



WHITE RIVER RECREATION ASSOCIATION

REPRESENTING FEDERAL LAND PERMITTEES IN THE UPPER WHITE RIVER VALLEY AND MT. BAKER-SNOQUALMIE NATIONAL FOREST SINCE 1929.
www.wrra.net

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Cabin Owner Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) with Forest Service Responses

The purpose of this document is to provide an easy resource for cabin owners to obtain quick answers to questions. It is not intended to address every situation or question. Please refer to language in your permits, to the WRRRA website or access the contacts at the end of this document.

- **Purchase – We are thinking of purchasing a cabin on Forest Service land – what’s involved?**

*Answer: A legal transaction (i.e., Final Sales Contract, Bill of Sale, Quick Claim Deed or Warranty Deed that is **notarized & recorded** with King, Kittitas or Pierce County) needs to be executed between the holder of the existing permit and buyer. Good to have the permit holder contact the Forest Service when they are considering selling and when they have an acceptable offer since the buyer will need to be vetted for eligibility to hold a permit. Both parties will need to fill out Forest Service [Form 2700-3a](#) which starts the process to revoke the existing permit and issue a new permit. For those cabins in the SR 410 corridor, The Tacoma Pierce County Department of Health (TPCDH) also requires that any dwelling involved in “any” type of transaction needs to have its on-site waste water treatment system inspected for functionality and certified by the TPCDH before the transaction is executed (See TPCDH web site for more current detail on “as built” septic records, administrative processes and certified system inspectors <https://www.tpchd.org/environment/septic-systems/>).*

- **Transfer – We want to transfer the permit to a different family member where do we start?**

Answer: If the permit holder(s) is alive, the Forest Service will need [Form 2700-3a](#) filled out by the permit holder(s) and the specific family member to whom the new permit will be issued. If the permit holder(s) has passed away then this becomes a probate process and the Forest Service will need a legal instrument that conveys the direction or authority of the permit holder(s) designated agent/representative to transfer the cabin property to the family member upon their death.

- **MODIFICATIONS – We have a cabin and want to modify our cabin – install a new roof, add a porch, repaint the trim, install upgraded windows, etc. Do we need to get approval?**

Answer: Yes and the process can be very complicated since not only the Forest Service is involved but other agencies will need to be consulted with if the changes proposed will affect Threatened, Endangered & Sensitive species or historic properties of both the structures and setting. Early

contact with the Forest Service may help alleviate some design barriers but past experience indicates that permit holder(s) are not usually satisfied with the options available to them based on the June 2006 programmatic agreement between the Forest Service and Washington State Historical Preservation Office. (See [WRRRA website](#) for a copy of the document and perspectives of options.)

- **Storm Damage – In a recent storm, there was damage to an outbuilding. We want to repair it as is. Is there a form to complete or may we just proceed with the repair?**

Answer: There is no form to fill out however the permit holder will need to contact the Forest Service to consult on what options for repair/replacement are available to the permit holder(s) since there are lots where over time some outbuilding structures have been erected that are inconsistent with Forest Service policy governing these matters.

- **Septic / Water – We want to install a new septic / water system. How should we proceed?**

Answer: The permit holder(s) need to contact the Forest Service first to outline or describe in general what, why, how and where they are thinking of installing these systems. The Forest Service will subsequently review the general proposal and consider both the environmental and infrastructure issues associated with authorizing a new utility use on the lot. After this consultation the Forest Service will need to also look at staffing and specialist needs so that the NEPA and tribal obligations can be addressed for the authorizing official. In the past both competing Forest priorities and lack of available Forest Service funding to pay these specialists have made progress extremely slow to non-existent, so please be patient. For those cabins in the SR 410 corridor, the permit holder(s) will also need TPCDH permits both for the water and septic systems. This process can be initiated concurrently with the Forest Service's NEPA process but be aware that the TPCDH will not issue final permits until Forest Service concurrences have been officially received. Cabins situated in either King or Kittitas Counties need to consult their respective health departments for current rules or policies governing approval and permits for waste and potable water facilities.

- **Tree Danger – We have a tree which we think is dangerous and likely to fall on our cabin – can we have it removed?**

Answer: Removal of any vegetation on or off the lot needs Forest Service approval prior to taking action (See your individual permits terms and O&M requirements). If the Forest Service agrees that the tree poses a threat to the structure, you will then receive authorization (verbal or written) and then you can have it removed.

- **Trees Wood – We had trees fall on our cabin lot. Can we keep the wood or give it away?**

Answer: Removal of any vegetation on or off the lot needs Forest Service approval prior to taking action (see permit terms and O&M requirements). If the Forest Service agrees that the down tree poses a problem to access to the structures on the lot, you will then receive authorization (verbal or written) on what if anything you can do with the wood.

- **Outdoor Burning – When can we burn? What is allowed and what is not? Is there a website to get updated conditions?**

Answer: Use of fire or burning of campfires on the lot is regulated by the same Code of Federal Regulations ([36 CFR 261.5 Fire Prohibitions](#)) that governs or prohibits this use on all National Forest lands. Burning of vegetative debris piles is not normally an accepted method of disposal for permit holder(s) unless specifically approved by the Forest Service. Consult with your local administrator to see what options are available in lieu of fire for debris removal.

- **Gunfire – is not allowed in cabin area, where to call and what to report?**

Answer: Recreational shooting ([36 CFR 261.10 \(d\)](#)) is not either a precluded activity or a prohibited act on any National Forest System lands (see Attached Reference) including the cabin tracks. You can report this activity to the local Forest Service office and it will be shared with law enforcement so that they can address the best method for either monitoring or responding. If you have stray rounds hitting within your vicinity, seek cover and call 911 immediately to report the life-threatening emergency. So long as shooters don't violate the following requirements, conducting this activity in the vicinity of the cabin tracks is perfectly legal:

1. *Discharge of a firearm in or within 150 yards of a residence, building, campsite, developed recreation site such as a trailhead, or occupied area, or*
2. *Across or on a National Forest road system or body of water adjacent thereto, or in any manner or place whereby any person or property is exposed to injury or damage as a result of such discharge.*
3. *Into or within any cave.*
4. *In manner that causes resource damage.*

- **ORVs – Can Snowmobiles or Off-Highway Vehicles be driven in the cabin area?**

*Answer: The Forest Service defines highway-legal vehicles as motor vehicles licensed under the state law for general operation on **ALL** public roads within the state. The Forest Service roads in the cabin tracks, when they are accessible to public entry meet the definition of a public highway and therefore operation of any type of un-licensed motorized vehicle on these roads would be a violation of [36 CFR 261.15](#). Unless specifically prohibited, operation of snowmobiles within the tracks but not on a road may be legal but this judgement is best made by a Forest Service Law Enforcement Officer (LEO) who enforces highway related laws and regulations.*

- **Fireworks – Are fireworks or sparklers allowed in the cabin area?**

Answer: No types of fireworks are permitted on National Forest lands

- **Christmas Trees – If we want to harvest a tree how do we go about getting permission?**

Answer: Christmas trees are considered forest product and sold only by permit. No permission will be given to a permit holder(s) to remove vegetation for use as a Christmas tree.

- **Squatters – If we have a squatter or a camper on FS land near or on our cabin lot, is there anything we can do? Are there guidelines for squatting or camping on FS land?**

Answer: Your permit and the terms it specifically does not give the permit holder(s) exclusive use and/or control of the land within your lot and as such the public always has the legal right to enjoy their public lands even if it's camping out in front of your cabin or outhouse. Our desires are that no one would do so and we would encourage you to contact the permit administrator or LEO should this situation develop. Occupancy regulations do however restrict the public from occupying a site to no more than 14 continuous days at which time they will be subsequently required to relocate their camp site off the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest.

- **Roads – Who maintains the roads in the cabin area?**

Answer: These are Forest Service system roads (except for driveways to cabins) but due to the fact that most of these roads currently exist solely for the access to cabins, road maintenance over the past years has been accomplished through a coop-agreement with either the WRRRA on the SR 410 corridor and other individual cabin owners in the I 90 corridor. The Forest Service is currently looking at a significant shortfall in future funding to maintain all the system roads it manages so it is always looking at opportunities to reduce its road maintenance obligations. The cabin tracks and system roads within them will continue to be a maintenance struggle for the Forest Service should recreation dollars be ultimately needed to address non-discretionary repairs.

- **Sledding – What about sledding on the roads leading up to the cabins and on other roads outside of the Snopark areas?**

Answer: Again, these are considered public highways when accessible to the public and as such use of the Forest Service roads as a snow play area is inconsistent and extremely unsafe with the joint operation of motor-vehicles. If a Forest Service road is inaccessible to motor-vehicles due to a heavy snow pack, it is usually the discretion of the LEO to determine if the snow play activity is in violation of regulations.

- **Other Topics – for direction on these and more, refer to the [operations and maintenance plan](#) addendum of your permit:**

- Playground toys, lawn furniture, and trailers (not allowed)
- Antennas and satellite dishes (not allowed)
- Outdoor lights (limited)
- Lot signs
- Outdoor burning
- Subject to compliance inspections

- **Key Contacts:**

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