

Statement of Glenn Casamassa
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Before the
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests and Mining
Concerning
S. 2062 - Oracle Cabins Conveyance Act of 2017
February 7, 2018

Chairman Lee, Ranking Member Wyden, members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) regarding S. 2062 – Oracle Cabins Conveyance Act of 2017. I am Glenn Casamassa, Associate Deputy Chief for the National Forest System (NFS), USDA Forest Service.

S. 2062 would require the Secretary of Agriculture to convey three parcels of NFS land on the Coronado National Forest in Arizona totaling approximately 9.5 acres to persons, or their heirs, executors, or assigns, who hold valid permits for use of the properties.

The USDA Forest Service has attempted to determine the history of how these three cabins came to be built on the Coronado National Forest, but has been unable to definitively determine their origin. However, we can confirm they are not located within an area designated for recreational cabins, which would allow for long-term ownership of improvements and occupation on a seasonal basis only. Because they do not fall within the category of a recreational residence and because they are being used as full-time residences, the type of special use permit that has been issued for each of these three cabins are for “residence, privately owned building”, with a current expiration date of 2028. We have explored a number of potential solutions within our existing authorities. However, each has downsides for either the permit holder or for balanced and equitable management of the National Forest System.

Consequently, we appreciate Senator Flake’s concerns about this situation and his efforts to find a workable outcome for the individuals involved and the USDA Forest Service. The Forest Service is committed to finding a mutually agreeable solution and intends to continue working

with the individual owners toward that end, within the parameters of applicable agency policy and regulations.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify on this bill and I look forward to your questions at the appropriate time.