

**Testimony on SB 49 relating to Cabin and Campsite Fees
To
The Senate Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources**

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Secretary
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SB 49 seeks to exempt cabin fees and campsites from the public hearing process. **The Department supports the provisions contained in the bill.** The provisions of the bill would be effective upon publication in the statute book.

By way of history, the Department's cabin program started in the late 1990's with a few cabins at El Dorado and some converted shelters scattered at various state parks. In 2001, Secretary Hayden embarked on a cabin program that ultimately led to over 100 cabins spread throughout the state. In 2001, to gain some continuity over the fees and pay for a cabin program, the Department moved those cabin fees into regulation. As the program grew, the regulatory process became too cumbersome to enable the Department to maximize opportunities and occupancy. The Department then came back to Legislature requesting the fees be exempt from the rules and regulations process and allow the Department to set those fees at public commission meetings held six times per year.

Given the consistent charge to the Department to reduce reliance on EDIF and run more like a fee funded business, the Department is requesting to remove the public hearing process from the equation. Strategic planning requires that we analyze changing market conditions and respond accordingly to maximize revenues. By way of example, when market conditions at one property discourage participation in cabin or campsite use, the Department must respond quickly to those changing conditions. Those six commission meetings are timed to coincide with regulatory deadlines, not to weather patterns and are not flexible enough to maximize profits and use of the cabins and campsites.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to address the Committee on the bill and the support of the Committee on the bill.