

# Living in the Forest: Meanings and Use of Recreational Residences

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The Forest Service Recreation Residence Program has been operational since the passage of the Occupancy permits Act in 1915. In the initial years the Forest Service actively encouraged summer home occupancy with the view that such occupancy encouraged recreational use and assisted in proper forest management and fire control as well as providing a source of income. Approval of further recreation residence development on public land was discontinued in 1968 as program costs exceeded revenues and the perception that such occupation of public land was elitist and potentially restricted public access to desirable recreation sites. More recently, both the appraisal process and the pursuance of permit violations have become a focus of some political controversy.

Recreational residences have often been built by and remain in the same family across generations leading to a strong attachment and identification with a particular forest tract. The study discussed in this paper examines the use of these residences and the meanings of such use to a sample of cottage owners in the Arapahoe-Roosevelt and Pike National Forests in Colorado. A multi-methods approach was used to collect data on cottage use including project analysis, surveys, experiential sampling and in-depth interviews. The rationale underlying the multi-method approach and some preliminary results of this study will be presented in this paper.