



Advocacy, Education & Stewardship  
Strengthening the Cabin Program  
NFH Tract Leaders Meeting

April 2024

Greetings NFH Member Tract Leaders,

Mark your calendars for several upcoming NFH **VIRTUAL** events!

Wednesday, April 17

4:30 – 6 PM Pacific

5:30 – 7 PM Mountain

6:30 - 8 PM Central

7:30 – 9 PM Eastern

1. **NFH Tract Leaders** is a 90-minute free virtual meeting on *Wednesday, April 17*. We hope multiple leaders from every NFH Member Tract join us. [Register here](#). Our agenda includes:
  - a. Stewardship: progress on priorities set by your responses to the 2023 fire surveys,
  - b. NFH Awards: Outstanding Tract and Bob Ervin Leadership,
  - c. Advocacy: update on permit reissuance in Eldorado NF where their permits expire 12/31/24, recent activity on Capitol Hill, and collaboration with Forest Service,
  - d. Q&A: Send questions ahead of time to [meredithrandall14@gmail.com](mailto:meredithrandall14@gmail.com).
2. **NFH Annual Business Meeting** is free and virtual on *Thursday, April 18* for one hour. It begins at 3:30 PM Pacific / 4:30 PM Mountain / 5:30 PM Central / 6:30 PM Eastern. There will be an important discussion of a proposed NFH bylaw change followed by a membership vote. See the [Winter 2024 newsletter](#) for the bylaw language and statements in support and opposition.
3. **NFH Virtual Conference** will be on *Thursday, April 25 - Saturday, April 27* with two or three sessions each day (only \$50 for NFH members.)\* Our theme is *Stronger Together: Building Relationships that Work*. Sessions cover a broad yet deep understanding of relationships such as healthy forest through stewardship, effective communication by cabin associations, and collaboration with the Forest Service. Several sessions have interactive panel discussions with professionals, NFH leaders and the Forest Service. Check out the program and register [here](#). \*Early bird discount ends on April 12.

We want to set attendance records for all three events! Those who register for the NFH Virtual Conference are automatically registered for the Business Meeting. The Tract Leader Meeting is by email invitation. Contact us if you are an association leader or tract communicator and have not received an invitation.

NFH values all members and works to grow our membership. Almost 3/4ths of the NFH members are from Member Tract associations and the remainder are individual members. Working with Member Tracts is critical to our mission of forest stewardship, cabin owner education, and program advocacy. The Board strives to generate income from non-dues sources such as event sponsors and secured investments. We are cautious with expenditures looking to spend funds wisely for the benefit of members such as a website upgrade coming later in 2024. Even with good fiscal oversight, we are increasing dues for Member Tract members in 2025. Dues for a Regular Tract member (\$55), an Associate Tract member (\$35), Cabin membership (one Regular and up to four Associate members for \$110, offered by some Member Tracts), and a Lifetime membership (\$1,200). The current rates remain in effect for dues payments made in 2024. Please do your part as Member Tract leaders to ensure that the increase is properly included with your dues payment made in 2025.

On Capitol Hill, we are bringing the Cabin Program Restoration Act message to restore permit holder rights, maximize rebuilding after destruction of cabins by disasters, and recognize the economic benefit to rural communities. Our case is strong given that this century-old program is revenue positive to the federal government and requires no additional authorization of public lands.

NFH is excited by the work in the Forest Service Washington Office of the National Lands Special Uses Program Manager. The person in this role came up through the ranks and has a personal connection to the cabin program. He wants to overcome problems created because of the frequent turnover of District Rangers, Permit Administrators and Recreation Officers, by documenting standards and guidelines and conducting nationwide training on administering the Recreation Residence Program. I am certain that without his efforts, we would still be fighting for action on the two illegal clauses inserted into the 09/2020 permits. Instead, he authored an amendment, got it approved by the Agency and worked with local Forests to get it issued to all impacted permit holders. We are hopeful of many more positive outcomes from the collaborative working relationship NFH has with the Washington and Regional Forest Service offices.

Last year, NFH issued two Call to Actions. One was for the public comment period regarding temporary land use fee reductions for impaired access and restricted occupancy and 29 comments were submitted. Almost all were from cabin associations or cabin owners and followed NFH recommendations that the criteria to consider fee reduction were too limited and didn't honor the intention of Congress in the Cabin Fee Act. Additionally, the regulation needed criteria for when full fees would be reinstated. The other Call to Action was to write to your Forest Supervisor with recommendations for the use of retained fees. Some Forest Supervisors welcomed the dialog, but others either didn't respond or were skeptical if they would receive the funds. We mentioned this to the Regional and Washington Offices. They committed to issuing internal communications about the requirements for use retained fees per the Cabin Fee Act. NFH views these retained fees as a watershed moment in our relationship with the Forest Service. Each year, cabin associations should send a letter about priorities for retained fees to their Forest Supervisor.

For me, the greatest perk and pleasure of being a volunteer leader in NFH is talking with other cabin owners and visiting cabin tracts. I live in Georgia and knew there were cabins in the South. I encouraged NFH Field Director, Desiree LaMaggiore, to make contact with some tracts and organize visits so we could take a road trip tour together. We visited tracts in Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Florida. We had small group discussions or community room meetings in each state and met with our one Member Tract in the area. The southern forests look a bit different, but cabin owner stories are similar: relationships with the FS run from supportive to antagonistic, the many private landowner neighbors and high demand for using public lands has rewards and challenges, and everyone treasures cabin time. Oh, but learning to share space with alligators is unique to Florida.

Please share your thoughts with us by contacting your Board liaison, Executive Director Sharon Leach, or me.

All the best,



Meredith Randall  
NFH President  
[meredithrandall14@gmail.com](mailto:meredithrandall14@gmail.com)