

Chapter 1 - Purpose and Need for Action

1.1 Introduction

This environmental assessment (EA) documents the analysis of effects associated with the proposed re-issuance of 20-year special use permits for 84 recreation residences located in Logan Canyon on the Wasatch-Cache National Forest and Logan Ranger District. The current permits for these summer homes will expire December 31, 2008. This EA is not a decision document, but is intended to disclose those impacts important in making a decision whether to reauthorize this recreation use under a new special use permit.

1.2 Background

Recreation residences, sometimes referred to as summer homes, are an historic and well-recognized recreation experience for thousands of National Forest visitors. Recreation residences on National Forest System lands were first authorized in 1915 to encourage recreation in National Forests. These cabins are privately owned, but are set on National Forest System lands and thus require agency authorization for the occupancy and use. This authorization takes the form of a special use permit issued for each lot where a summer home is located.

Recreation use in the Logan area began in the early 1900s when the Forest Service took over management of the area. As access from the Cache Valley improved, recreation use also increased. The first special use permit for a summer residence in Logan Canyon was probably issued in the 1930s. Most of the cabins were constructed between 1940 and 1975. Construction of the developed recreation sites (such as campgrounds) also occurred during that time. By the 1960s, most of Logan Canyon was well developed with developed recreation sites and summer homes.

Generally, summer home groups are organized and administered as "tracts." Some tracts have a homeowner's association, elected representatives that work with the Forest Service on issues of community interest. In-lieu lots are sometimes used to relocate a summer home to a site more appropriate for the use. Five vacant, in-lieu lots have been designated in Logan Canyon, two in the Chokeycherry tract and three in the Birch Glen tract.

The 2003 Forest Land and Resource Management Plan for the Wasatch-Cache National Forest (Forest Plan) calls for the recreation residence program to continue and for the Forest Service to work in partnership with holders of these permits to maximize the recreational benefits. A host of requirements are a part of this use of the National Forest. For instance, summer homes must be used at least 15 days per year, but cannot be used as a principal residence. Operations and maintenance requirements for recreation residences are listed in the special use permit, the permit's Operations and Maintenance Plan and in the Wasatch-Cache Recreation Residence Administrative Guide (February, 2006). In addition, each special use permit requires that homeowners comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and ordinances of Federal, State, and local government.

1.2.1 Description of Project Area

The project area comprises twelve recreation residence tracts located on the Logan District of the Wasatch-Cache National Forests in Cache County, Utah. This area is situated in the Bear River Mountains located at an elevation of 4800 to 5800 feet and is a very popular recreation destination on the Forest. It is easily accessed from the city of Logan via Highway 89. This highway has been designated as a National Scenic Byway and is utilized by thousands of visitors using not only the amenities along the corridor, but also traveling this route as an artery to the Jackson Hole/Yellowstone area. With this designation, increasing numbers of travelers have been identified and measures taken to protect visual qualities, provide interpretive signing, and construct and maintain roadside facilities. Twelve sites along the Byway provide historic, cultural, and natural resource information to those traveling this scenic route.

The tracts along this same corridor range from the Gus Lind tract, located about 3.5 miles from the Forest boundary near Logan to the Brachiopod tract, located about 13.6 miles from the Forest boundary. All of the tracts are located between the City of Logan and Temple Fork road along the Logan River. The general area of Logan Canyon includes Township 12N, Range 2E, and Sections 5, 18, 19, 23, 24 and 28. For the purposes of this analysis, the boundary of the recreation residence tract is defined as the sum total of the residence lots, the spaces between those lots, and the tract roads. The existing lots total about 37 acres for recreation residences in Logan Canyon. This acreage amount does not include acreage for the road system and common space between lots. Maps for the tracts are outdated, survey corner markers don't exist, and some permittees are believed to have improvements existing outside their original lot boundary.

TRACT	ACRES
Gus Lind	3.1
Beirdneau	6.1
Valhalla	1.3
Birch Glen	8
Brown's Rolloff	4.5
Lower Card	1.9
Upper Card	2.8
Pine Bluffs	1.1
Chokecherry	6.7
Juniper	0.7
Hailstone	0.3
Brachiopod	0.5

The Forest Hills Tract will not be analyzed in this document. Recent direction has determined that it no longer qualifies as a recreation residence, but as a historic site, and as such is not within the scope of this analysis. Its disposition will be determined through a separate environmental analysis.

The Logan Canyon area consists primarily of the Logan River and its tributaries, rock canyon cliffs, riparian habitat with deciduous trees, oak/maple/grass on south facing slopes, mixed

conifer on north facing slopes and developed recreation areas. The main drainages are the Logan River, Right Hand Fork, Temple Fork and several smaller creeks that flow into the Logan River.

Much of Logan Canyon is primarily managed as a developed recreation area with several campgrounds and picnic areas, fishing access, interpretive sites and several trails and trailheads. There are 12 recreation resident tracts that have a total of 84 cabins. There are currently five in-lieu lots listed on the tract maps, three in the Birch Glen tract and two in the Chokecherry tract. However, two of the lots in Birch Glen will not be analyzed due to the fact that they are located in riparian areas. These three remaining in-lieu lots will be analyzed to see if their availability will continue.

TRACT	CABINS
Gus Lind	5
Beirdneau	10
Valhalla	3
Birch Glen	22
Brown's Rolloff	12
Lower Card	5
Upper Card	6
Pine Bluffs	3
Chokecherry	12
Juniper	3
Hailstone	1
Brachiopod	2

During summer months the lower Logan Canyon area is heavily used by visitors for such activities as hiking, biking, camping, picnicking, fishing, bird watching, etc. Winter activities in the recreation area include limited snowmobiling, snow play, cross country skiing, snow shoeing, and some hiking. Overnight public recreation use in Logan Canyon area primarily occurs at the developed campgrounds, with some dispersed camping, some backpacker use to the Mount Naomi Wilderness area, and by the recreation residence use. Most of the tracts are also located close to riparian areas that are wet or damp, and this tends to minimize the threat of fire. To cooperate in efforts to minimize fire occurrence in the summer home tracts, a close relationship is maintained between county and local fire agencies and the Logan Ranger District.

1.2.2 Recreation Residence Improvements

Homeowner-constructed features such as homes, decks, sheds, walkways, roads, driveways, patios, permanent grills, and water systems are a visible part of the surroundings. These "improvements" are authorized either in the special use permit for a given lot or, if they serve a community purpose, they are authorized in a permit issued to the tract association. In a few cases, improvements are located slightly beyond the boundaries of any lot, such as a spring development and water line. These are usually authorized in a permit to the summer homeowner, a group of adjacent homeowners, or to the tract association as an off-lot improvement. Recreation residence holders have formed associations in the Beirdneau, Birch

Glen, Brown’s Roll-off and Chokecherry tracts. Other tracts, primarily because of their small size, do not currently have tract associations. Individual lot driveways will be listed as improvements on individual lot permits.

Some tract improvements are currently under a Tract Association Special Use Permit (see Table below), while many others are not. Some of these tract improvements currently under Tract Association permits have no expiration dates or dates that may have expired. These Tract Associations need to have new special use permits issued to them in the name of the applicable Association. The goal is to have Tract Association permits for these improvements issued prior to 12/31/08. Expiration dates for Tract Association permits will coincide with the new dates for the recreation residence permits. The permits will include maintenance requirements for the improvements. Roads must have a road maintenance agreement. All of these Logan Canyon Tract Association improvements currently exist (as indicated in the Table below). No changes or expansions for them are being proposed.

Improvements currently authorized or that will be authorized to tract associations are summarized below.

TRACT	ROADS, WATER SYSTEMS, UTILITY LINES, OTHER IMPROVEMENTS
Gus Lind	0.3 miles of road with bridge and gate not under permit – Association permit needed. Water is from Logan City. UP&L power permit with USDA FS, covers section, township and range for sites from Gus Lind to Right Hand Fork, which covers all summer home sites except Brachiopod (no expiration date). No telephone service
Beirdneau	0.53 miles of road with gate – Association permit needed Water is from Logan City. UP&L power permit with USDA FS, covers section, township and range for sites from Gus Lind to Right Hand Fork, which covers all summer home sites except Brachiopod (no expiration date). Qwest phone line permit signed 9/15/90 with no expiration date.
Valhalla	0.15 miles of road with bridge and gate – Association permit needed. Water is from Logan City. UP&L power permit with USDA FS, covers section, township and range for sites from Gus Lind to Right Hand Fork, which covers all summer home sites except Brachiopod (no expiration date) Qwest phone line permit signed 9/15/90 with no expiration date.

<p>Birch Glen</p>	<p>0.8 miles of road with bridge and gate in upper tract and 0.2 miles of road in lower tract – Association permit needed. Majority of water is from Logan City. Has additional spring source to supplement under permit with State Water Rights. Permit has no expiration date. UP&L power permit with USDA FS, covers section, township and range for sites from Gus Lind to Right Hand Fork, which covers all summer home sites except Brachiopod (no expiration date). Qwest phone line permit signed 9/15/90 with no expiration date.</p>
<p>Brown’s Rolloff</p>	<p>0.24 miles of road with bridge and gate – Association permit needed. Spring for water under permit with no expiration date. UP&L power permit with USDA FS, covers section, township and range for sites from Gus Lind to Right Hand Fork, which covers all summer home sites except Brachiopod (no expiration date). Qwest phone line permit signed 9/15/90 with no expiration date.</p>
<p>Lower Card</p>	<p>0.14 miles to end of Lower Card Canyon with gate – Association permit needed. Hooked up to Forest Service water system – Association permit needed. UP&L power permit with USDA FS, covers section, township and range for sites from Gus Lind to Right Hand Fork, which covers all summer home sites except Brachiopod (no expiration date) Qwest phone line permit signed 9/15/90 with no expiration date.</p>
<p>Upper Card</p>	<p>0.25 miles to end up Upper Card Canyon tract road. Upper Card road includes bridge but no gate and goes to the archery range, thus is Forest Service system road, so no permit needed. Hooked up to Forest Service water system – Association permit needed. UP&L power permit with USDA FS, covers section, township and range for summer home sites from Gus Lind to Right Hand Fork, which covers all summer home sites except Brachiopod (no expiration date) Qwest phone line permit signed 9/15/90 with no expiration date.</p>
<p>Pine Bluffs</p>	<p>0.1 miles of road with bridge and gate not under permit – Association permit needed. Hooked up to Forest Service water system – needs permit. UP&L power permit with USDA FS, covers section, township and range for summer home sites from Gus Lind to Right Hand Fork, which covers all summer home sites except Brachiopod (no expiration date). Qwest phone line permit signed 9/15/90 with no expiration date.</p>

Chokecherry	0.4 miles of road with bridge and gate not under permit – Association permit needed. Hooked up to Forest Service water system – Association permit needed. UP&L power permit with USDA FS, covers section, township and range for summer home sites from Gus Lind to Right Hand Fork, which covers all summer home sites except Brachiopod (no expiration date). Qwest phone line permit signed 9/15/90 with no expiration date.
Juniper	0.13 miles of road shared with Preston Valley Campground, thus it is Forest Service system road and no special use permit is needed. Hooked up to Forest Service water system – Association permit needed. UP&L power permit with USDA FS, covers section, township and range for summer home sites from Gus Lind to Right Hand Fork, which covers all summer home sites except Brachiopod (no expiration date). No phone service
Brachiopod	0.1 miles of road with bridge and gate – Association permit needed. Water system under permit held by Frank West (previous recreation residence owner to Steffensen), no expiration date – needs to be transferred to current owner. No power. No phone.
Hailstone	0.1 miles of road with bridge and gate – Association permit needed. Water under permit number - no expiration date UP&L power permit with USDA FS, covers section, township and range for summer home sites from Gus Lind to Right Hand Fork, which covers all summer home sites except Brachiopod (no expiration date). No phone.

1.3 Proposed Action

The Forest Service proposes to authorize continued recreation residence use of 84 summer homes in the Gus Lind, Beirdneau, Valhalla, Birch Glen, Brown’s Rolloff, Lower Card, Upper Card, Pine Bluffs, Chokecherry, Juniper, Brachiopod, and Hailstone Recreation Residence Tracts for a 20-year period, beginning on January 1, 2009. The new permits will be effective January 1, 2009 and will expire December 31, 2028. These new permits will replace the existing Recreation Residence Term Special Use Permits that expire on December 31, 2008. As noted above, there are five in-lieu lots in the Logan tracts (only three will be analyzed), and no additional recreation residences beyond the existing 84 units will be authorized. In addition to reauthorizing use for the existing summer home lots, the proposed action also includes authorizing the existing tract improvements identified above in section 1.2.2.

Over the past few years, homes in the above-listed tracts have been inspected and homeowners have been notified of instances where action is needed to make their use consistent with all terms and conditions of their special use permit and other requirements. The actions needed included such items as removing playground-type equipment and zip lines, restoring vegetation around cabins to natural vegetation, refraining from watering, and bringing tract water systems into compliance with county water department regulations. Much of this work has been completed

or is underway. It is required that each homeowner be in compliance with all terms and conditions of their current special use permit before a new 20-year special use permit can be issued. Homeowners who fail to bring their use into compliance will be required to remove their home and all improvements from the National Forest and rehabilitate the site. The proposed action assumes all homeowners will comply.

1.4 Purpose and Need

On September 1, 2005 a review was completed by Forest Service resource specialists to determine whether recreation residence use was consistent with the Forest Plan, Recreation Residence Guidebook, and laws and regulations pertaining to water quality, etc. Based on the input provided by this group, it was determined that recreation residence use at the Logan tracts was consistent, or could be modified to be consistent, with the Forest Plan, the Recreation Residence Guidebook, or other state/county requirements. The primary concerns, questioning whether or not recreation residence areas may or may not currently be consistent with the Forest Plan and other documents itemized above, include:

- Standards and guidelines that protect riparian vegetation and stream channel characteristics.
- Standards and guidelines that protect water quality. The impact on water quality directly and indirectly affects aquatic insects and native and non-native fish species. The Forest Plan direction included measures to prevent sediment, oils, and chemicals from reaching surface and ground waters. These pollutants can cause direct mortality to aquatic species or indirect affects as aquatic insect communities adjust to pollutants.
- Improvements for which no approval documentation can be located and which is inconsistent with the Recreation Residence Administrative Guide, or other Forest Service requirements.

The purpose of this project is to provide for continuation of recreation residence use within the twelve existing tracts in Logan Canyon in accordance with the Forest Plan, Rec Residence Guide, and state/county direction. Recreation residences are identified under national policy as a valid use of National Forest System lands. It is agency policy to continue recreation residence use and to work in partnership with the holders of these permits to maximize the recreational benefits of these residences. The Cabin User Fee Fairness Act of 2000 directed the Forest Service "to ensure to the maximum extent practicable, that the NFS recreation residence program is managed to preserve the opportunity for individual and family-oriented recreation..." The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that an environmental analysis be conducted to determine the effects of continuing recreation residence use for another 20-year permit. Existing permits for recreation residences for the Logan Canyon area will expire December 31, 2008.

The needs to be met for this action include the following:

- Making a decision whether to continue recreation residence for the 84 summer home permits in a timely fashion relative to their common expiration date.

- Updating existing permits to incorporate existing improvements which are consistent with Forest Service requirements and policy, but which have not been previously permitted.
- Properly authorizing existing tract association improvements.
- Identifying additional requirements and mitigation measures which are needed to assure compliance with Forest Service policies, the Recreation Residence Guidebook and permit conditions.

1.4.1 Wasatch-Cache Forest Plan Direction

Much like a County land use plan, Forest Plans provide the fundamental framework for determining what uses of the land are appropriate in specific areas and outline management requirements across an entire National Forest. Management Prescription Categories (MPCs) provide the “zoning” in the Wasatch-Cache Forest Plan. Recreation residences in Logan Canyon are located in three MPCs. MPC 2.5 applies to tracts in the canyon corridor below Card Guard Station and along the Scenic Byway. The Beirdneau tract is also classified as MPC 2.5, Scenic Byway. This designation is managed to protect and maintain outstanding scenic qualities. Areas within 300 feet of streams fall within MPC 3.1A, where the emphasis is on watershed and aquatic habitat management. This would include all Logan tracts above Card Guard Station. In 3.1A areas, a primary goal is protection and restoration of proper hydrologic function of streams and adjacent riparian areas. Some of the lots in the tracts above Card Guard Station fall into the 2.7 MPC category. This is classified as a special interest area, managed to protect particular values or unique qualities of special interest.

Forestwide management direction also includes standards and guidelines that address recreation residences. They include the following:

- Allow no net increase in the number of recreation residences (S29).
- Recreation residence tracts (including those in Logan Canyon) will continue to be allocated as special use development areas (G82). As listed in the Forest Plan, they include: Beirdneau, Birch Glen, Brachiopod, Brown’s Roll-Off, Chokecherry, Gus Lind, Juniper, Lower Card, Upper Card, Pine Bluff, and Valhalla.

Appendix A of this document contains a complete list of references pertaining to Recreation Residence Special Use Permit administration and continuance.

Forest Service policy in FSM 2347 and 2720, and FSH 2709.11, requires that recreation residence permit holders be in compliance with the Forest Plan and other applicable Forest Service requirements before they can be issued a new authorization when their current one expires. In order to assess current compliance, an interdisciplinary team of Forest Service resource specialists reviewed the Logan Canyon tracts and documented their findings in a Consistency Review. In it, they determined that the recreation residence tracts were consistent with the Forest Plan in areas pertaining to recreation, cultural resources, vegetation, wildlife, and transportation. In other areas, such as requirements for aquatics and riparian areas, the team found that actions could be reasonably taken to make recreation residence use consistent with the Forest Plan. Typical actions would include measures to curb cutting and trimming of vegetation along the riverbank, prohibit use of sandbags, prohibit resident-created dams and berms in the streambed, reduce mowing and trimming of

vegetation in riparian areas, removal of wood piles or fire pits in riparian areas, or reduction of parking spurs to one-per-lot.

While the Consistency Review was undertaken at the tract level, compliance for each individual recreation residence is required before a new permit can be issued. Those permit holders who do not undertake the actions necessary to bring their homes into compliance with the Forest Plan, the terms and conditions of their existing permit, and other applicable requirements may not be issued a new 20-year authorization. This may require homeowners to remove their home and all other improvements from the National Forest.

1.4.2 Wasatch-Cache Recreation Residence Administrative Guide

This guide, last updated February 2006, serves both as an administrative guide for the Forest Service and a reference for recreation residence permit holders on the Forest. The guide describes the desired conditions for a typical lot, its cabin, structures and improvements. Major sections of the guide include recreation residence use, permit administration, general recreation residence guidelines, construction and reconstruction, building style and design, general lot improvements and management; as well as exhibits for forms, non-compliance, and historic properties.

1.5 Decision to Be Made

The decision to be made is whether or not to continue recreation residence use on the Logan Canyon tracts for another 20-year term. In addition, the decision includes consideration of whether to authorize, and in some cases amend the authorization, for a number of long-existing improvements in the twelve tracts. Faye Krueger, Forest Supervisor, is the Forest Service official responsible for making these decisions.

1.6 Scoping and Public Involvement

Informally, recreation residence permit holders were apprised of the upcoming permit reissuance process beginning in 2003 in a number of letters sent to them regarding removal or modification of unauthorized improvements. Direct public contact began in April 2006, when a scoping letter was sent to agencies, organizations, recreation residence owners in Logan Canyon and members of the public who had previously expressed interest in being informed of actions or who were potentially affected by the proposed action. Further, the proposal for permit reissuance was listed in the July edition of the Forest's Schedule of Proposed Actions.

A total of five written responses were received. This included four generic letters from summer home permittees stating their desires to comply with permit reissuance requirements, and a letter from Utah Environmental Congress Association.

1.6.1 Issues

The Interdisciplinary Team developed a list of issues based on comments received during public scoping. Concerns raised by team members were also discussed and added to the issues list. The ID Team then examined the list to determine if the issues identified were driving issues that will

be analyzed in Chapter 3, “Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences”. Issues were considered non-driving if they were: 1) outside the scope of the proposed action; 2) conjectural; or 3) already resolved by law, policy, or regulation. In addition, comments about homeowner’s compliance with the terms and conditions of their existing permits were considered non-driving issues that could be resolved administratively. A complete list of the issues received during scoping is included in Appendix B. Driving issues are those that are the subject of detailed analysis in this EA. They include the following:

Fish and Wildlife

- What will be the effect of continued recreation residence use on aquatic life, including threatened, endangered, and Forest Service sensitive species, such as the Bonneville Cutthroat trout? As a component of the aquatic ecosystem, how will continued summer home use affect Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas?
- How will continued recreation residence use affect wildlife, including threatened, endangered, and Forest Service sensitive species? What will be the impact to migratory bird species and Forest Service management indicator species?

Vegetation

- How will continued recreation residence use affect vegetation, including threatened, endangered, and Forest Service sensitive plant species?
- To what extent will recreation residence use affect the spread of noxious and non-native invasive plant species?

Soil and Water

- How will recreation residence use affect water quality and quantity? What will be the effects on stream, floodplains, and wetland function?
- Will recreation residence permit holders be in compliance with State and local government requirements water use and stream and spring diversions?
- To what extent will continued recreation residence use affect soils, including the effects of bare soil conditions created by vehicle and pedestrian traffic within each tract?

Recreation, Wilderness, Scenery, and Historic Resources

- How will visual resources in Logan Canyon (Scenic Byway Corridor) be affected by continued recreation residence use?
- How will summer home use affect access and the recreation experience and safety for other visitors to Logan Canyon?

- What will be the effect on homes and other improvements that are eligible for National Register of Historic Places, including those that are located in riparian areas?

In-Lieu Lot Availability

- Should the five in-lieu lots identified on the tract maps in the Logan River corridor remain available for use by permittees who wish to move their residences out of riparian areas?

Issues Dismissed

1. Issue: Will recreation residence permit holders be in compliance with State and local government requirements for water use and stream and spring diversions?

Rationale: Since the amount of water use is very small currently (estimated to be an average rate of 17 gallons per minute for all of the tracts combined), no change in effects to aquatic conditions in the Logan Canyon drainage is expected from either use or non-use of water at the recreation residences.

2. Issue: What is the need for fire hazard reduction, particularly in riparian vegetation zones?

Rationale: The vegetation within and immediately adjacent to recreation residence tracts is primarily riparian, mostly consisting of riparian hardwood trees such as box elder, cottonwood, and willows. In the larger analysis area, riparian vegetation makes up a small proportion, with larger areas of aspen forests, coniferous forest, juniper woodlands, sagebrush shrublands, and maple.

Fire hazard is dependant upon the location of resources at risk from wildfire relative to the likelihood of suppressing fire in a timely manner. In this particular area, the fire hazard of the recreation residences is fairly low due to the riparian vegetation and proximity to water. The ecological risk from wildfire is also fairly low, since the natural fire regime is of mixed severity and has been only moderately altered.