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U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings is seeking to cap cabin fees

U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings

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The Wenatchee World

U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Pasco, announced Friday that he will introduce a bill to end what he said are exorbitant yearly fees for cabin owners in national forests.

Hastings said his bill would establish a fair system using a tiered yearly fee structure based on current appraisals, capping annual fees at $4,000.

The Cabin Fee Act of 2010 would replace the Cabin Users Fees Fairness Act established by Congress in 2000 to ensure a uniform and fair method for computing cabin fees across the nation.

As part of that legislation, appraisal guidelines were developed in 2006, setting cabin fees at 5 percent of the market value of the estate.

One family that owns a cabin on leased U.S. Forest Service land around Lake Wenatchee, for example, learned that their annual fee was going from $1,400 in 2009 to $17,000 in 2010 because of the new fee process.

The spike in fees happened because the cabins there are mingled with million-dollar homes on private land and were appraised the same.

Hastings' tiered proposal, at the lowest level, applies a $500 annual fee if the cabin's appraised value is between $0 and $19,999. At the highest level, with an appraised value of $200,000 or more, the yearly fee would cost $4,000.

Hastings said he does think the government should be compensated for families using its land, but that it should be fair to the users.

Mary Ver Hoef, executive director of the National Forest Homeowners Association in Sacramento, Calif., said her organization, which supports the bill, worked closely with Hastings in its development.

Hastings, a ranking member of the U.S. House Natural Resources Committee, said he plans to introduce the bill this week. He said that late last year a provision was put in the spending bill to put a moratorium until Sept. 30 on the increased cabin fees.

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