees 594 cabins, which were all just reissued 20-year permits. These cabins range in size from 200 to 1,400 square feet "some with more than an acre of land.