

Background: Access to drinkable water for holders of Special Use Permits on National Forest Lands can be problematic due to remote location, shifting regulations, drought, impure water sources, and expense. The NFH Association, as advocate for cabin permit holders, surveyed via email permittees (members and non-members of NFH) to determine information on water access, cost, pertinent existing or pending governmental regulations, and how the NFH could assist in addressing these issues.

- Completion Rate: 17% (896/5124)
- Self-identification Rate: 71% (632/896)
- Percent response by state

CA	OR	WA	CO	MN	MT	AZ	WY	MI	UT	TN
45%	19%	8%	4%	4%	3%	3%	2%	1%	1%	1%

1. Source(s) and Cost of Potable Water /Multiple answers were allowed

Water Source	No.	Percent	No. of Annual Cost Provided	Responded Zero Cost ³	Range		Average Cost ⁴
					Low	High	
Surface Water ¹	388	37%	261	129	\$0	\$3,000	\$105
Community water system ²	238	23%	180	18	\$0	\$4,000	\$473
Ground - private well	226	22%	176	123	\$0	\$1,000	\$34
Haul water by container	96	9%	69	34	\$0	\$750	\$57
Tanker truck	41	4%	31	3	\$0	\$600	\$236
Other	38	4%	3	3	\$0	\$0	\$0
Rainwater harvesting	13	1%	5	3	\$0	\$500	\$190
Total	1040	100%	725	313	\$0	\$4,000	\$180

1. Surface Water (lakes, streams, & springs)
2. Community Water System combined Community Well with Local Utility
3. Almost 50% of surface water responses indicated zero cost for surface water
4. Responses with zero cost significantly impact the calculated annual average cost for some water sources, likely understating true average annual cost

2. Do You Own Water Rights

No	37%
Yes	32%
Unknown	31%

The Committee found results of this question difficult to interpret. Wording was vague, and “water rights” was not defined (eg “junior” vs “senior water rights”, authorizing agency, terms of “water rights”). It is more likely than not that most respondents guessed with their responses, and it is suspected the “yes” response may be overstated for permittees holding legal water rights.

3. Have you had sufficient potable water to meet your usual household/cabin needs?

Supply is reliable year around	58%
Supply is usually reliable, but not available during winter months.	23%
Supply is usually reliable, but must be conserved during summer	14%
Supply is unreliable and quality uncertain	6%

4. Are you, the permittee, required to report water usage to the Forest Service or other agencies?

No	91%
Yes	9%

Comment:

1. For the “9%” who do report water usage to the Forest Service, by what mechanism is that accomplished?
2. Committee recommends follow up with those who are required to report water usage, either as permit holders or as tracts (see below).

5. Is your cabin tract required to report water usage to the Forest Service or other agencies?

No	69%
Unknown	19%
Yes	13%

6. What is the source of wildfire fighting water?

Lake	41%
Tanker	22%
Hydrant	19%
Stream	18%

7. If source of water is by tanker trucks, what is the one-way distance tankers travel servicing your cabin?

Not applicable	84%
Less than 10 miles	9%
10-20 miles	4%
Greater than 20 miles	3%

8. To your knowledge, are there pending federal or state regulations that would adversely affect your cabin water supply? Please explain your 'Yes' answer to the above question.

No	88%
Yes	12%

9. If you have concerns about your water supply, how can the NFH help you address these concerns with local, state, or federal agencies?

There were nearly 400 individual entries to this question. Representative requests were:

- a. Assist in expediting approval of well permits
- b. Work to establish water rights language within NF Recreation Permits
- c. Eliminate trend toward metering of water consumption
- d. Allow permittees to self-manage quality control of their wells
- e. Ensure resorts and cabin owners are treated equally re: water
- f. Clear up overlapping oversight of water by state, local, and federal agencies (in California esp.)
- g. Keep the Forest Service from appropriating permittees' water, including their wells

Summary

- a. Majority of cabin owners have a reliable source of drinkable water from streams, lakes, springs, private wells, and/or community utilities.
- b. Many cabin owners report no cost associated with water use, though this is highly variable.
- c. Few cabin owners are required to report water usage to any entity at this time, but there seems a trend toward metering of water usage in some regions (California, Salt Lake County).
- d. Many cabin owners have concerns about continued accessibility, rising cost, persistent drought conditions, and frustrations with agencies with oversight over water access, though respondents are unaware of any pending changes in governmental regulations.
- e. Cabin permit owners have concerns about water access that relate to multiple governmental levels: tract, state, regional forest, and national. The NFH has resources to assist cabin owners through a combination of national policy and process familiarity, and educational and organizational support to tracts which are addressing their own local matters.