

Living in the Forest: Meanings and Use of Recreational Residences

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Abstract: 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, USA. 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.

Introduction

Various commentators have recognized the increased influence of modernity on people's lives today. Such influences include globalization, 'time-space compression' (e.g., Williams & Kaltenborn 1999), and 'separation from nature and experience' (e.g., Giddens 1991). The combination of these influences creates an environment characterized by dynamism, stress, a sense of constant rush, and lack of control. While it has been argued that such conditions can lead to disorientation and personal meaninglessness, the possibility of temporary 'escape' (Cohen & Taylor 1992) and 'resistance' (Ritzer 1998) provide a variety of mechanisms through which people cope with these increasingly pervasive influences.

One such theorized mechanism that is increasingly a characteristic of modern life in industrialised societies is the ownership of a second home in a natural setting.

Second Homes and Modern Life

A second home for most N. Americans is the vacation cabin or weekend cottage situated in natural or semi-natural areas, particularly on the coastlines,

rivers and lakesides and in forested and mountainous areas. In recent years in the USA, there has been an increase in the purchase of second homes, rising from 8.4% of total homes purchased in 1996 to 13.1% in 1999 (USA Today, Feb. 2000). Although there is an increasing trend towards the purchase of modern-style second homes in N. America, there still remains a significant proportion of what might be termed 'rustic cabins.' According to a study in Wisconsin, many of these are quite primitive (Williams and Kaltenborn 1999) and a significant outcome for users is an experience of getting 'back to nature.' The purchase and use of second homes is not limited to N. America but is also a growing phenomenon in other developed societies, including Norway (Kaltenborn 1997), France (Chaplin 1999), and New Zealand (McIntyre 2000).

Most research and thinking in the study of second homes tends to focus on the experiences in that context. However, in the majority of cases this experience is a relatively small component of the total life of individuals. Life at home and at work and its influence on the second-home experience is largely neglected. This more inclusive contextualisation is essential because increasingly, modern lifestyles that integrate home, work and play involve circulating

through a geographically extended network of social relations and across a multiplicity of dispersed places and regions (McHugh & Mings, 1996, Urry 2000).

The thrust of the argument is that to understand second homes within the context of mobility and new forms of place making we need to understand how people weave together the lifestyle sectors of leisure, work, and multiple homes. We need to uncover what people actually do, how they feel about what they are doing and finally, we need to access their deeper thoughts and feelings about these lifestyle sectors (Williams & McIntyre 2002).

The Recreation Residence Program

A unique program in second-home development is the Recreation Residence Program in the US National Forests. This program has a long history, having been part of the National Forests for over 80 years. An estimated 15,200 of these Recreational Residences exist throughout the length and breadth of the country. Many of these residences are situated in areas of high recreation use along the shorelines of lakes and on the banks of rivers and streams and are concentrated in the Western USA, particularly in Pacific South West region of California (Gildor 2002).

Despite the long history of use and importance of these residences, very little is known about their owners, types and frequency of use and the benefits that they provide. This paper reports one part of a larger study, which addresses these broad research issues.

History of the Recreation Residence Program

Recreation was not initially a part of the US Forest Service mandate but rather its policies emphasised extraction of forest resources and 'wise use'. However, the growing demand for recreation opportunities influenced, in part, by the 'back to nature' movement encouraged the Forest Service to promote "simple, low-keyed, rustic, recreational experiences" within the public forests (Lux et al. 2001, p.18). In the early days, recreation was controlled by means of a permit system, which included the establishment of recreation residences leases.

Recreation leases granted under the 'organic statute' had to be reviewed annually and were 'terminable at the discretion of the Forester' (Gildor 2002, p. 997). This approach provided little long term security considering the investment in infrastructure required of permit owners. So, in 1915 the Occupancy Permits Act was passed to provide for leases of no more than 5 acres of land for a period of 30 years.

The Forest Service viewed the Recreation Residence Program as a way of protecting forest resources. A prevalent view was that permit owners became 'conservationists', assisted in managing fire risk, and in addition, the leases were a welcome source of income. Thus, in the early years, the Forest Service actively promoted the program. Articles extolling the virtues of recreational residences and forest living even appeared in the mainstream press

(e.g., *Good Housekeeping* and *The Saturday Evening Post*) and outdoor living books:

[m]any a business man has gained a healthful and keen enjoyment in clearing a small area and erecting thereon a cabin in accordance with his purse and ability (Bryant 1929, p. 347–348, quoted in Gildor 2002, p. 998).

Waugh was appointed by the early Forest Service to examine recreation facilities in the National Forests and to develop guidelines for their development and management (Lux et al. 2001). His report favoured scenic sites (e.g. tree covered, in canyons, beside mountain streams and on lake fronts) for recreational residences. These guidelines influenced the choices of sites for which rangers issued permits. As a result, despite Forest Service policies and instructions to site recreation residences in less desirable location, many cabins were built on sites of high scenic and recreational value (e.g., shores of L. Tahoe). Therefore, right from the start conflict between 'higher uses' (the most benefit to the most people) and the apparent 'exclusive use' of recreation residence tracts was built into the system.

In the 1930's, there was a dramatic shift in Forest Service recreation policy, which moved from an emphasis on permits as a way of managing public recreation to a more broadly based public recreation strategy. This strategy directed energies into conservation and development projects such as the provision of public campgrounds, and picnic areas within the National Forests. The combination of this change in Forest Service policy in regards to recreation provision and the fact that by the 1950's the costs of the Recreation Residence Program to the Forest Service exceeded revenue from the leases contributed to a negative shift in the Forest Service administration's attitude to the program (Lux et al. 2001).

The Public Land Review Commission report published in 1970 recommended that 'public lands should not be made available for private vacation home construction and that such existing use should be eliminated' (Gildor 2002, p. 1001). Although this recommendation was largely ignored, conflicts between general recreation use and recreation residences combined with the growing negative attitude to the program mentioned above likely caused the Forest Service to pre-empt this recommendation and initiate a phase-out of the program. In 1968, they introduced a moratorium on the development of further tracts and in 1976 they prohibited further development within tracts, essentially bringing further extension of the program to a halt. Permit expiration and non-renewal, in the ensuing years, has reduced the number of recreation residences from a peak of 20,000 to 15,200 today (Gildor 2002).

Managing Recreation Residences

Over the years Forest Service policies governing recreation residences have become more detailed and comprehensive. Recreation residence use is author-

ized on the basis that: (a) it is consistent with the management plan; b) the residence is located where an alternative public use has not been established c) the residence does not constitute a removable hazard d) the residence does not endanger the health and safety of the holder or the public.

Permits may be issued for 20 years and the Forest Service must give 10 years notice of termination. They are non-transferable but can be re-issued to heirs and purchasers of lot improvements for the remainder of the term. The residence must be occupied at least 15 days in any one year but owners cannot live there full-time. Only one building is permitted on each lease and buildings are subject to restrictions on architectural design, size, height, decks, building materials, paint colours and outbuildings.

Permit violations are rampant. Examples cited by Gildor (2002) include: full-time residency, unauthorized construction and rentals. Size creep is a significant problem. For example, cabins originally 40–110 metres square now are commonly over 300 metres square.

A recent review (Lux et al. 2001) has shown permit violations to have a ‘substantial impact’ on the recreating public, cultural and historic sites and on endangered species. This same study noted that roughly half the lots in California have unauthorized improvements and have impacted archaeological or environmental resources. It is argued that this situation arises because of Forest Service ‘inability’ to administer the program due to lack of staffing, and appropriate levels of expertise and training amongst those staff charged with administering the program (Gildor 2002).

Politics and Recreation Residences

More rigorous administration of recreation residence permits and recent reviews of leases generally involving increases in lease costs have resulted in recreation residence owners evolving into a significant political force. The development of ‘client politics’ is not surprising given that the recreation residence program benefits a small number of people and that the costs are diffusely spread across the public domain (Gildor 2002).

Recreation residence owners have also developed the ability to mobilize easily. For example, of the 3,200 comments to the Forest Service on its 1987 proposed rulemaking 96 per cent were from permit holders.

Self-selection of congressmen into committees tends to favour the western states, where most of the RR are developed. One western congressman in a hearing on recreation residences is quoted as saying:

“The eco-marxists seem to dominate our policy in the area of public lands and environmental policy these days. Obviously the Forest Service has decided it does not like permittees and is doing everything it can to eradicate them... I don’t think congress feels that way. Once again, we have a large

bureaucracy careening pretty much out of control and doing whatever it likes”

Public sympathy is also garnered through the portrayal of recreation residence owners as ‘part of the West’s rich cultural heritage... often retired folks on fixed incomes who have loyally served our Nation in peacetime and war’ and ‘primary users of these cabins are the retired, the elderly, the disabled, teachers’ (Gildor 2002, p. 1013). As a result of these various influences, change in the recreation residence program is slow and difficult to implement.

The Recreation Residence Program is part of the Forest Service System and is unlikely to be able to be phased out despite philosophical and implementation difficulties. This paper, rather than address the issues inherent in the existence of this instance of an ‘exclusive use’ within public lands, focuses on the perceptions of a sample of recreation residence owners as to the role that the ‘cabin’¹ in the forest plays in their lives.

Cabins in the Forest: A Case Study

The approach used in this study involved four methods of data collection: personal project analysis, a survey, in-depth interviews and experiential sampling. Three of these will be discussed in this paper: Personal Project Analysis, the survey and the in-depth interviews.

Personal Project Analysis

Goal directed behavior is characteristic of humans and the way they manage their lives whether it involves going to the summer cottage, learning to be more sociable or getting the car fixed (Little 1989). In the late 1980’s and early 90’s there was a resurgence of interest in goal directed behavior in the form of “personal projects” (Little 1989). Personal Projects Analysis links closely with the notion of “distributed self” as discussed by Bruner (1990), in that, aspects of self are theorised as being represented in the variety of goal-directed behaviors of the individual. According to Little (1989) Personal Projects represent:

extended sets of personally relevant actions, which can range from the trivial pursuits of a typical Tuesday (e.g. ‘cleaning up my room’) to the magnificent obsessions of a lifetime (‘liberate my people’)... personal projects are natural units. . . that deal with the serious business of how people muddle through their complex lives. (p. 15).

Little (1989) has developed a Personal Project elicitation survey in which participants are requested to list ten current personal projects each of which are then related by the individual on a ten point scale using a series of dimensions which reflect potentially important characteristics of personal projects. Some of these dimensions are derived directly from the sequencing of the stages in a project (e.g., initiation,

control, outcome likelihood, time adequacy). Other dimensions such as self-identity, self-worth, challenge, stress, enjoyment and importance may be included because of their potential relevance to leisure projects. Two important contextual variables are also included namely, "where" and "with whom." Project analysis has a number of advantages:

- it focuses on "natural acts" that are of relevance to the individual rather than projects that arise from the researcher's interest;
- it provides a comparative profile of each personal project which indicates both the nature and degree of involvement in each project on dimensions that are relevant to the recreation residence and home experiences; and
- it provides data that can be analyzed at the individual level and group level.

In this study, project elicitation was focused on the cabin and home² projects to provide an understanding of the different and complementary roles of each in a person's life.

The Survey

The survey sought characteristics of the use of the recreation residence, facilities, details of annual expenditure and personal information about the owners. The survey and the Personal Project Elicitation package were mailed out to a sample of recreation residence owners in Eastern Colorado.

In-depth Interviews

Interviews were conducted with recreation residence owners either at their homes or at the residence. Typically interviews lasted from 1.50 to 2.00 hrs and often included both husband and wife owners of the cabins. Interviews were structured around open questions, which explored the history of the cabin, their lifetime association with it, memories and stories about incidents that took place at the cabin, life at the cabin, special places in the forest, and what they did when they visited. Broadly similar topics were discussed in the context of the home focusing particularly on similarities and differences in lifestyles and feelings about the two contexts. Perceptions of Forest Service management were also discussed, as were changes in the forests and Colorado over the time that they had owned the cabin.

The Sample

The survey was mailed to a sample of 37 cabin owners who volunteered to take part in the study. All these owners had leases in the Arapahoe-Roosevelt and Pike National Forests and lived in Front Range cities (Denver, Boulder, Fort Collins and Colorado Springs) in Colorado USA. Twenty-nine surveys were returned providing a 78 per cent response rate. Seventeen completed Personal Project Analysis were returned and 11 in-depth interviews were conducted.

Thirty-nine per cent of the owners were female and the average age was 67 years. Almost two-thirds

(62%) were retired, 11 per cent semi-retired and 27 per cent were still in the workforce. The owners were generally well educated with 96 per cent having either a college degree or some college education. Fifty-eight per cent were in teaching or other professional occupations, 26% in administration or medical, and the remainder were self-employed. Almost half (47%) had a household income of \$US60000 or more.

In summary, the owners were a relatively affluent, mostly retired, well-educated, professional group. The demographics of the this sample are broadly similar to those described by Berg (1975) in a more general survey of original cabin owners.

Life in the Forest

The first part of the study explored the characteristics of the cabins and their use.

Characteristics and Use of the Cabins

All of the cabins are in a forest setting with less than half (44%) sited on river/stream frontage. Only forty-four per cent are winterised and about two-thirds (77%) have gravel, graded road access both of which likely limits winter use in the rather frigid, snowy mountains of Colorado. Grid electricity is connected to about half (48%) of the cabins but wood-burning stoves are the most prevalent form of heating, as is bottled gas for cooking. Just over half (52%) use creek water, about a quarter (24%) carry water in and the remainder use springs or are connected to a community water supply. Seventy per cent have an outhouse, 15 per cent have flush toilets and composting or chemical toilets make up the rest. It is evident that, even in this small sample, the cabins have a wide range of facilities. However, the general level of facilities suggests that they are probably best described as 'rustic' rather than 'primitive' (Figure 1).



Figure 1 Cabin in the Forest: Arapahoe-Roosevelt NF.

Table 1 indicates that 'occasional' and frequent short stays' are the most common types of use of the cabins. The former took place throughout the year but mostly in the Spring and Winter. Summer and

Fall were characterised more by 'frequent short stays'. Some owners spent vacations at the residence in the summer. Three of the owners surveyed visited every day during Summer and Fall and six of the 29 owners did not visit at all in the Fall and Winter.

Table 1. Patterns of Use of the Cabins by Season (2002–2003).

Season	Not Used	Occasional Use	Frequent Short Stays	Vacation > 6 days	Every Day
Spring	0	7	6	1	0
Summer	0	3	7	3	2
Fall	1	5	9	0	1
Winter	5	8	1	0	0

The cabins were used mainly in the Summer with an average of 24 days of use out of a possible 90 days (Table 2). Summer also showed the widest variation (23.8 days). Fall use, although considerably less than Summer use was the second most popular season. Spring and Winter were the times of least use with zero days being the most common response. Overall use in the year averaged about 47 days, varying from a minimum of 4 days to a maximum of 190. The total use is probably much higher when use by other family members is taken into account.

Table 2. Number of Days Used By Season (2002–2003).

Season	Average No Days	Modal No Days	Maximum No Days	Standard Deviation
Spring	6	0	40	8.2
Summer	24	20	90	23.8
Fall	13	10	80	17.9
Winter	3	0	15	3.9
Total Days	47	34	190	46

In summary, cabin use is concentrated in the Summer and Fall when weather conditions are relatively mild and access is easiest. Most owners tend to use the cabins frequently for short visits throughout these two seasons.

Comparisons with cabin owners in Wisconsin (Stynes et al. 1995) indicate that owner use of these privately owned homes was higher averaging 70 days per year. However, patterns of use are broadly similar, with summer being the most popular time for extended stays and short visits are the norm in Winter.

A key issue for many owners at the present time is the costs associated with owning a cabin, especially as there is a move by the Forest Service to charge lease fees equivalent to that levied on adjacent private lands. This has meant increases in rates for many owners in excess of what are felt to be justifiable on the basis of the restrictive leasehold condi-

tions and the fixed income status of many of the retiree owners. Figure 2 shows that, at an average of \$US800, the Permit Fee is the most costly part of owning the cabin. All the other costs (insurance, utilities, repairs, furnishings and county taxes) are very similar, averaging between \$US150 - \$US200 per annum. The average cost of owning a cabin is just over \$US1600 a year.

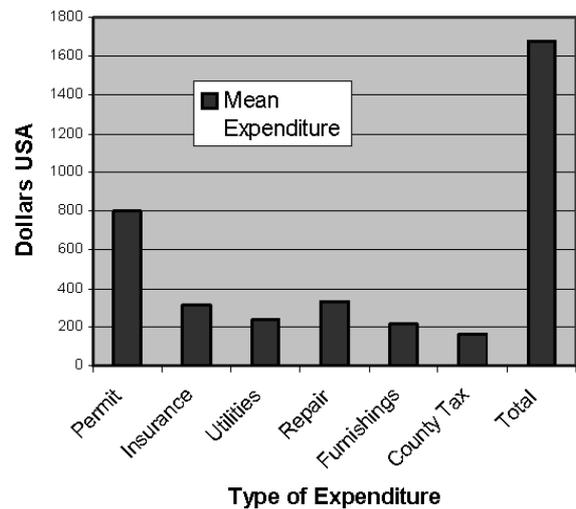


Figure 2 Types of Expenditure on Cabins.

Overall, the cabins in this part of Colorado appear to have remained relatively primitive with few of the modern conveniences that are common in cabins on private land in the same area. Use is generally spasmodic, short frequent summer-time stays being most prevalent type of use. Arguably, given the average income of \$US60,000 a year, costs of owning the residence seem reasonable but this view is not shared universally by all owners.

Home and Cabin

The second part of the study examined the sorts of things that owners did when they stayed at the cabin and explored how the various projects were similar and different at home and at the cabin.

Personal Projects were elicited by asking contributors to list:

as many personal projects as you can that you are engaged in or thinking about at the present time. Don't just list formal projects, or important ones, but rather I would appreciate you developing a list of everyday activities or concerns that characterize your life (a) in the home and (b) at the recreational residence.

This process elicited a total of 94 cabin projects and 171 home-based projects. These included: 'put varnish on the cabin'; 'explore the Colorado Trail'; 'weed out closets and basement'; 'losing a few pounds'; 'manage transition when my wife retires';

‘become a better listener’; ‘learn Spanish’ (Figure 3). The individual projects were classified into twelve broad categories (Figure 4) to facilitate comparisons across contexts (home/cabin) and between different studies.



Figure 3. Cabin Project: Footbridge on a Small Creek.

Cabin projects are dominated by maintenance, leisure, and building projects. On the other hand, leisure and to a lesser extent maintenance, volunteer work, family support, and personal development projects characterised the home (Figure 4). The range of projects in the latter context is also broader. Notable among the project types missing from the cabin context are fitness, family support, and volunteer projects.

Examination of the specific leisure type projects conducted at the cabin and the home demonstrated an emphasis on nature-based leisure activities (hiking and wildlife watching) in the former. These are also likely to contribute to fitness goals, a prominent project focus in the home context. In the home, artistic projects (painting, music and writing) prevail.

The number and variety of projects demonstrate that this group of mainly retired people lead quite active lives both at home and at the cabin. Overall, the cabin is a place where owners involve themselves in ‘fixing up the residence’ or enjoying nature through low-key activities. In the home, various leisure projects particularly of an artistic nature are the main focus, with volunteer work and caring for children, siblings, spouses and grandchildren also being important.

Perceptions of Life in the Forest

In-depth interviews with selected owners provided insights into the meanings associated with living at the cabins. This discussion will examine selected aspects only, in particular those that are linked to understanding key aspects of the Personal Project Analysis and survey responses discussed earlier in this paper.

Maintenance was the most often mentioned type of project at the cabin. One 70 year-old man who had spent most of his life as a stock-broker reminisced about working on the cabin some 40 years earlier:

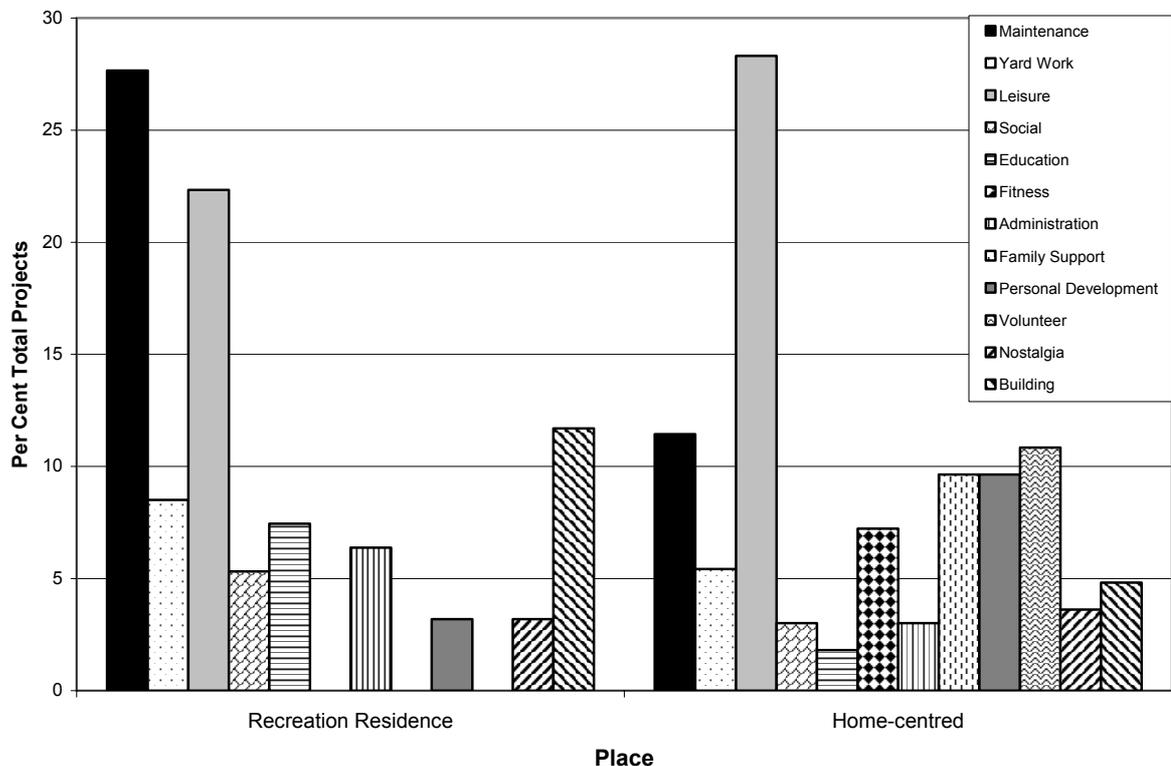


Figure 4. Personal Projects at the Cabins and at Home.

SB: I was a helper... her father was the worker... in fact the worst job I ever had in my life . . . that window on the east side. That was a little bitty window. Those logs are like steel. You know they're a hundred years old... we had a handsaw. And it took me two or three days to do that... was the hardest work I've ever done in my life. You couldn't saw those logs. (S, Fort Collins).

This particular maintenance/building task is very special and recounted with obvious pride at overcoming the challenge and successfully completing the window.

Such personal stories about work down on the cabins that create a binding relationship and sense of ownership with the particular structure are evident in most of the transcripts. One Denver couple talk about renovating their 'cabin' that they acquired about 13 years ago:

JP: put in a little bigger windows. I put in these nice windows and...

JP: put log cabin siding inside. It's so cute. It looks like a log cabin inside now.

PP: Yeah. 'Cause it's not actually log, it's like a siding stuff. . . . It was kinda just slapped up pretty much that cabin was. But . . . we painted it. I mean we've done a lot to it... but we sorta like to do that.

A female owner from Colorado Springs expressed how working on the 'cabin' made it her own:

RB: I got really attached to the cabin by doin' all the work to it... on the inside. That kinda became a part of me. I made curtains for every room in the cabin and . . . I don't know, I feel like my . . . my heart is there because of the things that I've put into it.

Owners also made a distinction between working on the home and at the 'cabin'.

PP: one thing nice is that... [at the] cabin you can do as much as you want and then leave. It's not like your house where you have to remodel your kitchen and live in it... We have to like wait for money for to do it. So it sort of... it gets done when the money's there and the time.

There is a sense of freedom to undertake tasks at the 'cabin' and a sense of accomplishment in doing something that he/she would find rather daunting at home. RB's husband expressed it this way:

MB: I mean, I can't saw . . . two sticks together and get 'em to fit right... but I can go up there [cabin] and do things and feel like I really accomplished some things, working with my hands. And 'cause I'm not a highly skilled person in that area but... I put in the... linoleum floor. I... you know, I put in the stove.

Working on and at the 'cabin' is a way of bonding with the place, of meeting and overcoming challenges, of practising skills and above all it is enjoyable and fun. This perception seems to be created, in part, through the less stringent requirements for quality and freedom from time constraints when working on the residence than on the home.

Chaplin (1999) in her study of British second-home owners in France considers this type of work at the second home as 'consuming work/productive leisure' interpreting it as a form of escape to a ludic space

characterised by a seamless integration of work and leisure.

Home and the Cabin

Despite the relatively sparse use of the cabins amounting to between 10 and 20 days a year (Table 2), these cabins play a very important part in the lifestyles of the people involved. A major motive for the acquisition of second-homes has been theorized as 'escape' principally from the 'controlled, predictable, alienating world of their normal working lives' (Chaplin 1999, p. 54) to an 'idealized rural way of life' (Butler & Hoggart 1994, p. 128).

Contributors in this study expressed similar themes, for example:

RB: The city gets to ya and then after a while it's nice to get a break [at the cabin]... and then come back [to the city] and you're refreshed again.

However, a contrary view was expressed by others who viewed life at the 'cabin' as more of a complement to their life at home and who expressed appreciation of the contribution of each to their total lifestyle.

PP: we appreciate living here [home in Denver] after having a cabin. It's... I just can't see that other lifestyle. I can't see living in the mountains and driving to Denver everyday... I like the contrast of the two...

JP: on the other hand, there's a lot of really interesting things to do here [Denver] that we don't do up there [cabin]... Go to art galleries or go downtown...

Aspects of 'cabin' life such as:
the contact with nature and wildlife:

MB: [the family] fish with flies and lures; so we return all the fish back. But they're, like the deer, kinda part of our family. We kinda look at the fish as part of our family and the hummingbirds... it's a very large extended family.

getting in touch with a more simple lifestyle:

PP: you know, the thing that's great about our cabin is... is the simplicity of it;

being part of a different, more rural community:

JP: as you exit the highway and turn to the cabin... There's a lumberyard right there... It's a funky little lumberyard. And it's really fun to buy stuff and then work on the cabin. Support the little community up there, you know. It's kinda neat;

the lack of the accoutrements of modern technology

PR: I guess to me, part of the neat thing about it [cabin] is it is primitive. 'N when you go up there... you don't listen to radios, and you don't watch TV, you don't have any telephone.

All provide a contrast to and complement the full lifestyle (Figure 4) experienced at home. There is little sense of the time at the cabin as an escape. Rather, return to the city and its assets are equally appreciated. As JP expresses it:

I like it up there [cabin] because it's like... going back in time a little bit. But really it's more than that... it's a bridge between living in this urban environment that is... unnatural... [and] nature that, you know, primitive man came out of. This is a lot closer to it.

Attachment to Place

Many of the owners have either built the residence themselves or inherited it from parents or grandparents. A strong feeling of attachment is evident in owners' comments:

RB: our dream wasn't just that we would like a place to relax, but it'd be a place where our children and our children's children could... build family relationships as well.

One couple sold the residence that had been handed down from the wife's family. Recently, they managed to re-lease it and commented thus:

JB: we just quit going up... and so we thought, well, we'll just sell it... and then we've always regretted it... I just never *ever* thought we'd get it back. It was just like it was meant to be.

Another couple talked of special family times:

JP: the aspens had turned. All of us, kids and everybody, we're just layin' in . . . layin' in a big bed of aspen leaves and just looking up and watching them come down on us... It's just unbelievable, through the yellow leaves and then how blue the skies are in Colorado.

This study suggests that attachment to place can be developed in four ways:

it arises through a desire to fulfil a 'dream' of having such a place in the forest,
as a result of a long association through family ties and childhood experiences,
as a site memorialized through family 'traditions' and stories.
by maintaining and building the residence.

Conclusions

This paper has addressed a unique type of second home; a cabin set in the forest on public land. Although this type of lease brings with it certain restrictions on the freedom of owners, at least for the Colorado owners involved in this study, the 'woody' nature of the residence is both appreciated and viewed as appropriate. Life in these cabins demonstrates broad similarities to that reported in other second-home studies (e.g., Chaplin 1999, Williams & Kaltenborn 1999) in that maintenance of the residence and its surrounds, contact with nature and wildlife, strong attachment to place and cross-generational continuity, a merging of work and leisure and celebration of a 'rustic minimalist' way of life are key aspects of this lifestyle.

Persistent themes in the literature on second homes are those of 'resistance' and 'escape'. However, neither of these themes is strongly represented in the narratives of cabin owners. They appear to construct life in the second home as complementary to their primary home lives which are equally rich and diverse, though different in ways that are important to the full realisation of their lifestyle. This may be due to the fact that the majority of these owners are retired and life at home is a mix of artistic leisure

pursuits, voluntary community work and family. Further analysis of a broader range of narratives will be required to resolve this particular issue.

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¹ Although the strict terminology for these dwellings is 'recreation residence', contributors to this study consistently referred to them as 'cabins'. For this reason, that terminology will be adopted in the remainder of this paper.

² 'Home' in this context refers to the dwelling which is occupied for most of the time by the contributors to this study.