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OVERSIGHT OF THE UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE

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BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY

UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

June 2, 2026

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OVERSIGHT OF THE UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE

TUESDAY, JUNE 2, 2026

U.S. SENATE
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10 a.m., in Room 106, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. John Boozman, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Boozman [presiding], Hoeven, Ernst, Hyde-Smith, Marshall, Moran, Klobuchar, Smith, Luján, Welch, Schiff, and Slotkin.

STATEMENT OF HON. BOOZMAN, U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF ARKANSAS, CHAIRMAN, U.S. COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY

Chairman BOOZMAN. Good morning and welcome. It is my privilege to call this hearing to examine the work of the United States Forest Service and the challenges facing our national forests and communities that depend on them. I welcome our witness, Chief of the U.S. Forest Service, Tom Schultz. Thank you for being here today and to share the work of the Forest Service to support our national forests, especially as fire season begins.

The Forest Service manages and oversees roughly 193 million acres of forests and grasslands across this country. My state of Arkansas is home to two of those National Forests, the Ozark-St. Francis and the Ouachita, which account for nearly three million acres between the two. These national forests not only support their local communities' economies, but also by providing recreational access to Arkansans.

The University of Arkansas at Monticello and the Arkansas Department of Agriculture also have close relationships that support research and local engagement. Needless to say, the impact of the Forest Service is well known in Arkansas, and we are immensely proud of them.

Earlier this year, USDA announced it will be moving Forest Service headquarters to Salt Lake City, Utah, as well as moving from a region-based structure to a state-based structure. I understand the sentiment of moving people closer to the communities they serve, and I look forward to hearing how the Forest Service will continue to support its mission during this move, especially as we are already in the early part of peak fire season.

As summer begins, the Forest Service's capacity to fight wildfires is top of mind for many people. Wildfires are indifferent to federal,

state, tribal, and private property lines or political subdivisions. Last year, we saw over 5 million acres burned, with another 8.9 million burned in 2024.

The outlook for this year looks grim, with many predicting another active fire season. I look forward to hearing your insight and strategy on how the Forest Service will handle those challenges this year.

This Committee also reported the Fix Our Forests Act, also called FOFA, in October of last year. I want to thank Senators Curtis, Hickenlooper, Sheehy, and Padilla for introducing that important legislation in the Senate and thank Chairman Westerman for championing it in the House.

I also want to thank my Republican and Democrat colleagues who voted for FOFA, including Ranking Member Klobuchar and Senators Fetterman, Luján, Slotkin, Warnock, and Welch. I am committed to working with leadership to get FOFA across the floor and to the President's desk. FOFA will provide the Forest Service much needed and streamlined authorities to reduce catastrophic wildfires and improve forest health.

Once again, thank you, Chief Schultz, for appearing before the Committee today, and I look forward to our discussion.

I now turn to Ranking Member Klobuchar for her opening statement.

STATEMENT OF HON. KLOBUCHAR, U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF MINNESOTA

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Well, thank you very much, Chairman, and thank you for holding this hearing. Thank you, Chief Schultz, for serving as the 21st Chief of the U.S. Forest Service and for appearing before the Committee. I also appreciated the briefing we had just last week with Secretary Rollins, Secretary Burgum, and others about the status of various fires and what was happening across the country. As I said then, I thank the firefighters of the Forest Service for responding to the recent Stewart and Flanders fires that were scary for many Minnesotans in Senator Smith's and my home state, including the residents of Two Harbors and Cross Lake.

Now we just this yesterday have a fire near Ely, Minnesota, which is actually where my dad grew up and I know that there are coordinated efforts as there were for the past fires over the last month with the Forest Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Minnesota DNR, and local first responders, most important, who are protecting lives and properties.

Last May, Senator Smith and I visited an incident command center in Two Harbors and surveyed the damage dropped by the Brimson Complex fires. Drier, hotter spring seasons and an ongoing spruce budworm outbreak are contributing to these fires.

I am focused on ensuring the Forest Service and its partners are ready for this approaching fire season. I do not quite remember a season where we have had so many, I would call them, flash fires. They come up out of the blue. They have been put out so far, but it just does not bode well because of the dry weather and the conditions for what we are going to see.

Chief Schultz, I appreciate our recent conversations, as I noted, and I have also raised the issues with Director Fennessy at DOI. Your agency's focus on the wildfire issue is critical, and forests across the country, which is why I remain concerned by some of the reductions that we have talked about.

I am troubled that more than 1,400 Forest Service employees with so-called red cards, which allow them to fight wildfires without being hired as firefighters, departed the agency last year amid broader workforce reduction, especially when we are seeing these sort of flash sudden fires as well as major fires across the country. These employees are crucial to the agency's wildfire response during challenging seasons like we may be seeing now, and these departures could leave the agency less prepared. I also look forward to hearing how the Forest Service will treat more acres for hazardous fuels this year after a year-over-year drop in 2025.

I believe we should be strengthening the agency's wildfire response capabilities, and unfortunately, we have seen these cuts that should be concerning to all. The budget that we have seen from the Administration proposes deep cuts to popular state forestry programs, funding for volunteer fire departments, and forestry research. The budget the Administration recommends moves wildfire operations out of the USDA's Forest Service, as you know, and we are concerned about the unintended consequences of doing that. I am sure you will address that.

The budget proposes eliminating forestry research and cutting NFS funding, but at the same time, the Forest Service reorg suggests these mission areas will be reconfigured. That leads to confusion. The Forest Service Research Facility in Grand Rapids, Minnesota, which carries out invaluable red pine research, is on the list of facilities to be closed, as is a site in Ely. Employees have been notified of potential reorganization, but questions remain about where researchers will be located.

In April, I, along with Ranking Members, Heinrich and Merkley, and more than 30 of my colleagues directly raised concerns with the reorganization of the USDA. If this reorganization is not well executed, it could lead to additional capacity and workforce reductions. Again, I am sure you will be addressing that, and I have appreciated your willingness to answer my questions over the last few months.

The departure of red card-holding employees, a drop in wildfire mitigation and trail maintenance work, and confusing reorg plans are concerning developments. There is a role for Congress. My colleague, Senator Boozman, just mentioned the Fix Our Forest Act, which this Committee passed through, and we are looking forward to its consideration on the floor. We understand that its passage could be eased by some additional changes that we hope we will be able to develop together, but I do appreciate the bipartisan leadership, and that is why I supported that bill.

Chief Schultz, your leadership and the dedicated work of the Forest Service personnel are much appreciated and are needed more than ever to see the agency through these challenging times and I look forward to hearing your testimony. Thank you.

Chairman BOOZMAN. It is my pleasure to introduce Tom Schultz, the 21st Chief of the United States Forest Service. Prior to serving

as Chief, he was Vice President of Resources and Government Affairs at the Idaho Forest Group and Director of the Idaho Department of Lands. Chief Schultz also worked for the Montana Department of Natural Resources and served as an Air Force officer. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Virginia, a master's degree from the University of Wyoming, and a master's degree in forestry from the University of Montana.

Thank you very much for being with us today and you are now recognized for your statement.

STATEMENT OF TOM SCHULTZ, CHIEF, FOREST SERVICE, UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. SCHULTZ. Chairman Boozman, Ranking Committee Member Klobuchar, and Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me here today to testify.

The USDA's Forest Service is the Nation's foremost federal forestry organization. We have the privilege of managing 154 national forests, 20 national grasslands, covering 193 million acres. Since day one, my work as chief has been to refocus our efforts on the fundamental work that delivers the greatest good to the American people. Today, I would like to share the priorities guiding the Forest Service forward, as well as share key accomplishments from the previous year.

Our priorities reflect a back-to-basics approach that centers on the work we know that matters most, keeping people safe, protecting communities from wildfire, actively managing our forests for health and productivity, supporting communities recovering after disasters, extending access to the outdoors, increasing domestic mineral production, and cutting unnecessary red tape and strengthening partnerships that make all of this possible.

At the center of everything we do is safety. Whether it is firefighter safety on the line or an employee in the field, safety is our first and last priority. I am proud to say that we reduced OSHA-related recordable incidents by more than 15 percent year over year. That is a direct reflection of the culture that puts safety first.

Wildfire readiness and response remains one of our most urgent responsibilities. We are prioritizing rapid, aggressive initial response so that we can keep fires small. We have invested in staffing, coordination, contracting, and infrastructure to meet the reality that fire season in many cases extends 12 months, and we are seeing results. In Fiscal Year 2025, even though we had the highest number of wildfire starts in the national forest in nearly a decade, the acres that were burned were held to about half of the 10-year average. Our initial attack success rate was the strongest in 12 years, and we treated more than 3.3 million acres to reduce hazardous fuels.

For this fiscal year, we have treated nearly 2.2 million acres nationally already, or 61 percent of our target as of May, with over 1.6 million acres of prescribed fire, nearly 500,000 acres more than last year at this time.

In addition to these hazardous fuels treatments, other forms of active forest management, timber production, grazing, and reforestation also remain essential to healthy, resilient forests. In 2025, we

exceeded our timber targets, selling 2.95 billion board feet. This supports domestic mills, strengthens rural economies, and improves forest health. We are implementing the National Active Forest Management Strategy, and we are on target to increase our timber volume off the national forests by 25 percent with an overall goal of four billion board feet by Fiscal Year 2028.

We are also modernizing grazing processes and expanding access to ensure grazing continues to promote healthy landscapes and resilient rural communities. Last year, we completed the highest level of reforestation in over 25 years, reforesting almost 287,000 acres and improving stands on another 165,000 acres.

America's forests also play a critical role in supporting domestic energy and mineral production. The Forest Service is committed to facilitating responsible development, especially of critical minerals essential to national security, technology, and energy, while reducing unnecessary regulatory delays. We are currently working on 20 FAST–41 projects, including 6 covered and 14 transparency projects.

Disasters. When disasters occur, the Forest Service is a key partner in recovery. Following a 2024 hurricane season, we opened up more than 1,500 miles of roads, nearly 700 miles of trails, and 34 recreation sites. Across more than 100 disaster recovery events, we awarded $885 million in contracts and $1.5 billion in agreements to restore landscapes and infrastructure. We are also working to expand recreation access and improve the visitor experience for the millions of Americans who enjoy their national forests. Under the Great American Outdoors Act, we completed 125 deferred maintenance projects, improving 162 rec sites and 78 roads and bridges.

The Forest Service is working alongside states, tribes, and local governments to manage the Nation's forests more effectively. In the past two years, we have signed and entered into shared stewardship agreements with seven states and three tribal nations. By the end of Fiscal Year 2025, we will have had 540 active Good Neighbor Authority agreements, 99 which were signed in the past year. These partnerships help expand capacity, cut through operational challenges, and deliver restoration work. We are also taking significant steps to reduce red tape and improve organizational efficiency.

Our restructuring, relocating headquarters to Salt Lake City, shifting to a state-based leadership model, and creating an operations service center and unifying research programs is designed to move decision-making closer to the communities and the landscapes that we serve. The shift represents a structural reset and commonsense approach to improve mission delivery.

As we look into the 2026 fire year, we enter the season facing elevated fire potential across large areas of the country. We also enter unified and prepared. We have hired more than 11,000 firefighters, up six percent from last year at this time, and we will reach our 11,300 goal by July. We have increased the number of red-carded non-fire staff by more than 450 personnel, giving us more surge capacity when fires occur.

Finally, we are working with the Department of Interior and Congress as directed on the Administration's broader effort to consolidate the Nation's wild and fire system. These efforts moving forward without compromising our operational readiness. Throughout

all of this work, our commitment remains constant to protect the public's support, our partners, and ensure rapid, effective, and unified response to wildfires across the Nation.

Chairman Boozman, Ranking Member Klobuchar, and Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me here today, and I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Schultz can be found on pages 26–30 in the appendix.]

Chairman BOOZMAN. Thank you, Chief, very much. We will go to our questions now. As I mentioned in my opening statement, this fire season is expected to be active as we saw a very dry winter in our West and below-average rain in the Southeast this spring. How has the Forest Service prepared for this year, and what is your strategy for approaching the fire season?

Mr. SCHULTZ. Mr. Chairman, this year we are ahead of about eight percent over what we were last year over in terms of hiring at this time. We have hired over 11,000 firefighters at this point in time. We have also got, as I mentioned in my opening statement, about 450 more red-carded personnel than we did previously. We have increased our ability to basically suppress wildfires aggressively.

The other thing that we have done is I have issued a Letter of Intent to our employees across the Forest Service, and that is basically advocating for a safe fire season, but also one that we are going to attack aggressively the fires that occur in protecting communities.

The other piece that we are also looking at doing, we have been working to implement the President's executive order with regard to wildfire unifications. We have had a lot of support and a lot of success in simplifying and unifying our processes between the Department of Interior and the Forest Service so that we are communicating better and coordinating better this fire season.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Very good. It was announced earlier this year that the Forest Service will move its headquarters to Salt Lake City, Utah, and move to a state-based structure. What measurable improvements do you expect this reorganization to deliver for the Forest Service employees, forest management operations, and can you describe how the agency engaged with local communities and state partners when considering the changes?

Mr. SCHULTZ. Mr. Chairman, so first of all, I think we have to take a step back and ask why we are doing this. I think if you look at the way we have been structured for years, in many cases things have worked, but we have also had a lot of shortfalls in what we have done and how we have made decisions.

When the Forest Service was initially set up, the intent was to have decisions made at the local level as much as possible. What we have seen over time is we have grown the size of the Forest Service. That decision-making has gravitated away from local forests to regions and even the Washington office. What this is first and foremost is an attempt to move the decision-making back to the ground, back to those local communities, those forests and districts where those folks that work on the ground know those that land the best, work in and live in those communities, know the people the best, make those decisions.

How we are doing that is we are creating the state-based system that you referenced. We will have 15 state directors that will be in the West and in the East, and it is going to look a little bit different in the East, where we have a smaller footprint. That is the fundamental intention. We are going to have greater coordination with states. We think we are going to have greater coordination with tribes as well as county commissioners and local partners by having that approach.

Just as an example, right now, we have a single regional forester over California, Oregon, Washington, and Alaska. In this new base model, we will have an individual director over each of those states. We think there is going to be greater communication and coordination with those local governments to get things done, but that is really what we are trying to do is really push decision-making down and have the agency's presence closer to the people that are impacted by the forest on the ground.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Very good. Chief, last October, as was mentioned by myself and Senator Klobuchar, we were able to advance the bipartisan Fix Our Forest Act, or FOFA. From the Forest Service perspective, what measures in legislation like FOFA would be most effective in reducing wildfire risk and improving active forest management across our national forest system?

Mr. SCHULTZ. Mr. Chairman, FOFA has a lot of provisions in there which we think are very beneficial. Utility rights-of-ways is a big deal across the country, particularly in the West. We have seen that, an opportunity to expand how quickly we can remove some of those hazardous fuels for utility lines. There has been a lot of support for those provisions. There are provisions in there to reduce some of the litigation issues that we have and limit some of those. We think that is going to be very helpful. There are provisions with fire sheds, and some of the work that is being done to identify those areas and expedite some of the work that can be done in those areas that need to be protected.

We think that overall, there are a lot of good things in FOFA. As was mentioned in your opening statement, there are a couple things I think folks are still looking at trying to tweak around the edges, but overall, we think FOFA is going to be very helpful to the agency as we move forward, and actually helpful to the American public.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Very good. Senator Klobuchar.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. We have talked about this before, Chief Schultz, but the Canada fires of the last few years, I understand, there may be a chance they will not be as bad this year, and you can comment on that. I am not going to hold you to it, but that is the hope given the smoke that they created, which really in my state and many others actually had an incredible impact on so many people across the country.

I understand that last summer, more than 500 U.S. Forest Service and Minnesota DNR wildland firefighters went to Canada to help, and last month's personnel from Canada came to help in Minnesota with the fires I mentioned previously.

As we are now in the fire season, how do you balance sharing resources with Canada, and could you talk about what you predict,

what you have seen for what the Canada fires will be like this year?

Mr. SCHULTZ. Senator Klobuchar, Mr. Chairman, the agreements we have with Canada, it is over 40 years old. We have been working with them for 43 years. As you mentioned last year, I think was actually nearly 600 firefighters and incident command personnel actually supported them in those efforts, and that will continue. It goes both ways. We send support staff and resources to Canada, and they reciprocate and send folks to the U.S. as well when we have a difficult fire season, and that has been a very effective relationship.

In terms of this upcoming fire season, as we have talked about, the conditions in the U.S. look very difficult, and last year looked very challenging as well as we went into fire season. If you remember Minnesota last year, early in the fire season, a very challenging season.

One of the things that can be helpful, you asked about how we allocate resources, is the timing of when the fire season occurs. In some cases, the Minnesota fire season tends to be a little bit earlier in the year than some of the other. You kind of think about the fire season kind of like a U-shape, almost. It kind of starts in the East, goes in the Southeast, kind of comes up through the Southwest, and then comes up to the West. Typically, the fire season does not directly overlap a lot of times with Minnesota, in particular, with Canada, but we will allocate resources accordingly. We have a lot of inner-agency coordination——

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Okay. The predictions on the Canadian smoke this summer?

Mr. SCHULTZ. I think it looks a little bit better than last year. Last year was a very tough year, but again, it is very difficult to predict how the season will go.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Okay. Quickly, what was the reason for putting the Grand Rapids facility set for closure in Grand Rapids, Minnesota?

Mr. SCHULTZ. Senator Klobuchar, Mr. Chairman, so what we identified is I think we have roughly 90 different R&D facilities approximately that have some degree of staffing in them. We are looking at all of our facilities. We identified 20, which house about 50 percent of the R&D staff, but this is a broader discussion than just R&D. Right now we have about a $3 billion backlog in deferred maintenance across all of our structures in terms of infrastructure, and that is just for whether it is buildings or infrastructure-supporting buildings. We have about a $37 million reduction in our budget year-over-year for facilities. We are taking a hard look not just at R&D facilities, but all of our facilities that we have got.

I know there has been some confusion based on language that I have used previously about closures. We have not made any determination with regard to closures. We are evaluating facilities and looking at opportunities for consolidation. In some cases, we know we have state partners or other partners that maybe have interest in buildings, but so there have been no determinations, just so you know, to close anything at this point.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Okay, because our concern is forests are not all the same. They are researching red pine, black spruce, things

that you might not be able to do in other facilities. We can talk more about it later.

I brought up in my opening how the President's budget once again requests moving the Forest Service fire operations to the DOI. When the congressionally directed study regarding this proposal is not completed, why not wait until the study is completed?

Mr. SCHULTZ. Senator Klobuchar, Mr. Chairman, so currently where the study is at, so the study is on the straight right now. It is open until I think June 8th for submission of proposals. We are actually, it is called a RFQ, a Request for Quotes. My understanding is looking at the House mark that they are going to wait in the House version of the budget until the study is completed.

I think in the President's budget, it clearly, we articulated this in 2026 and in 2027, a desire to move and consolidate the fire program and unify it. Congress asked us to complete the study, which we were going to do that. I have not seen a Senate mark yet on the budget, but the House, I think, is looking for that study to be completed before the House is proposing to move forward.

I think at this point in time, it looks like the study will be completed probably in the November timeframe. There is a six-month time limit to get the work done. I anticipate the study will be completed before final decisions are made.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Okay. Last, what is your plan to minimize the loss of Forest Service employees with red cards that are subject to the reorganization? I mentioned all of these people and our concerns about people who have lost their jobs when we need more people fighting fires.

Mr. SCHULTZ. You did. Senator Klobuchar, Mr. Chairman, so appreciate those comments. Last year was a lot different than this year. You referenced the 1,400 number of folks that are red cards. We looked at those numbers last year and about it was less than 500 of those folks had been on a fire in the last five years, but this year we actually have 450 more red-carded personnel than we have had over the last several years, even going back to 2024.

We have made an effort, to your point, to ensure that we had more outreach with staff to get more folks red-carded as we go into this fire season. We actually have more people that we have hired to date year to date over the last couple years. As of this date, right now more than 11,000 have been hired. Plus, we have an additional 450 red-carded personnel available to fight fire this season. We feel like in terms of staffing, we are better positioned this year than we have been over the last several years.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Okay. I will put in writing, or if we ask a question at the end about state forestry agencies not being able to accept certain awards because of changes to terms and conditions, and I am just concerned. Last year, the grants went out, and given what we are facing right now, making sure those grants go out, but my time is expired, so thank you.

Mr. SCHULTZ. Yes, ma'am.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Senator Hoeven.

Senator HOEVEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Chief, good to see you. Appreciate you being here. As you know, prairie dogs are a big problem in the Dakota Prairie grasslands. In last year's Interior Appropriations bill, we included language, which I will read. "The

Committee remains concerned about the rapidly increasing levels of prairie dogs in the Dakota Prairie grasslands, as well as encroachment and degradation of adjacent non-federal lands," meaning our grazers, "and their private lands." "The Committee encourages the service to promulgate an amendment to the 2018 Prairie Dog Management Plan, which would limit occupied prairie dog habitat to not more than 1.5 percent of the federal land in any single grazing allotment and ensuring prairie dog control activity is conducted within a one-mile buffer between federal land and state and private land."

As you know, we have a prairie dog problem. My first question is, when are you going to fully implement this 2026 language?

Mr. SCHULTZ. Senator Hoeven, Mr. Chairman, what we did was we had outreach with the Grasslands Association. We met with folks here over the last couple months, and they have come up with a list of recommendations that they have submitted to us and it was a jointly worked on piece of work. That is something we are evaluating right at how to implement those recommendations, which includes recommendations specific to prairie dogs included in those recommendations.

Senator HOEVEN. Okay. Where are you in the process? What does that mean in terms of actually accomplishing the objective laid out in the language?

Mr. SCHULTZ. The objectives and the language provided a framework to evaluate this and we took direct input from those folks that are impacted by the permittees and they developed a list of recommendations on how to proceed with that and they submitted that back to us just in the last month. We are evaluating how to best implement those recommendations, whether it is through forest plans, whether it is through individual allotments, even language in some of those association agreements that we have. We are looking at how to best implement those.

Senator HOEVEN. That is good. What is your timeline for getting to determination?

Mr. SCHULTZ. Senator Hoeven, I would say within the next month, we are going to have a plan on how to implement those recommendations.

Senator HOEVEN. Can you and I go back out and see our grazers then at that point and go through it with them? They are very concerned that they are losing ground. As you know, in some cases, it looks like a lunar landscape——

Mr. SCHULTZ. I have seen it. Yes, sir.

Senator HOEVEN [continuing]. and that means on private land, not non-federal lands, on adjacent lands, because the buffer's just not working. We need to get you back out. You are agreeable to going back out there with me? Again, we will try to time it with your formulation of the response there. I think we need to get back out and talk to those grazing associations and really see if it is going to work and hopefully what their thoughts are, and obviously it needs to be coordinated with them.

Mr. SCHULTZ. Yes, sir.

Senator HOEVEN. Okay. Then the other thing is just all the other—we do appreciate what you are doing on noxious weeds. That funding has been there. Again, thanks to you and to Chris

French. Again, to go out and see that interface of ranching and energy. There is so much going on with energy now, tourism, fires, and everything else. We just need to have you come back out and see our guys.

Mr. SCHULTZ. Yes, sir.

Senator HOEVEN. All right. Thank you, Chief. I appreciate it very much.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Senator Smith.

Senator SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chair and Ranking Member, and welcome Chief Schultz. Good to see you today.

I want to actually quickly follow up on the questioning that my colleague from Minnesota was asking about the Grand Rapids Research Facility. My ears perked up when you talked about sort of two combined goals, one, keeping decision-making at the local level, which I completely agree with, and also always looking for ways that you can save money, which I can also relate to.

I want to just, on the Grand Rapids facility, two points here. You may not be aware that that facility, the Forest Service leases from the University of Minnesota, and it is $1 a year for a 50-year lease, and there are 45 years left on that lease. It looks like a pretty good deal for the taxpayers to have those folks there.

Then, in addition on the goal of local decision-making, those folks there have been hosting decades-long large-scale experiments that are very local based on wetlands, peatlands, and forests. It is a unique forest land.

Can we follow back up with you? As I understand, this is on the closure list, there are decisions yet to be made. Seems to me like it could be a really good financial decision to leave this research facility in place in Northern Minnesota.

Mr. SCHULTZ. Senator Smith, yes, ma'am. We can sure visit on that. Again, I just want to clarify there, there have been no decisions made. Then with regard to the research program, and there has still been confusion on this, our intent is not to eliminate any research programs. We are looking at facilities in the best way to manage the facilities, reduce our overall footprint so that we can manage within our budgets. In terms of the staffing and in terms of the research programs, the intent is not to reduce the programs. It is to look at facilities.

Senator SMITH. We could maybe find some common ground here as we think about the value of the folks in Grand Rapids doing this research on very regionally specific, but widely applicable research. Okay.

I am going to switch to another issue. I would really like to talk with you about a public lands issue that the Forest Service has direct accountability for in Minnesota, and this is the Boundary Waters. This is this large Federal Wilderness Area in the Superior National Forest right on the border of Minnesota and Canada. I am sure you are familiar with this issue, Chief.

There has been a longstanding proposal to build a copper sulfide mine there. There was a mineral lease withdrawal, which was done in 2023, after a comprehensive science-driven analysis. Public land order was put in place with a 20-year moratorium on these mineral leases, essentially because the analysis showed that this mine and this place posed unacceptable risks to the wilderness area. Then,

last month, the congressional review process was used in an unprecedented way. This public land order was revoked and overturned despite widespread opposition in Minnesota.

Here is my question. Now, here we sit here today, the Forest Service is in a crucial place both for the decision around re-upping these leases, and then the permitting process that would follow as a result. Under Section 102 of the National Environmental Policy Act, NEPA, the Forest Service is required to evaluate the environmental impacts of any project under its jurisdiction. There seems to be no doubt that this project would have significant environmental impact. Can you talk to me about what the Forest Service's plans are here for completing a full and complete environmental review of this project?

Mr. SCHULTZ. Senator Smith, Mr. Chairman, so my understanding is we did do an EIS previously on this, as you indicated, for that process. What we need to do is take a look at that. We probably need to dust it off and evaluate what additional work needs to be done. I do not know exactly what work needs to be done to update that EIS with new information or what we might need to do. I do not have an exact answer for you, but we can definitely get back to you on what a timeline might look like for updating and revising that analysis that was previously done.

Senator SMITH. The concern in Minnesota is that the Administration has made some statements about how this process could be done in a matter of weeks. Of course, that does not seem logical or credible to us that that would be a full review given that time period. What about the opportunity for members of the public to weigh in on this project and a public comment period? What are your plans, and will you commit to having a robust public comment period for this project?

Mr. SCHULTZ. Senator Smith, Mr. Chairman, so what I will do is we have not determined a plan yet on a go-forward basis yet. What we will do is we will get back to you and your staff on that and let you know exactly what we are thinking about how to proceed. We just have not had that discussion. As you mentioned, the action by Congress was relatively recent, and we have not had a time to go back and look and determine a plan of how to proceed yet.

Senator SMITH. One other thing. As you are going through that process, you should think about the requirement around intergovernmental consultation with the government of Canada, which this is outlined in the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909. I will, of course, be following up with great interest because this is an issue of huge interest in Minnesota and actually around the country as tribal leaders and tribal members, outdoor enthusiasts, public land advocates, and also hunting and fishing groups care very much about what happens here. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Senator Hyde-Smith.

Senator HYDE-SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, very much, and I certainly appreciate you being here, Chief Schultz, and I have enjoyed our relationships that we have had and the opportunities we have had together to visit mills and things, because Mississippi is a wood basket.

Mr. SCHULTZ. Yes, ma'am.

Senator HYDE-SMITH. That is very important, but they are facing some pretty critical challenges right now as we briefly discussed, that you and your team have been extremely helpful to our office in tackling the decline of timber demand by building more sustainable market opportunities for our landowners. What we want to talk about right now is the significant storms that we have experienced from the recent tornadoes, and Winter Storm Fern was absolutely brutal. It harmed private and national forests all over the state of Mississippi.

I live in southwest Mississippi and very familiar and spend a lot of time around the Homochitto National Forest, which suffered major damage in the tornadoes that we had on May the 6th and the 7th that came through. I surveyed the damage, and it is pretty staggering of what has happened to that. The tornado caused, obviously, damage on private land as well as our federal land, and it is pretty significant.

The impact reaches other national forest lands in Mississippi included the Holly Springs and the Delta National Forest. The roads, the Forest Service facilities, the campgrounds, and other infrastructures, including the area around Lake Okhissa, which I have done an awful lot of work on there, bringing a project that has been very significant to southwest Mississippi. It is very clear that the amount of damage in that area is going to take a lot of money. We are talking tens or even hundreds of millions of dollars.

I am concerned, obviously, about the dead timber and the biomass that is left behind that we know is perfect conditions to create wildfires that we certainly do not need. If this material is not removed quickly, that is exactly what we are going to be experiencing. Being very frank, the wildfires and these already hard-hit areas, which have experienced drought conditions, would be catastrophic and threatening to the surrounding communities.

I believe Congress should act to prevent this from happening by passing supplemental disaster package for the Forestry Service to continue response efforts. The package should include legislation. This Committee approved, actually, in October, to convey lands in the Homochitto National Forest to help spur the economic development in this rural region of my state.

My question is, from the Forest Service's perspective, what additional actions can be taken to accelerate the storm damage cleanup, reduce the risk of wildfires on affected national forest lands in Mississippi, and what additional resources can be provided to the Forest Service to rebuild badly damaged infrastructure in these areas?

Mr. SCHULTZ. Senator Hyde-Smith, Chairman Boozman, thank you for those questions, and thank you pointing out the impact of those recent tornadoes in Mississippi. Unfortunately, as you know, tornadoes are not uncommon as are not hurricanes. When you see what happens with a tornado, a lot of times when it hits a community, not only does it impact people's lives and their structures but the trees are twisted. A lot of times it can be challenging to be able to salvage those for value.

I am happy to report that it is been, you mentioned I think May 5th or May 6th was the date that that tornado hit. Here we are, less than a month later. The Forest Service has already been selling salvage timber sales to help clean up some of those areas.

In my checking this morning, a couple big things, one, roads. When tornadoes and hurricanes hit, road closures are a big deal. We have already opened up 70 miles of roads that were impacted by the tornadoes so people can get access. That was a key piece. In terms of the salvage sales, we have actually prepared six different salvage sales across the different forests. It is about 66,000 CCF of volume. Two of those sales have already sold. Four of them are on the shelf to be sold. I mean, we have priced them at basically as cheap as we can at nine cents a ton.

Now, what happens is in an area like this, what you see is typically the private lands want to be salvaged first. Our ability to sell some of the federal timber can be challenged. We do not want to oversupply the market. We want to ensure that those private landowners have first opportunities to make sure that they can salvage dead material off of their properties. We have acted quickly in this particular situation working with the forest.

You are right, in terms of the infrastructure needs, there are other infrastructure needs, not just on roads but some of the campgrounds. That is where we will look internally, see what we can do. If you decide and Congress decides to move forward with the supplemental, we will definitely work with you to help identify areas where that could be helpful.

Senator HYDE-SMITH. Thank you. Hurricane season started yesterday, so we are holding our breath. Thank you so much.

Mr. SCHULTZ. Yes, ma'am.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Senator Welch.

Senator WELCH. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I am delighted to be here. Chief Schultz, thank you so much for being here.

The reorganization is always a tough issue because it is legitimate to have fresh eyes on a situation, but the consolidation has real impacts. In Vermont, we have this tremendous relationship with USDA in general. It has been extremely helpful. It is a governmental agency that is doing important work, and Vermont farmers really depend on it, rely on it, as does our forest community.

We have a George Aiken Research Center that is in danger of being closed down. I want to just point out that consolidation and moving people may ultimately result in some, quote, "efficiencies," but on the other hand, there is an enormous value in having people assigned to be placed where they are doing the work. The partnership we have had with USDA and the University of Vermont has been invaluable.

Can you speak to me about what is going to happen to the George Aiken facility?

Mr. SCHULTZ. Yes, sir. Senator Welch, Mr. Chairman, as I reiterated previously, so we have made no determinations on any closures and with particular——

Senator WELCH. Can you speak more into the microphone? I am having trouble hearing you.

Mr. SCHULTZ. Yes, sir. There have been no determinations made on any closures. We are still evaluating sites. Specific to Vermont, my understanding is we do have an agreement with the University of Vermont, as you indicated, and I think the cost is about $40,000 a year. It is not a significant amount. What we are looking at is

all of these agreements, all of these structures, can we renegotiate some of those rates? How do we get our cost structure down? Like I said, our biggest issue right now is looking across all of our facilities, knowing that we have a shortfall, and how can we best consolidate and save funds. There has been no determination to close that site or that facility.

Senator WELCH. Okay. Let me just speak to that.

Mr. SCHULTZ. Yes, sir.

Senator WELCH. Because that does not give anybody any reassurance. It is legitimate, I want to acknowledge, for you and your responsibility to look at how things are organized, how resources are used. If the focus on reorganization is just saving money, bring back Elon Musk and DOGE. It does not work out so well. That decision about whether to relocate people from where the work is being done in the area that the work needs to be done comes with an immense cost in terms of the quality of the work.

It is hard for me to see how it makes any sense to be talking about closing down this facility that is a modest budget impact. It has huge environmental positive impact and it is based on a very successful relationship with the University of Vermont and with the Forest Service. Can you speak to that?

Mr. SCHULTZ. Senator Welch, yes, sir. Again, to reiterate my points previously that we are not shutting down research and we are not eliminating staff. In terms of any particular relationship with any university, we have got relationships with universities all across the country, not unlike the one with the University of Vermont.

Senator WELCH. That is a good thing.

Mr. SCHULTZ. It is a good thing. I do not disagree with you.

Senator WELCH. Right.

Mr. SCHULTZ. My point being is that when we have these discussions, we are able to look at the lease structures, we are able to look at the rents being paid, we are looking at opportunities. We had the same discussion previously with the University of Baltimore, the Maryland campus, and also looking at that facility. Historically, it is not always been in the same facility. We are just evaluating things. We have not made any determinations on closures.

Senator WELCH. Thank you. Maybe I will just make the case here. This is very low cost, and we have an extraordinary invasive species problem in Vermont, and that is true in a lot of areas of the country. It is absolutely vital to us that we have on-the-ground local people that are familiar and committed over the long term to dealing with these invasive species problems. That is what we have right now with the structure in place.

As the Senator from Vermont and someone who sits in the seat of Senator Leahy, who is so instrumental in helping us, this is a vital institution for Vermont. This is a vital institution for the well-being of our environment. I urge you to take into account the impact locally, not just the impact financially, where to save a dollar you may lose a forest. Thank you.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Thank you, sir.

Senator WELCH. I yield back.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Senator Marshall.

Senator MARSHALL. Well, thank you, Chairman. Welcome, Chief Schultz, to the hearing. Glad you are here. Just remind everybody that the terms Kansas and forest are oxymorons, that we get to examine the beauty of nature one tree at a time. Do you know what we call three trees in a quarter section of land in Kansas? A forest.

Now, all that being said, the Cimarron National Grassland is something near and dear to my heart and is under your purview. I was out there not too long ago. By the way, long-term District Ranger Nancy Brewer gave me an incredible job. What a wonderful, committed ranger we have there.

The same day, the wind was literally blowing 40 miles an hour, not gust of 40. I mean, that was the baseline was 40 miles an hour. As we were leaving, she said, "My gosh, I sure hope we don't have any fires today. It's a bad day." Sure enough, we were not 30 minutes out of the grasslands and there was a huge fire. Turns out to be 280,000 acres. Fortunately, it was east of those grasslands.

Look, to speak specifically to that grasslands and grassland management in this particular case to decrease the chances of losing all that, if you could.

Mr. SCHULTZ. Yes. Senator Marshall, Mr. Chairman, so in my opening statement, I talked about active management, and active management is not just forest management. It is also range management and managing grasslands. We have 20 national grasslands, and Cimarron National Grasslands is one of those. Active management is key to reducing fuels and fine fuels on the landscape. Making sure that we have active permittees out there. As you know, the Forest Service does not have staff all over the place. It is the permittees in many cases, whether there is a wildfire issue or if there is an insect and disease issue, or if there is an invasive issue, the permittees are going to see that and let us know. They are the ones on the front line of defense in most cases of making sure the management occurs. We work with our permittees a lot.

Senator MARSHALL. What that means to me is that active grazing is a good thing.

Mr. SCHULTZ. Absolutely, it is a good thing. It is necessary to reduce those fuels.

Senator MARSHALL. Some prescriptive burns are a good thing, as well. I would still encourage you to think about what type of buffers you could put in there, around, between, or whatever to break it up somehow.

Certainly, when you took this job on, I thought one of the biggest challenges was the lack of management of our forests over the past decade or two. That has a big reason that these fires get out of control. Can you tell me what type of progress you are making on actively managing our forest to prevent some of these huge, huge fires?

Mr. SCHULTZ. Senator Marshall, Mr. Chairman, yes, so active management is a broad thing. We have highlighted the importance of grazing. We have actually worked with permittees to increase grazing on the landscape and do it in a way that is consistent with our forest plans. We have also looked at our timber sale program. We have increased our timber sale sales that we are selling. We are going to increase that, I mentioned in my statement, up to about four billion board feet over the next three years. We are see-

ing about a 10 to 15 percent increase every year, and that is going to continue to increase.

In terms of the fuels program, we actually treated more acres prescribed fire this past season than we have over the last year as well by about an additional 500,000 acres. We are increasing——

Senator MARSHALL. Is that a five percent increase or a two percent?

Mr. SCHULTZ. In terms of year over year, we probably about a 40 percent increase over last year.

Senator MARSHALL. Say again, how much?

Mr. SCHULTZ. About a 40 percent increase year over year in terms of prescribed fire on the landscape.

Senator MARSHALL. What has allowed you to do that?

Mr. SCHULTZ. It varies. When you use prescribed fire, based on where you do it, how much you get done. Region 8, which is the Southern region of the Forest Service, basically from Texas across to Georgia and South Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, that area, if we can get out there early in the season and get that fire on the landscape, allows us to treat a lot of acres, so we can get more work done. This year we were able to get more work done early in the season given the fire conditions.

Right now to burn prescribed fire in the West, it does not make any sense. The conditions are so dry and hot right now. We have actually gotten ahead of our fuels program this year compared to where we were the prior year based on us getting folks out on the ground and just making that a priority.

Those are some things that we have done. In terms of overall management, we have increased our forest management, increased our grazing management, increased our fuels treated. Those are the key focus areas that we have got.

Then on the fire side, in terms of aggressive initial attack, I mentioned last season we had 12 percent more starts than we typically have on a 10-year average and we burn half as many acres of forest surface ground. It is being safe, it is being aggressive in our initial attack, and it is also being aggressive in how we treat the landscape with fuel treatments and timber sales.

Senator MARSHALL. Yes. I want to point out that certainly we all are concerned about the cost of housing and we are hoping that by allowing the forest to be harvested appropriately and replenished, of course, is that that is going to bring down the cost of lumber, as well. Just briefly, what would keep you from doing more management of the forest or what do you need from us to enable you to do even more?

Mr. SCHULTZ. Senator Marshall, I think, Mr. Chairman, question was asked about FOFA previously. We think that is a good provision that you could do in helping pass FOFA, that Fix Our Forest Act, which would provide us additional tools to get more work done on the ground. In the short term, that is probably the biggest impact you could have, sir.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Senator Schiff.

Senator SCHIFF. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Schultz, I think many of us on the Committee can agree that there are inefficiencies in the way Forest Service has done business in the past and that the agency is facing a lot of increasing costs, including from

expensive real estate. I think Congress absolutely needs to provide your agency with more resources because we are asking you to do more and we are forcing you to do more at the moment with less. This reorganization proposal is causing me great concern, particularly because it has been put forward without any congressional input.

I want to submit this L.A. Times article that ran yesterday for the record from two former Secretaries of Agriculture serving under President's Clinton and George W. Bush, which raise important oversight concerns with the reorganization proposal. This is the piece, "The Forest Service Is Too Important to Be a Political Pawn."

Chairman BOOZMAN. Without objection.

[The letter can be found on pages 32–36 in the appendix.]

Senator SCHIFF. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The U.S. Forest Service reorganization website lists six of eight research and development facilities slated for closure in California. This is more than any other state. The website also lists R&D facilities are still under evaluation, meaning there are dozens of other research and development sites across the country with unclear status. These research stations study wildfire risk as well as the most effective ways to restore land in a more resilient way after wildfires.

Chief Schultz, the Forest Service is committed that wildfire response coordination during the fire season will not be affected by the reorganization, but how can we be sure of the Forest Service's ability to reduce wildfire risk in the future? How can we be sure that it will not be harmed by shutting down these research stations, which, among other things, study wildfire risk and resilient response methods?

The President's budget proposal to eliminate the Forest Service research and development branch does not give much confidence that this key science will be valued properly. In particular, why was California hit so hard by targeted facility closures? I understand we may have more facilities than some other states, but no state faces wildfire risks more acute than California. What criteria are being used to determine that these offices should be closed or if other offices should be closed?

Mr. SCHULTZ. Senator Schiff, Mr. Chairman, thank you for the breadth of questions. Let's talk about wildfire in California first. You made a statement, which I 100 percent agree with. You said that there is probably more risk to California than any other state, and that is 100 percent true. When we have looked at the data and what has happened in California just in the last five years, it is about 22 percent of the national forests have burned in the last five years in California. There are about 20 million acres of national forest. I have been to California four times, Southern California, Northern California, Central California, looking, for myself, on the ground to see what is happening. Huge impacts from wildfire in California, as you know firsthand from being there.

In terms of our resources, we are resourced up in California to make sure that we have the ability to fight fire effectively. In terms of research, I have met with our researchers out there at the Pacific Southwest Station. They are doing great work. I want to assure you, you are looking for some assurance here that we are not

going to reduce research. We are not going to reduce research in California. We are not going to reduce research elsewhere.

What we are looking at doing with the reorganization is, again, looking at our facilities and making sure where we have facilities, are there opportunities to co-locate staff? In some cases we have facilities and 10 miles down the road, we have a forest supervisor's office, and we have two facilities that we could consolidate and have staff in one and save the government money. That is what our intent is, is really to look closely at where we have facilities, not to impact research and not to impact researchers. That is our intent, and that is how we have structured this reorganization.

You are right. We are going to continue to focus on working to reduce fuels and fight fire aggressively in California to protect those communities and those people in California.

Senator SCHIFF. Has USDA or Forest Service done any analysis of the expected staff attrition that might come about as a result of the reorganization? I am not aware of any, if it has been done. Has that been done?

Mr. SCHULTZ. Senator Schiff, Mr. Chairman, we have not done any just speculation in terms of what might happen. We do know, as has been stated previously, I have commented on this previously, we have had over the last year, about 6,500 people have taken DRP, which is the voluntary retirement program that was offered across the country. We have anticipated right now with the folks that would have to be relocated from their current location, from Portland, from Milwaukee, from the Washington, DC, office, and from Atlanta we are estimating about 500 people out of about 30,000 would have to physically relocate, so some percentage of those could theoretically choose not to relocate. We do not anticipate overall that it is going to be a significant number of people. Most people have probably already left the agency.

Senator SCHIFF. With the planned cuts to staff and anticipated attrition, will the Forest Service have enough red-carded staff to meet firefighting needs if we end up with a National Fire Preparedness Level of 5?

Mr. SCHULTZ. Senator Schiff, Mr. Chairman, yes. I indicated we actually have more red-carded folks this year than we have had in the last several years, but we have increased our red-carded folks just over the last year by about 450 people that are prepared to fight fire this year. We do feel like we have done outreach over this last year just to shore up that component of our firefighting capacity in red-carded personnel.

On the firefighters, which we typically look at as GS–9 and below, that 11,300, like I said, today we are at just over 11,000 people that we have hired and brought on board before the height of the fire season, which typically will happen sometime in mid to late June, if not even July, so we are ahead of where we have been over the last several years with bringing on our firefighting workforce.

Senator SCHIFF. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SCHULTZ. Yes, sir.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Senator Slotkin.

Senator SLOTKIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for calling this hearing. I am glad to have Administration witnesses. I want to do that more often.

I am from Michigan. We really feel that a well-functioning Forest Service is critical to the state of Michigan. More than half of Michigan is forested. Michigan's forest industries provide direct employment for 40,000 people, $16.2 billion in economic output. Then our forests are key to our recreation economy, just the getting out and about, attracting young families to move to the state of Michigan, enjoying the state of Michigan. We get 35 million visitors a year to our state parks. We care about forest management. We care about our environment. We care about conservation and shepherding our natural gifts for the next generation.

I was just in Northern Michigan this past week visiting with a ton of people, including at our National Lakeshore, who are involved in conservation. We are concerned about wildfires. We do not have the same problem that California has, but we did just have a wildfire near Oscoda.

Even though we see more and more need for the Forest Service, you all have lost 6,000 employees out of 35,000 in 2025, 16 percent of your workforce, and 100 of them in Michigan. I think in cutting those people, you also have a proposal on the table to cut four research stations, all of our research stations in Michigan, in East Lansing, in Wellston, in Houghton, excuse me, in L'Anse, and have us based out of Madison, Wisconsin, along with all the other Midwestern states. We feel like it is just really crucial for R&D, for our forestry products, but also for conservation to have people actually working in the state. In your current capacity have you visited the state of Michigan?

Mr. SCHULTZ. Senator, I have not been to Michigan yet, no, ma'am.

Senator SLOTKIN. Okay. I would love for you before any decision goes final, to come to Michigan, commit to at least getting a ground-up view of what these R&D closures are going to mean in four locations across the state. It is for us just critical that we do not lose that expertise. We were up in Northern Michigan and the emerald ash borer, this bug that has just been devastating Michigan forest, the whole effort to stop that in its tracks and prevention was led by these research offices.

Can you first commit to that? Then just explain to us how it is that we could lose 100 staff in Michigan, but somehow you think the mission of your service is still well-fulfilled in our state.

Mr. SCHULTZ. Senator Slotkin, Mr. Chairman, what we have seen is when people took DRP, nobody was fired, they voluntarily took it. People left all over the country, and for different reasons and different capacities. What is going to happen with the reorganization is over time we expect more resources to go to the field. Folks that have been in a regional office, folks that have been even in the Washington office, those positions over time, we feel will transition more to forests. The 100 people in Michigan that you reference, we think over time that we will have staff that will go back there, whether it is we hire new staff or staff that transition from other locations.

Senator SLOTKIN. Why would you ever have an expectation of staff coming in and backfilling when you are closing all four offices in my state?

Mr. SCHULTZ. Okay. Senator, what I am talking about is on the forest. The forest personnel. You talked about 100 people.

Senator SLOTKIN. Research. I see.

Mr. SCHULTZ. Yes.

Senator SLOTKIN. These are working in the forest. Okay.

Mr. SCHULTZ. That is right. In research, again, we are talking facilities. We are not talking research programs or program of work. We are not talking researchers. We are talking about facilities and making sure that folks have the right facilities, but also that we are consolidated where we can. We are not just going to, I guess, unilaterally close offices without evaluating where can they be located. It could be another USDA office. Like I mentioned, we have got multiple instances where we have a forest supervisor's office within 10 miles of a research facility. We are paying rent on both facilities and we could easily consolidate one building or the other. That is what we are taking a look at. Our intent is not to just to——

Senator SLOTKIN. Yes. I am open to that. I was a Fed for 16 years, and Lord knows there is fat on the bone and consolidation. I guess I would just ask for you to visit a place before you close four offices, and just get that on-the-ground look so that we are not just cutting——

We burned a lot of capital with people through DOGE of just random cutting lines on a spreadsheet. I would ask you to come to Michigan and talk with folks. If you continue to make those decisions, fine, but not to do it in a way that does not respect the on-the-ground view of things.

Mr. SCHULTZ. You bet. Senator, I just want to point out too, you talked about the states and your own interest in forest management. Well, I just want a shout-out for Michigan. The state that has done more Good Neighbor work than any state in the country——

Senator SLOTKIN. Did you hear that, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. SCHULTZ [continuing]. has been Michigan.

Senator SLOTKIN. Did you hear that, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. SCHULTZ. Very seriously. The state has been——

Senator SLOTKIN. I love it. Do not try to butter me up though. It is too late.

Mr. SCHULTZ. No, I am serious.

Senator SLOTKIN. You have still got to come to Michigan.

Mr. SCHULTZ. No, the state of Michigan has done more than any state over the last three years consistently. We really appreciate the partnership that we have.

Senator SLOTKIN. I believe it. Well, we would love to host you.

Mr. SCHULTZ. Yes, ma'am.

Senator SLOTKIN. Again, I want you to make objective decisions, but I want you to do that with the expertise of what you just said was the best state in the country on forest service. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Thank you for that.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Note for the record on good neighbor service, but yes, it was very impressive.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Senator Luján.

Senator LUJÁN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Chief Schultz, in an investment webinar last week, Connor Messler, the president of a Canadian mining company, Gamma Resources, said that he has plans to begin drilling for uranium exploration in the second quarter of 2027 in the Carson National Forest. It was a very specific public forecast from the company and the president to potential investors. Can you confirm if that is accurate, the timeline associated with the announcement from Connor Messler from Gamma Resources?

Mr. SCHULTZ. Senator Luján, Mr. Chairman, I did not hear that statement so I cannot confirm what he did or did not say, but I can tell you that——

Senator LUJÁN. I am telling you he said it, sir.

Mr. SCHULTZ. No, I am not denying it. I just do not have any firsthand knowledge.

Senator LUJÁN. I can send you the script.

Mr. SCHULTZ. We can look at that.

Senator LUJÁN. Let me ask you this question then, if what you can confirm, is there a mining company from Canada whose name is Gamma Resources, who has made application and is going to start mining uranium in New Mexico in the second quarter of 2027? Have you approved such a thing?

Mr. SCHULTZ. No, we have not approved anything like that.

Senator LUJÁN. Sounds like to me like they are lying then. If you have not approved it, I do not know how a president of a Canadian company, who has changed their name three times, that is in the financial hole, which is why they are hiding their name, is telling shareholders, "Hey, give me some money because we are going to go mine," and they have not even gotten approval yet.

Mr. SCHULTZ. Mr. Luján, Senator, here is what we do have from them. They made an application for exploration permitting. That is what they have made an application for. To get a mine permitted you have to go through an entire EIS process after you do exploration. I would find it challenging to expect to have a mine up and running in 2027.

Senator LUJÁN. I appreciate that, sir. Are you aware, Chief, that I sent you a letter on April 9th? It went to the local forester. I also carboned you. Are you aware of this letter? Are you familiar with it?

Mr. SCHULTZ. Senator Luján, I do not recall it offhand. I do not recall.

Senator LUJÁN. Yes. Mr. Chairman, I can submit this to the record. I will give you a copy of this as well just so that I know you have it, sir.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Without objection.

[The letter can be found on pages 37–40 in the appendix.]

Senator LUJÁN. Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to take this opportunity today to make it clear to everyone that is listening, including everyone in this room, this mine is not welcome in New Mexico. This mine and this company from Canada, who again, has changed their name three times to hide their name and they are in a financial hole, are coming in and making false statements.

Where I come from, it is called a lie. It is either true or it is not true, and he is trying to convince people to give him money so he

could come to the United States and go mine uranium in a place where the United States should care, not just because of this community, but the water that flows from this is going to have impacts with compacts with New Mexico and Texas and agreements between the United States and Mexico with water flow. That could all be jeopardized by what is going on in this place.

I just want to be abundantly clear. After coming from a town hall that I had out in the community where they have been organizing, Democrats, Republicans, Libertarian, ranchers that are in this area, very conservative constituents of mine, they are saying, "Hell, no. This is not going to happen."

For anyone that is listening, I hope they put this on their webinar, that they understand that this is not going to go well for them in New Mexico. Everything that I can do as an incumbent United States Senator and work with a Governor of the state of New Mexico, work with the local county commission who are all on the same page, Democrats and Republicans, this is not going to go well. Please stay away.

Even this nonsense with what you are saying is this exploratory environment that they have created, carrying off of something that was cored back in 1967, 1968 and 1969, I just do not get it. By the way, if this happens, all those ranchers that are up there that this President says that he loves and he wants to take care of, you are going to throw them out of business. They are going to have to get up and they are going to have to move. I certainly hope there is a lot of thought that goes into this as we have this conversation going forward.

Last thing that I am going to say, Chief, something that my constituents that live in these communities was offended by, is the way that this company characterized this, I do not even know what to call it, bamboozle. They called it low-hanging fruit for uranium mining. That is what they think of these people and that is what they think of this land. I do not get it.

I appreciate your response today. I will make sure I share a copy of this letter. I look forward to working with you and with the team. I just want to be abundantly clear of the sentiments and the feelings of the constituents, the ranchers, those that have allotments in this area raising cattle, beef, sheep, lamb, up that way as well, they do not want to see this. I hope we can work together in that space.

Mr. SCHULTZ. Thank you, sir.

Senator LUJÁN. Thank you. Yield back.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Thank you. Okay. I have got to get this right or they will yell at me later on. We do appreciate you very much. Do you have anything, Senator Klobuchar?

Senator KLOBUCHAR. No, I will just follow up with the grants in writing, and thank you very much for being here today.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Good. This, I think, was a very, very good hearing. We appreciate your willingness to come over as always and talk to us about really the very, very important things that were discussed today. We appreciate——

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Can I just——

Chairman BOOZMAN. Yes.

Senator KLOBUCHAR [continuing]. before you just, I mean, one thing, I think the chief is aware of the concern on our side in a big way about reductions, especially reductions in research, and just what it is going to mean for especially the fire states that have a lot of fires, like as you pointed out, California. I did appreciate the knowledge that you bring to this hearing and your clear willingness to work with us. Thank you.

Chairman BOOZMAN. Very good. The hearing record will remain open for five business days. The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:09 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

JUNE 2, 2026

STATEMENT OF
TOM SCHULTZ, CHIEF
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOREST SERVICE
BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY

REGARDING:
"OVERSIGHT OF THE UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE"
FOR THE USDA FOREST SERVICE
JUNE 2, 2026

Chairman Boozman, Ranking Member Klobuchar, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the Forest Service's current priorities and recent accomplishments.

The Forest Service is committed to a back-to-basics approach that focuses on the work that matters most: keeping people safe, protecting communities from wildfire, actively managing our forests for health and productivity, supporting communities recovering after disasters, expanding access to the outdoors, increasing domestic mineral production, cutting unnecessary red tape, and strengthening the partnerships that bolster our ability to deliver our mission-critical work. The following statement provides an overview of these agency priorities and a summary of key accomplishments over the past year.

Safety at the core

The top agency priority is safety —of agency employees and the public—in every action. Safety is the foundation of everything the Forest Service does. This includes making safety the first and last step of every operation—from fireline to fieldwork. The agency promotes a culture of care, where safety goes beyond just avoiding injuries or accidents. Last year, the Forest Service reduced OSHA recordable incidents by over 15 percent from 2024 to 2025.

Wildfire readiness and response

The agency remains focused on safeguarding lives, communities, and natural resources through strengthened wildfire readiness and rapid response capabilities. The agency continues to emphasize an aggressive, coordinated initial attack to keep fires small and reduce the likelihood of large, destructive events. To meet the reality of year-round fire seasons, the Forest Service has invested in interagency coordination, contracting, infrastructure, and staffing to enhance operational capacity and support community preparedness. To continue to improve Federal operations efficiency and effectiveness, the 2027 Budget proposes to shift the Forest Service's wildland fire programs into the U.S. Wildland Fire Service within the Department of the Interior.

The Forest Service is also expanding the use of proven hazardous-fuels reduction strategies—including prescribed fire, mechanical thinning, and cross-boundary treatments that strengthen wildfire resilience and protect communities and natural resources. Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 demonstrated the effect of clear priorities and focused implementation: despite the highest number of wildfire starts on national forests since 2016, total acres burned were held to nearly half the 10-year average—a reduction of nearly 1 million acres. The Forest Service initial attack success rate was the highest in 12 years. In addition, the agency reduced wildfire risk on more than 3.3 million acres through hazardous-fuels treatments.

Active forest management—Timber production, grazing and reforestation

Active forest management remains essential to creating resilient, productive forests. Timber production—critical to both forest restoration and rural economies—continues to be a core component of our management strategy. In FY 2025, the Forest Service exceeded its timber outputs, selling 2.95 billion board feet and offering 3 billion board feet. Supporting domestic mills strengthens both local economies and the agency's ability to carry out effective forest restoration.

Livestock grazing is also a central component of the Forest Service's multiple-use mission. The agency is working to expand access, modernize processes, and elevate producer input to ensure grazing continues to contribute to healthy landscapes and resilient rural communities.

Reforestation remains another essential element of our management responsibilities. The agency is accelerating efforts to restore areas impacted by wildfire and streamline permitting and environmental review processes to deliver results more efficiently. In FY 2025, the Forest Service completed the highest level of reforestation in over 25 years, reforesting almost 287,000 acres and improving timber stands on an additional 165,000 acres.

Minerals and energy development

National Forests play an important role in ensuring American energy security and supporting innovation. The Forest Service is committed to facilitating responsible development of domestic energy and mineral resources, including critical minerals necessary for national security, technology, and energy. The agency is taking steps to reduce regulatory burdens that slow responsible exploration and permitting.

Disaster recovery

When disasters strike, the Forest Service plays a critical role in helping communities recover by restoring damaged landscapes, repairing trails and infrastructure, and supporting community resilience. This work not only addresses immediate needs but also strengthens relationships and reduces vulnerabilities to future disasters.

Following the 2024 hurricane season, the agency reopened more than 1,570 miles of roads, 695 miles of trails, and reopened 34 recreation sites. Across more than 100 disaster-recovery events nationwide, the Forest Service awarded $885 million in contracts and $1.5 billion in agreements to support landscape and infrastructure restoration.

Recreation access and infrastructure

Outdoor recreation continues to grow, and millions of Americans rely on national forests for access to the outdoors. Expanding that access and improving visitor experience is a key agency priority. The Forest Service is modernizing trails, campgrounds, and facilities; improving roads and recreation sites; strengthening on-the-ground engagement; and using tools like Recreation.gov to help visitors plan safe, enjoyable trips. The goal is simple: more access, better service, and a visitor experience that reflects the pride the agency takes in stewarding its forests.

Our public lands offer some of the best recreational opportunities in the world. National forests alone receive more than 160 million visitors annually, maintaining safe and reliable infrastructure for these visits and other management activities is critical. As stated in the FY 2027 President's Budget, the Administration is supportive of reauthorization of the seminal Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) (P.L. 116-152) Legacy Restoration Fund for another five years. The Legacy Restoration Fund has been critical to the Forest Service's ability to repair and upgrade vital infrastructure and facilities in the national forests and grasslands. With these funds in FY 2025 under the GAOA Legacy Restoration Fund, the Forest Service completed 125 deferred-maintenance projects, improving 162 recreation sites and 78 roads and bridges.

Partnerships and cooperative federalism

The Forest Service is working alongside state, tribal and local governments to manage the nation's forests more effectively. Shared stewardship and local collaboration are essential to improving forest health, wildfire resilience, recreation access and conservation outcomes. In 2025 and 2026, the Forest Service entered into Shared Stewardship Agreements with seven states and three Tribal Nations, continuing to build partnerships that support landscape-scale outcomes.

By the fourth quarter of FY 2025, the agency had 540 active Good Neighbor Authority agreements across 39 states—426 with states, 50 with counties, and 45 with Tribal Nations. These partnerships enhance capacity, remove operational barriers, and enable locally driven restoration work. The agency also announced $200 million through Community Wildfire Defense Grants across 58 projects in 22 states and two Tribes.

Deregulation and organizational efficiency

The Forest Service is taking deliberate steps to reduce excessive administrative processes that constrain innovation and slow on-the-ground results. New attention is being brought to ensure critical projects can be accomplished easier and faster by clearing obstacles that make it hard to do business with the Forest Service.

The agency is currently implementing a sweeping organizational restructuring designed to move leadership and decision-making closer to the communities and landscapes it serves. Key elements include relocating the headquarters to Salt Lake City, transitioning to a state-based leadership model, establishing a network of Operations Service Centers, and unifying the agency's research programs. This reorganization plan will strengthen local leadership, streamline operations, and improve mission delivery. For an agency whose lands, partners, and operational

challenges are overwhelmingly concentrated in the West, this shift represents a structural reset and a common-sense approach to improve mission delivery.

Fire Outlook

Wildfire preparedness and response remain at the core of the Forest Service mission, and the agency's ongoing reorganization will not impede our ability to protect lives, communities, and landscapes during the 2026 fire year. We enter this season amid higher-than-average national fire activity, reflecting the cumulative impacts of a dry winter and early-season fuel conditions across large portions of the West. As of May 26th, approximately 29,000 wildfires have burned more than 2.6 million acres nationwide, signaling an early and active start to the year. Yesterday, the new National Significant Wildland Fire Outlook was published by National Interagency Fire Center that includes the latest wildland fire predictions for the summer and demonstrates many areas of the West will experience above average activity.

USDA and the Forest Service enter this fire year with a unified posture, as clearly set forth in the Chief's 2026 Fire Letter of Intent and the Secretary's Memorandum (1078-022, April 28, 2026). Their direction emphasizes firefighter safety, rapid initial attack, hazardous fuels reduction in high-risk areas, and strengthened cooperation with federal, state, Tribal, and local partners.

Our firefighting workforce is stronger than at any point in recent years. As of late May, the Forest Service has hired over 11,000 firefighters—a 6 percent increase over the same point last year and 5 percent above 2024. We will reach our goal of 11,300 firefighters by July at the peak of season. The number of non-fire red-carded personnel has also grown, increasing from over 9,800 in 2024 to more than 10,310 in 2025, resulting in more than 450 additional responders available this season. These increases ensure that we are fully staffed and equipped to respond aggressively to every unplanned ignition.

Our success hinges on continued collaboration with our federal, Tribal, state, and local partners. Through shared stewardship, unified response, and the removal of barriers to active management, we are strengthening our collective readiness and ensuring decisive, coordinated action when fires occur. This commitment also extends to the ongoing Administration effort to modernize the nation's wildland fire management system. In alignment with Executive Order 14308 and congressional direction, the Forest Service is working closely with the Department of the Interior to identify opportunities to streamline functions, reduce duplication, and strengthen interagency wildfire operations as the Administration advances the unification of federal wildland fire responsibilities within the U.S. Wildland Fire Service at DOI.

These efforts are underway without compromising operational readiness. The consolidation of administrative and support functions will not hinder our ability to respond to wildfires this year. Firefighters, incident management teams, and support staff across both Departments will continue to operate under existing, well-established interagency coordination structures. The operational posture for the 2026 fire year remains fully intact, fully staffed, and fully prepared.

In the joint explanatory statement accompanying the FY 2026 Interior Appropriations, Congress directed USDA and DOI to conduct a study examining potential options for consolidating Forest Service fire programs with the U.S. Wildland Fire Service. As part of the directed third-party study supporting this unification effort, USDA issued the formal solicitation on the General

Services Administration contracting site on May 19th, with responses due on June 8, 2026. The Forest Service is committed to working with Congress and the Department of the Interior to modernize the nation's wildland firefighting system. Our priority remains ensuring the nation has an effective, coordinated wildfire response that supports federal, state, Tribal, and local partners.

Throughout these transitions, our fundamental commitment remains unchanged: to protect the public, support our partners, and ensure a rapid, effective, and unified response to wildfires across the nation. The Forest Service will continue to bring the full strength of its personnel, partners, and resources to bear as we prepare for and respond to the challenges of the 2026 fire season.

Chairman Boozman, Ranking Member Klobuchar, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present these priorities and accomplishments. I look forward to continuing our work together to ensure the health, resilience, and productivity of our nation's forests and grasslands, and I would be pleased to answer any questions.

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

JUNE 2, 2026

Los Angeles Times

Voices

Dan Glickman and Ann Veneman

The Forest Service is too important to be a political pawn



Forest Service firefighters conduct a controlled burn in Angeles National Forest in 2023. (Luis Sinco / Los Angeles Times)

By Dan Glickman and Ann Veneman
Guest contributors

June 1, 2026 3:02 AM PT

While most folks think that the U.S. Department of Agriculture focuses on farm policy, the largest agency within USDA is the Forest Service — famous for Smokey Bear and quietly doing significant work on many fronts.

As secretaries of Agriculture during the Clinton and Bush administrations, we spent years getting to know what this agency does: not only timber management but also stewardship of the 193-million-acre National Forest System across virtually every state and oversight of two-thirds of federal firefighting resources.

But now, the Trump administration has taken significant steps to dramatically change the agency, following an executive order last summer to consolidate the firefighting work of USDA and Interior. In January, the Interior secretary created the U.S. Wildland Fire Service, which brings together that department's firefighting functions — but which does not yet incorporate the Forest Service.

While some changes to the service appear warranted and well-intentioned, others have been criticized as seemingly intended to dismantle this storied institution.

Most recently, the administration proposed to move Forest Service headquarters from Washington to Salt Lake City and consolidate its critical research functions into a handful of places, while closing 57 key research and other offices across the country. When the first Trump administration moved the Bureau of Land Management headquarters to Colorado, most of the agency's leaders resigned rather than relocating, and their institutional knowledge and wisdom were lost. Other agencies have suffered similar fates when relocated. The work of the Forest Service is too important to be sacrificed cavalierly.

The agency is already reeling, having lost at least 6,000 employees through Department of Government Efficiency dismissals and other reductions.

In what could be the most significant change of all, the administration now proposes to transfer the Forest Service's fire program to the Department of Interior. For more than a century under USDA, this program has managed forests through research-based techniques such as prescribed and controlled burning and maintenance of forest waste, aiming to prevent destructive fires.

With all of this change, we're left with a pile of unanswered questions — the sort that the Trump administration should explain to Congress and the public.

What will this mean for firefighting? For relations with private landowners and Native nations? For the economies of the rural communities where most national forests are located?

Will these changes ultimately lead to selling off vast swaths of public land to private developers? That is a misguided notion that was once unthinkable but has unfortunately gained some traction in Congress.

How many employees will leave and what will be the effect on employee morale? How will the Forest Service be effectively managed with headquarters in Utah and operations in Washington, and how will the "streamlined" organization affect other operations of USDA and other land management agencies?

Will hiking, fishing and other recreation on public lands be affected by any loss of personnel?

These are only a few of the many questions that need to be answered if we are to maintain effective management and stewardship of some of our greatest national treasures.

During our tenures leading USDA, we both worked to streamline various programs and to right-size the workforce. Reorganizations of government agencies can

reinvigorate calcified bureaucracies, and we strongly support pursuing thoughtful and well-reasoned opportunities to save taxpayer dollars.

However, when leaders undertake significant changes, they need to be driven by data, based on compelling evidence and carefully reviewed facts — not based on ideology or simply meant to "shake things up."

So, if the federal government is going to move the Forest Service, reorganize its parts and further downsize this agency, every American should demand that key questions be answered first. Members of Congress should lead the charge through effective and bipartisan oversight.

There may be good reasons to make changes to the 120-year-old agency that President Teddy Roosevelt, our great conservationist president, wisely moved to USDA at the beginning of the last century. But so far, the administration has not effectively outlined those reasons for the public, and it has not asked for their input or feedback in any substantial way. Nor has Congress been meaningfully involved, an absolute and vital requirement for a change of this scale. The administration has not made the case or provided data to justify such an upheaval.

As we approach the 250th anniversary of our country this summer, millions of Americans will be traveling to enjoy our great natural resources, including our national forests. They will be enjoying a legacy articulated by Daniel Webster, memorialized on the wall behind the speaker's chair in the House of Representatives: "Let us develop the resources of our land, call forth its powers, build up its institutions, promote its great interests and see whether we also in our day and our generation may not perform something worthy to be remembered."

Protecting and sustaining the continued wise stewardship of America's forests and forestry institutions is something worthy to be remembered.

Smokey Bear would demand no less.

Dan Glickman and Ann Veneman are former secretaries of Agriculture, serving under Presidents Clinton and George W. Bush, respectively.

More to Read

Senate confirms Trump's pick to lead federal land agency as drilling and mining expand

May 24, 2026



White House withdraws hospitality executive as nominee to lead the National Park Service

April 28, 2026



Trump plans to move Forest Service headquarters to Utah and shutter research sites

April 1, 2026



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Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

Re: Opposition to Foreign Owned Gamma Resources Ltd. Notice of Intent for Uranium Exploration Drilling, Mesa Arc Project, Carson National Forest — Request for Full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Immediate Suspension of Review Pending Congressional Action

April 9, 2026

James Duran
Carson National Forest Supervisor
208 Cruz Alta Road
Taos, New Mexico 87571

Attention Carson National Forest Supervisor Duran:

We write on behalf of the communities of northern New Mexico to express serious concerns regarding efforts filed by Gamma Resources Ltd. earlier this year seeking authorization to conduct exploratory uranium drilling within the Carson National Forest near Canjilon, New Mexico. We strongly oppose approval of this action and urge the Forest Service to require a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) before taking any further action on this proposal. We also request that the Forest Service suspend its review pending congressional action to protect the Chama watershed from mineral development.

It has come to our attention that Gamma Resources Ltd. — a Vancouver-based company traded on the TSX Venture Exchange — has proposed drilling up to twelve exploratory boreholes up to 500 feet deep within the Carson National Forest as part of what the company calls its "Mesa Arc Project." The company has identified a four-mile stretch of the Chama Basin as a target for uranium extraction, and has stated publicly its intent to ultimately extract uranium from this area, not merely explore it. The exploratory phase, if approved, would involve construction of temporary drill pads, approximately 800 feet of new road cuts, and heavy equipment staging — all within one of the most water-sensitive landscapes in New Mexico.

We plan to introduce legislation to withdraw the Chama watershed from all forms of mineral entry. We urge the Forest Service to take that legislative effort into account as it evaluates this proposal.

The Carson National Forest rises above the villages of the Chama Valley and serves as the headwaters for the water systems that feed acequia ditches, community wells, and agricultural operations throughout the region. The Chama River is a principal tributary of the Rio Grande and a critical source of water for communities across northern New Mexico. What occurs on Carson National Forest lands directly determines the quality and quantity of water available downstream to acequia parciantes (water rights holders), ranchers, tribal communities, and families who depend on shallow wells with no alternative water source.

This watershed is not simply an environmental amenity. It is critical water infrastructure — as essential to the communities of northern New Mexico as any road, pipe, or reservoir. Acequia irrigation systems in the Chama Valley have continuously sustained agricultural production and community identity for more than 400 years. Tribal nations have exercised cultural, ceremonial, and subsistence ties to this landscape since time immemorial. The integrity of this watershed is inseparable from the economic survival and cultural continuity of the people who live here.

Uranium is not an ordinary hard-rock mineral. Once uranium or associated contaminants enter an aquifer or stream system, remediation is technically complex, extraordinarily expensive, and may require decades of work — or may not be achievable at all. New Mexico bears a disproportionate and well-documented legacy of harm from uranium mining. Hundreds of abandoned uranium mines on and near tribal lands, particularly within the Navajo Nation, have contaminated water sources and resulted in elevated rates of kidney disease and cancer among affected communities. The federal government has spent hundreds of millions of dollars attempting to remediate legacy uranium contamination sites in New Mexico, and significant contamination remains unaddressed decades after mining operations ceased.

Even at the exploratory stage, this proposal carries real risk. New road cuts and drill pad construction increase erosion and sedimentation in a watershed that feeds gravity-fed acequia systems where even small changes in sediment load can mean a lost agricultural season. Monsoon rains — increasingly intense under drought conditions — can mobilize surface disturbance rapidly. For families on shallow wells, a single contamination event can permanently alter daily life.

We understand you are currently determining whether Gamma's proposal would cause "significant surface disturbance" requiring a full NEPA review. We urge the Forest Service to make that determination affirmatively and promptly. The factors present here — uranium exploration in a sensitive watershed, proximity to acequia-dependent agricultural communities, adjacency to tribal cultural resources, and a company whose stated ultimate goal is extraction, not merely exploration — collectively demand the most rigorous level of environmental review available under federal law.

Specifically, we request that any NEPA review address the following questions before approving any plans:

1. What is the baseline water quality in the affected watershed, including groundwater, prior to any surface disturbance, and who will be responsible for ongoing monitoring?
2. What are the specific pathways by which uranium or associated contaminants could reach acequia headgates, surface streams, and shallow aquifers relied upon by nearby communities?
3. What financial assurance mechanisms will ensure that Gamma Resources Ltd. — a junior mining company with no current production revenue — can cover full remediation costs in the event of contamination?
4. How will the Forest Service ensure meaningful government-to-government consultation with affected tribal nations, including consultation that occurs before, not after, any surface disturbance is authorized?
5. What is the cumulative impact of this proposal considered alongside other uranium exploration and development activity currently proposed or underway in New Mexico?

Gamma Resources Ltd. is a Canadian company, incorporated in Vancouver and traded on the Toronto Stock Exchange Venture Exchange. Its investors and executives are not accountable to New Mexico communities, and its financial interests are not aligned with the long-term health of the Chama watershed. The company's own investor materials describe New Mexico's "historical deposits" as "low-hanging fruit" — language that reflects an extractive calculus, not a commitment to stewardship. Notably, the company has cycled through two name changes in just over a year — operating as Medallion Resources until February 2024, then as Gabo Mining until June 2025 — and its auditors have repeatedly flagged a "going concern" warning, citing an accumulated deficit of nearly $29 million and no revenue from operations, raising serious questions about whether this company has the financial foundation to responsibly develop, and ultimately reclaim, a uranium mine in the headwaters of the Rio Chama.

The administration has framed domestic uranium production as an energy security priority. But energy security built on the contamination of tribal water systems and century-old acequia infrastructure is not security — it is the transfer of risk from a foreign company's shareholders to New Mexico's rural communities. The Chama watershed's clean water is itself a critical resource, one that cannot be replaced if lost.

We urge the Forest Service to require a full Environmental Impact Statement for Gamma Resources Ltd.'s proposed Mesa Arc Project, including a draft EIS with a public comment period; to conduct robust, meaningful government-to-government consultation with all affected tribal nations before any permit decision; to require comprehensive baseline water quality testing throughout the affected watershed before any surface disturbance is authorized; and to suspend further permitting action pending the outcome of congressional consideration of legislation to withdraw the Chama watershed from mineral entry.

The communities of the Chama Valley — acequia farmers, tribal members, ranchers, and rural families — have tended this watershed for generations. The Forest Service has both the authority and the responsibility to ensure that decisions affecting their water, their land, and their future are made with the care, science, and respect those communities deserve.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss these concerns further and request a briefing from Forest Service staff on the current status of the agency's review.

Sincerely,

Ben Ray Luján
United States Senator

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

Teresa Leger Fernández
Member of Congress

cc: Secretary of Agriculture
Under Secretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and Environment
Associate Chief of the U.S. Forest Service
Chief of the U.S. Forest Service
Regional Forester, Southwestern Region, USDA Forest Service

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Sustainable Forestry
Environmental Stewardship
Stable Communities

June 1, 2026

Senator John Fetterman
142 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: USFS Closure of Forestry Sciences Lab at Irvine, PA

Senator Fetterman,

Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns about the potential closure of the USFS Forestry Research Lab at Irvine, Pennsylvania with the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry. While this is one of many proposed lab closures across the nation, we can only speak to the importance, relevance, and contributions of the Irvine lab to the field of forest management as those professionals address significant forest health issues, its importance as a source of professional, family-sustaining employment in this rural community, and its contributions to local stability in ways that extend beyond forest research alone. We have prepared the following concerns, arguments, and questions on the issue.

HEARING BRIEFING: IRVINE FORESTRY SCIENCES LAB (PA)

Key Points & Questions for USFS Witnesses

Opening Position

- The proposed closure of the Irvine Forestry Sciences Lab risks **serious economic, social and ecological harm** to Pennsylvania forests, the Allegheny National Forest, and the communities of the region.
- This is a **low-cost, high-impact facility** with nearly a century of contributions to scientific advancements in applied silvicultural research, long-term forest health datasets, and practitioner training tools.

- Closing this lab appears **inconsistent with USFS priorities** and may undermine science-based forest management.
- Retaining robust research on the Allegheny National Forest, **home of the new USFS Mid-Atlantic/New England Office**, is aligned with the stated goal of "*building a Forest Service that is closer to the forests and communities it serves*".

Point 1: This Lab Supports Pennsylvania's Forest-Based Economy

Key Arguments

- Pennsylvania leads the nation in hardwood production, including **~30% of U.S. black cherry supply**.
- Pennsylvania's forest products sector:
    - Generates **$21.8B direct / $36B indirect impact annually**
    - Supports **60,000+ jobs**

Questions to Ask

- How does USFS justify closing a research facility that provides key support to both Pennsylvania's significant timber industry and its forest-based communities?
- What economic analysis has been conducted on the impact of this closure?
- How will USFS replace the applied research that directly supports timber productivity and rural economies?

Point 2: The Irvine Lab Provides Unique, Place-Based Science and Contributes to National Forestry Research

Key Arguments

- The lab serves **16.62 million acres of Pennsylvania forestland** (including the Allegheny National Forest) with region-specific research.
- The Allegheny Plateau has **unique forest conditions** that require localized expertise.
- **Research from the Irvine** lab underpins forest-management tools and knowledge used not only in Pennsylvania, but across the **Mid-Atlantic and New England.**

Questions to Ask

- How will the USFS maintain region-specific research without a local lab?
- Are out-of-state researchers equipped to continue long-term, place-based work?
- What is the plan to ensure continuity of local knowledge and relationships?

Point 3: The Lab Produces Widely Used Tools and Results

Key Argument

- The Irvine lab's research has led to:
    - **SILVAH system** used by 2,500 practitioners from across the Mid-Atlantic/New England region
    - Landmark studies on **black cherry decline**
    - Nationally recognized work on **deer impacts**
    - Advances in **prescribed fire and regeneration techniques**

Questions to Ask

- How does the USFS justify closing a research facility whose work supports widely used hardwood forest management tools?
- Which of these programs will be discontinued or disrupted if the lab closes?
- How will USFS continue delivering these tools without dedicated staff on-site?
- What evidence shows these programs can be effectively managed remotely?

Point 4: Loss of Irreplaceable Long-Term Data

Key Arguments

- The lab maintains **nearly 100 years of continuous forest data**
- Includes long-term measurements and precipitation chemistry records

Questions to Ask

- How will USFS preserve and maintain continuity of this long-term dataset?
- How will USFS ensure ongoing access to local research addressing local issues?
- What safeguards exist to prevent disruption of ongoing studies?

Point 5: Forest Health Threats Are Increasing

Key Argument

- Region faces growing challenges:
  - Invasive species (plants, pests, and diseases)
  - Aging forests
  - Increasing wildfire risk
  - Soil and water impacts
  - Deer over-browsing

Questions to Ask

- Why is USFS reducing research capacity at a time of increasing forest health threats?
- How will the agency address these challenges without local scientific support?

Point 6: Closure Undermines Forest Planning

Key Argument

- The Allegheny National Forest Plan is **overdue for revision**
- Local (Irvine lab) **research is critical to informing that process**

Questions to Ask

- How will the Forest Plan revision proceed without input from local researchers?
- Does USFS believe planning decisions can be made effectively without local data?

Point 7: This Decision May Increase Costs, Not Reduce Them

Key Argument

- The lab is:
  - **Owned by the USFS**, not rented
  - Located in a **low-cost area**
- Closure may require:
  - **Expenses related to frequent travel** from out-of-state staff covering multiple research sites in multiple states
  - **Costly technology** to maintain daily data collection
  - **Costly contracted services** in lieu of local research staff

Questions to Ask

- What are the projected cost savings—and how were they calculated?
- Has USFS compared those savings to the cost of replacing this research elsewhere?
- Could maintaining staffing be more cost-effective than closure?

Point 8: Misalignment with USFS Mission

Key Argument

- USFS leadership emphasizes being **"closer to the forests and communities it serves"** (Chief Schultz)
- Closing a long-standing local lab contradicts that goal

Questions to Ask

- How does closing this lab align with your stated commitment to local engagement?
- What definition of "closer to communities" supports removing on-the-ground research presence?

Point 9: Community and Social Implications of Closure

Key Arguments

- The Irvine lab provides **high-quality professional jobs** in a rural community where such opportunities are limited. These positions sustain families and support the local tax base – contributing to stability of nearby schools and public services.
- The lab's presence has long offered **local youth exposure to scientific careers** - pathways that help keep young people connected to the region and encourage future local workforce development.
- **Indirect social and economic impacts -** Declines in forest health reduce recreation quality, tourism activity, and the broader community benefits of being forest-adjacent, affecting quality of life for residents and the vitality of local businesses.

Questions to Ask

- What assessment has been made of the impact on the **local tax base** and community stability if these federal jobs are removed from Irvine due to lab closure?

- How will USFS ensure that rural students continue to have access to **science and research-based career pathways** if the lab closes?
- What consideration has been given to the **community-level consequences** of reduced forest-health research, including effects on businesses, recreation, tourism, and overall quality of life?

Closing Statement

- The Irvine lab is a **high-value, cost-effective asset** supporting science, jobs, and sustainable forest management.
- The Irvine lab is an opportunity to **complement the new Mid-Atlantic/New England Office in Warren, PA** by maintaining, and potentially rebuilding, the USFS Research presence in this region.
- Closing the Irvine lab risks:
    - **Loss of critical data** and local expertise
    - **Weakening federal forest management**
    - **Compromised response** to local forest health threats
    - **Community, economic, and social degradation**
- The better path is to take this opportunity to **retain a robust research presence at the Irvine facility**.

The USFS' "Priorities" web page includes, "Listening to the people closest to the ground who know the forest best". We hope they will listen to local voices in this matter and retain the Irvine lab with a robust research presence to complement their Mid-Atlantic/New England Office in Warren.

Thank you for your assistance in putting forth our concerns in this matter.

Sincerely,

Tyler Q. Martin
AFA Board President

Co-Signers:

John Saf

John Saf, Professional Forester Vice President, AFA Board

Mary McGrath

Mary McGrath, Treasurer, AFA Board / Secretary, Ridgway Township, Elk County

Amy Beers

Amy Beers, Secretary, AFA Board Superintendent, Forest Area School District

Dan Weaver

Dan Weaver, Executive Director
Pennsylvania Independent Oil & Gas Association

Danielle Flasher

Danielle Flasher, AFA Board / Warren City Council, Warren County

John G. Wortman

John G. Wortman, AFA Board / Warren County School Board Member

Norm Strotman

Norm Strotman, AFA Board Member

Paul Webster

Paul Webster, AFA Board Member

Alejandro A. Royo

Dr. Alejandro Royo, AFA Board Member

Greg Geyer

Greg Geyer, AFA Board / Supervisor, Jenks Township, Forest County

Amy Shields

Amy Shields, AFA Board Member /Executive Director, Allegheny Hardwoods Utilization Group

Signature: John Saf (Jun 1, 2026 20:39:33 EDT)

Email: [redacted]

Signature: John G. Wortman (Jun 1, 2026 20:54:18 EDT)

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Signature: Dr. Alejandro Royo (Jun 1, 2026 17:02:05 EDT)

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Signature: Norm Strotman (Jun 1, 2026 20:30:15 EDT)

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Signature: Paul Webster (Jun 1, 2026 20:31:47 EDT)

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Email: [redacted]

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

JUNE 2, 2026

U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
Oversight of the United States Forest Service
June 2, 2026
Questions for the Record
Mr. Tom Schultz

Senator Amy Klobuchar

1. **I have heard reports of state forestry agencies that are unable to accept Forest Service awards because of changes to USDA's terms and conditions. Many of these funds for wildfire prevention or to protect forests from invasive species are time sensitive and these new terms and conditions are adding more red tape to the federal approval process. These funds were distributed to state forestry agencies last year without the new terms and conditions that Forest Service is now requiring. What can the Forest Service do to help state forestry agencies get immediate access to these funds?**

Response: USDA has addressed state forestry agency concerns by including a Reservation of Rights Statement in agreement files, which precludes USDA from enforcing the conditions in litigation. With this, state agencies have signed their passthrough agreements and we are making every effort within our ability to finalize the awards.

2. **The Landscape Scale Restoration Program was created in the 2018 Farm Bill to give another tool to state forestry agencies for reducing wildfire risk, restoring watersheds, and slowing the spread of invasive species. Last year Landscape Scale Restoration funds and other funding for state forestry agencies were used to pay for the administration's workforce reduction efforts.**
    a. **Can you commit to using all the fiscal year 2026 funds for State, Private, and Tribal Forestry programs on those programs rather than other uses?**

Response: FY26 Landscape Scale Restoration Program funding will support program objectives.

    b. **Is the Forest Service considering using State, Private, and Tribal Forestry program funding to pay for the Forest Service reorganization?**

Response: State, Private, and Tribal Forestry (SPTF) Salaries & Expenses funding will be used for reorganization activities associated with SPTF personnel. No other SPTF program funds will be used.

Senator Charles Grassley

1. **The National Environmental Policy Act rule finalized on April 7, 2026, is aimed at modernizing the Department of Agriculture's regulations. Will the changes to the Department's regulations including under the Forest Service make it easier to mine for critical fertilizers such as potash and phosphate?**

Response: On April 3, 2026, USDA rescinded all agency-specific NEPA regulations, including those for the Forest Service in its Final NEPA rule. In their place, USDA established a single, department-wide NEPA regulatory framework to streamline processes and improve consistency across agencies. The rule enforces statutory time-bound and length-bound requirements for NEPA analysis, which significantly impact how mining project reviews are conducted – providing for faster, more predictable timeline.

With additional categorical exclusions (CEs) now available to the Forest Service from USDA NEPA regulations, and adoption of CEs from other Departments under NEPA Section 109, we anticipate leveraging CEs more often, thus eliminating the need for EAs and cutting review time and cost by 75%. Many of the adopted CEs, as well as others in the process of adoption, focus on accelerating the permitting process for a wide range of projects, including mining.

However, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has the authority to issue federal potash and phosphate leases and approve mining operations on Forest Service public domain lands under the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920, as amended. The Forest Service does not make a formal approval or decision related to the issuance of leases on public domain lands, unless ancillary development not within the federal lease is needed to support operations on Forest Service lands – at which time the Forest Service would conduct environmental review. The changes to the department's regulations may make it easier to approve ancillary activities associated with potash and phosphate development not within federal leases administered by the BLM.

The BLM also has the authority to issue leases and approve operations on acquired lands, but not without the "consent" of the Forest Service under the Mineral Leasing Act for Acquired Lands. Therefore, the Forest Service's "consent" decision requires environmental review under NEPA and other related laws. The changes to the department's regulations may make it easier to complete the NEPA process for ancillary activities associated with potash and phosphate development not within federal leases administered by the BLM. NEPA is one of several laws that make up the environmental review and compliance process. Other laws like the Endangered Species Act and National Historic Preservation Act would still need to be complied with.

2. **Are there currently any sites in the United States that have significant quantities of potash or phosphate that are not being mined?**

Response: Phosphate mining on the Caribou -Targhee National Forest located in eastern Idaho currently makes up 20% of all U.S. phosphate production with nearly 4 million tons of phosphate raw ore produced in 2025. The Uinta National Forest in north-central Utah also produces lesser

amounts of phosphate. Both Forests contain significant quantities of phosphate identified in the BLM's "Known Phosphate Leasing Area" (KPLA).

There are currently no potash leases or mining operations on National Forest Service lands. There are likely significant quantities of potash that have yet to be discovered and identified, primarily concentrated in deep basins across the Midwest, Mountain West, and Southwest that may underlie Forests and Grasslands administered by the Forest Service.

3. **How could Congress further address permitting requirements to speed up access to these or any future sites to increase domestic supply of fertilizers?**

Response:
Congress could help accelerate access to fertilizer-related sites by strengthening and expanding existing federal permitting streamlining authorities, particularly those under NEPA. The Forest Service has already demonstrated that targeted reforms, such as expanding categorical exclusions (CEs), improving regulatory efficiencies, and increasing flexibility in implementation, can significantly reduce environmental review timelines.

Senator John Thune

1. **As you know, Working Families Tax Cuts Act directs the USFS to implement specific timber targets over certain periods of time in an effort to reduce these wildfire hazards and insect infestations. Please outline your plan to meet these objectives, including timber volume increases by region.**

Response:
The Forest Service is committed to increasing active forest management to reduce hazardous fuels, address insect and disease threats, and improve overall forest resilience in alignment with the Working Families Tax Cuts Act. The National Active Forest Management Strategy (NAFMS) provides the framework to align these timber targets with long-term ecological, social, and economic outcomes.

Our approach is structured around three core themes in the NAFMS: scaling up active management, prioritizing active management in high-risk landscapes, and strengthening operational capacity.

We will identify and sequence projects using NAFMS risk indicators—wildfire hazard potential, insect and disease susceptibility, community exposure, and watershed condition. This ensures volume increases are strategically tied to the areas with the highest need, rather than uniformly distributed.

Using the NAFMS commitment to "right-sized, right-place" treatments, each region will increase timber outputs through a mix of mechanical thinning, salvage operations, and integrated vegetation management. While precise targets may shift annually with updated forest conditions and budget authority, the projected increase in timber volume by region for FY26–FY28 is as follows:

Regional Timber Targets (MBF)
- Region 1: FY26 434,400; FY27 446,829; FY28 431,374
- Region 2: FY26 182,888; FY27 165,039; FY28 170,150
- Region 3: FY26 205,832; FY27 221,408; FY28 198,762
- Region 4: FY26 143,555; FY27 148,943; FY28 154,000
- Region 5: FY26 399,000; FY27 450,000; FY28 520,000
- Region 6: FY26 622,000; FY27 745,000; FY28 900,000
- Region 8: FY26 585,650; FY27 636,698; FY28 681,050
- Region 9: FY26 653,000; FY27 704,000; FY28 745,000
- Region 10: FY26 27,900; FY27 27,900; FY28 47,050

These figures reflect our approach under the National Active Forest Management Strategy (NAFMS) to scale up active management while aligning capacity, markets, and ecological needs.

Through Shared Stewardship we are increasing collaboration with State agencies, Tribes, and industry to leverage partner capacity and implement work at an increased scale. By strengthening multiyear planning and maintaining a steady project pipeline, we will use outcome-based monitoring to confirm that volume increases translate into measurable reductions in hazardous fuels, healthier forest conditions, and long-term ecosystem resilience.

2. **The Forest Service has made meaningful progress in streamlining broadband permitting through its National Broadband Team, and providers have reported shorter approval timelines as a result. What additional steps can be taken to accelerate broadband permitting on National Forest System lands?**

Response: The Forest Service prioritized proactive coordination among applicants, State broadband offices, and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, to identify and resolve issues early in the review process, reduce duplicative efforts, and streamline permitting. Through this enhanced collaboration, standardizing our procedures, and the use of a centralized application portal and tracking tool, the agency has taken significant steps to expedite the review and approval of broadband applications.

The agency will continue to optimize available resources to expedite broadband permitting by leveraging existing permitting processes and coordination practices, and utilizing available

NEPA efficiencies, including coordinated environmental reviews and use of categorical exclusions where appropriate.

Senator Michael Bennet

1. **Red Card Holders: In written testimony, Chief Schultz noted that "the number of non-fire red-carded personnel has also grown, increasing from over 9,800 in 2024 to more than 10,310 in 2025, resulting in more than 450 additional responders available this season." This follows widespread reports that last year at least 1,400 Forest Service employees with red card certification left the agency amidst the administration's push to reduce the Forest Service workforce. The Forest Service seemingly acknowledged these departures in June 2025 when the agency offered an opportunity for former Forest Service employees with red cards to support fire response.**

    a. **Please provide the following data:**
        - ♣ **The number of Forest Service non-fire, red card employees as of January 20, 2024;**
        - ♣ **The number of Forest Service non-fire, red card employees as of January 20, 2025; and**
        - ♣ **The number of Forest Service non-fire, red card employees as of June 1, 2026.**

Response: We do not have the ability to pull the data from January 20, 2024 due to the modernization of our incident qualifications management system (IQCS 1.0). We do have the number from March of that year, so we will use that as the baseline number.

- March 10, 2024: 8,385 non-fire red card employees.
- March 10, 2025: 9,404
- May 30, 2026: 10,354

    b. **In Fiscal Year 2025, how many non-fire, red card Forest Service employees left the Forest Service under the Deferred Resignation Program, Voluntary Early Retirement Authority, Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments, or other workforce reduction efforts?**

Response: In 2025, we lost 1,272 non-fire red carded employees to the Deferred Resignation Program. We did not lose any non-fire red carded employees to other authorities in 2025. Over the past five years, approximately 350 of those individuals have been activated to support fire incidents—meaning about 25 percent of red-carded employees who took the DRP supported wildfire response during that period.

c. **How many non-fire, red card employees has the Forest Service hired in Fiscal Year 2025 and Fiscal Year 2026 to-date? Please specify how many of these employees are returning Forest Service personnel.**

Response: Obtaining a red card as a non-fire employee is entirely voluntary and is not related to any hiring actions.

d. **Will the Forest Service once again this year offer an opportunity for former Forest Service red card-holding personnel to assist with fire response?**

Response: Yes. As in previous years, former Forest Service employees who have incident qualifications are able to participate in incident response through the Forest Service Emergency Hire Program as an Administratively Determined (AD) employee.

e. **How many former Forest Service personnel with red card certification voluntarily assisted on fire response last year?**

Response: In 2025, we had approximately 3,730 former employees voluntarily support wildland fire response as Administratively Determined Forest Service Emergency Hires. In addition, we had about 90 personnel who took the deferred resignation program return to mobilize to support incidents.

2. **Wildland Fire Consolidation and Staffing: Coloradans have voiced concerns about administration proposals to move Forest Service wildland fire management to the Department of the Interior (DOI) and that separating land management from fire response, including transferring potentially thousands of Forest Service employees to DOI, will lead to worse outcomes for fire mitigation, recovery, risk assessment, planning, and suppression in the field.**
   a. **When not actively on a fire assignment, do Forest Service personnel contribute to trail maintenance, hazardous fuel reduction projects, project planning and contracting, recreation, or other activities of the Forest Service?**

Response: Yes. While their primary focus is fire response and readiness, they contribute to other agency priority work when available to do so.

b. **If the administration's proposal to consolidate Forest Service fire suppression at DOI is implemented, how do you plan on replacing this critical work and staffing capacity for Forest Service personnel to perform trail maintenance, hazardous fuels reduction, recreation, permitting, planning, and contracting work?**

Response: Detailed decisions regarding future organizational structures, roles and responsibilities are pending and will be informed by the feasibility study required under P.L. 119-74.

3. **Wildland Fire Consolidation and Hazardous Fuels Reduction: The President's Fiscal Year 2027 budget proposes transferring Forest Service wildland fire management to DOI. This proposal includes transferring all Forest Service hazardous fuels funding and activity to DOI.**
    a. **If implemented, how would the Forest Service use its discretion to decide how much staff time and funding to devote to hazardous fuel projects on National Forest System lands?**

Response: The Government has not identified the specifics of a proposed consolidated structure. The Division C Joint Explanatory Statement for the 2026 Appropriations Act (P.L. 119-74) directs the Secretary of Agriculture, in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior, to engage an independent, non-partisan research organization to conduct a feasibility study on the consolidation of federal wildland fire management operations as proposed in the President's Budget. This Committee direction expects the study to assess how a consolidation may change how the Agencies would reach proposed timber targets, continued cohesion between wildland fire management and the hazardous fuels program, continued use of the available red card-certified workforce, and how a new consolidated service would differ from the role the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) already plays in coordinating fire response, and state, localities, and Tribes.

The Explanatory Statement further directs the Secretary of Agriculture to submit the study and a comprehensive response to the findings of the study, including funding estimates, staffing plans, and the legislative proposal required to complete the transfer to such Committees upon completion. Decisions regarding future organizational structures, roles, and responsibilities, including those for hazardous fuels, will be informed by this study.

    b. **Given the interrelatedness of fire and forest management, how will DOI accomplish hazardous fuels projects on Forest Service lands?**

Response: See response to Q. 3a above

    c. **How will DOI and the Forest Service prioritize hazardous fuels projects?**

Response: See response to Q. 3a above

    d. **Will the Forest Service participate in project design and implementation?**

Response: See response to Q. 3a above

    e. **How will other land use activities and values, such as recreation, wildlife, and conservation, be incorporated into hazardous fuels project design?**

Response: See response to Q. 3a above

4. **Hazardous Fuels Shelf Stock: Last December, Senator Schiff and Senator Wyden joined me in asking the Forest Service for information on the number of hazardous fuels projects that have completed environmental reviews pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), but have not yet been implemented – commonly referred to as "shelf stock." The Forest Service response to our inquiry noted high-level information regarding the agency's timber and hazardous fuels reduction work, but did not answer questions related to the volume of shelf stock projects at the agency. Recently, the Forest Service shared with my staff that only Region 6 has "shelf stock" data at the regional level, and individual forest units monitor their shelf stock levels.**

    a. **For the list of forest units below, please provide a list of forest projects for which the agency has completed a final environmental document, determination that a categorical exclusion applies, or record of decision, but that the agency has not commenced as of June 2, 2026:**

        - **Colorado: Arapaho, Grand Mesa, Gunnison, Manti-La Sal, Pike, Rio Grande, Roosevelt, Routt, San Isabel, San Juan, Uncompahgre, and White River.**
        - **California: Angeles, Cleveland, Eldorado, Humboldt-Toiyabe, Inyo, Klamath, Lassen, Los Padres, Mendocino, Modoc, Plumas, Rogue River-Siskiyou, San Bernardino, Sequoia, Shasta-Trinity, Sierra, Six Rivers, Stanislaus, and Tahoe.**
        - **Oregon: Deschutes, Fremont-Winema, Malheur, Mount Hood, Ochoco, Rogue River-Siskiyou, Siuslaw, Umatilla, Umpqua, Wallowa-Whitman, Willamette.**

Response:
While we don't have unit-by-unit or project-by-project information available, we have estimates of NEPA timber shelf stock (in years and mbf) and NEPA fuels shelf stock (in years and acres) by Region. These numbers are approximate estimates based on our out-year program of work tracking and represent a Summer 2026 moment in time snapshot.

Region	Estimate of Timber Shelf Stock FY27-31 (years)	Estimate of Timber Shelf Stock FY27-31 (mbf)	Estimate of Fuels Shelf Stock FY27-31 (years)	Estimate of Fuels Shelf Stock FY27-31 (acres)

R1 – Northern	1.2	548,840	2.8	312,201
R2 – Rocky Mountain	1.8	313,538	6.5	597,792
R3 – Southwestern	4.7	925,799	3	500,000
R4 – Intermountain	2.7	400,222	6.6	1,469,300
R5- Pacific Southwest	1.9	918,488	2.4	803,652
R6 – Pacific Northwest	1.9	1,602,103	2.9	1,002,812
R8 - Southern	3.0	2,146,456	5	7,226,618
R9 – Northeast	2.2	1,604,788	2.9	581,669
R10 - Alaska	0.1	3,250	3.2	3,057

b. For Forest Service Region 6, please provide a comprehensive list of forest projects for which the agency has completed a final environmental document, determination that a categorical exclusion applies, or record of decision, but that the agency has not commenced as of June 2, 2026.

Response: See response above for question 4a.

Senator Tina Smith

1. **The United States has legal trust and treaty obligations to Tribal Nations, and all federal agencies have a responsibility to uphold government-to-government relationships with Tribes. This includes formal Tribal consultation. USDA doesn't have the best track record working with Tribes, and for many years this Committee has in a bipartisan way instructed the Department to do better.**

- **According to the Forest Service website, a Tribal forum which is not an official consultation, happened on April 7, 2026. This forum was for the Forest Service to give information on the reorganization. That is not actually a consultation. According to the Forest Service website, there are no future Consultations planned.**
- **Over 50% of Regional Office positions within the Forest Service Office of Tribal Relations are currently vacant, and the Forest Service reorganization and USDA-wide reorganization efforts raise questions about additional impacts on the Forest Service Office of Tribal Relations. The Office of Tribal Relations guides and assists Forest Service personnel in meeting Treaty obligations, engaging in consultations, forging co-stewardship agreements, and engaging with Tribes in other ways to improve forest and rangeland management.**
  - **a. Will you commit to having Tribal Consultation specifically on the Forest Service reorganization?**

Response: U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Forest Service reorganization is a Department-level action. USDA conducted two in-person Tribal consultations on the reorganization plan on October 14th, 2025 in Washington, DC, and October 16th, 2025, in Denver, Colorado, and considered submitted remarks in the subsequent 30-day comment period. USDA published this report: https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2025-usda-reorg-plan-tribal-consultation-report.pdf.

b. How will the Forest Service reorganization impact the Forest Service's Tribal Relations employees located in the Washington Office, Regional Offices, and Research Stations?

Response: The mission, the land, the workforce, and the relationships that have been built over decades with communities, Tribes, and partners will continue. The reorganization changes the management structure above the field — not the field itself. Throughout the transition, frontline mission work will continue uninterrupted. This includes active forest management, wildfire response, forest and watershed restoration, recreation services, and sustained collaboration with States, Tribes, and communities.

c. Will the Forest Service commit to creating Tribal Relations positions for the new Forest Service headquarters, state offices, and Operational Service Centers?

Response: Fifteen State directors will manage small teams within one or more States and will serve as national leaders for forest supervisors, operational priorities, and relationships with States, Tribes, and partners. Each State Office will include a small leadership team responsible for legislative affairs, communications, and intergovernmental coordination. The State Office concept will improve Tribal engagement due to the emphasis in each office to focus on relationships, engagement and collaboration internally and externally.

2. **How will the Forest service meet its obligations to the Tribes with treaty rights in the Boundary Waters and Superior National Forest when considering approving a mining project?**

Response: The Superior National Forest has ongoing coordination and consultation with the Bois Forte, Fond du Lac, and Grand Portage Tribes. In coordination with the Bureau of Land Management, the Superior National Forest will consult with all relevant Tribes to ensure we honor Tribal treaty rights and comply with the respective agency legal authorities when considering a mining project.

Senator Cory Booker

1. **Experimental Forests are used to answer practical forestry research questions that are directly relevant to forest management questions of a region. The Silas Little Experimental Forest (SLEF) in the New Jersey Pinelands conducts research into the**

forests of New Jersey and the Northeast, which have unique ecology, surrounding industries, weather, and pest/disease/forest fire pressures. In particular, 50% of New Jersey residents are in a Wildland Urban Interface, a dangerous area for wildfire risk and management. SLEF researchers investigate how wildfires start and spread, and how they can be mitigated. All research is in close partnership with New Jersey's Forest Fire Service, to ensure the research is immediately applied for firefighters and forest managers. It is essential that the research at SLEF continue, by letting researchers continue to be based there and by maintaining research land, buildings, and equipment. Can you commit that the Silas Little Experimental Forest will remain in full operation and not be impacted by the reorganization of the U.S. Forest Service?

Response: The Forest Service recognizes that long-term studies and experimental forests and ranges (EFRs) are unique, irreplaceable assets essential to forest science, and we are not shutting down experimental forests and ranges as part of the reorganization. We will be evaluating the internal workforce capacity and leveraging the strengths of partners to ensure this vital research continues. The goal is to maintain the integrity of these decades-long projects through strategic realignment and collaborative support.

We have carefully identified a small number of facilities associated with EFRs for closure. These evaluations are about facilities and upkeep – not the experimental forests and ranges themselves, or research jobs or programs. Research at these locations will continue as planned regardless of whether the local buildings employees are working from changes. These evaluations are about facilities and upkeep – not the experimental forests and ranges themselves, or research jobs or programs. This is about the choice to fund research over buildings.

Senator Ben Ray Luján

1. **There were over 600 total town halls and public hearings held before the finalization of the 2001 Roadless Rule. These afforded residents, small businesses, and local units of governments near Inventoried Roadless Areas the opportunity to inform the Forest Service's proposed and final rules. Chief Schultz, will you commit to the Forest Service holding towns halls to take public input on the pending, proposed rule to repeal the 2001 Roadless Rule?"**

Response: In August 2025, the USDA Forest Service published a notice seeking public comment on its intention to develop an environmental impact statement (DEIS) for the proposed rescission of the 2001 Roadless Rule. On August 20, 2026, the proposed rule and draft environmental impact statement were published, initiating an additional 30-day public comment, consistent with requirements under the Administrative Procedure Act and guidelines given by USDA. Since that initial announcement, the Department extended the comment period by 15

days to allow the public additional time to submit comments. The new deadline for comments is October 6, 2026.

2. **The National Forest System has one of the largest networks of roads in the world. Unfortunately, this means the Forest Service has a more than $6 billion deferred maintenance backlog on its roads system. At the same time, the Forest Service is proposing to repeal the 2001 Roadless Rule, which was finalized in large part due to the Forest Service's ballooning road construction costs and not having the resources to maintain such a large road system. Is the Forest Service factoring the cost burden of potentially constructing new roads in areas that are currently covered by the 2001 Roadless Rule?"**

Response: As part of the rulemaking process, USDA Forest Service has prepared an environmental impact statement, which evaluates the impacts of the proposed rule rescission. In addition, consistent with requirements under Executive Order 12866 for significant rules, the Forest Service prepared an assessment of costs and benefits of the proposed regulatory action. These analyses include evaluation how the rulemaking may affect the National Forest System transportation system and associated management costs.

In summary, these analyses find that under the proposed rule roads would be constructed or reconstructed only where there is a need as defined through a local planning process and funding source –timber harvest or other active vegetation management activity would generate the greatest need. Temporary roads would be more commonly used within ½ mile of existing roads.

3. **Roads play an important part in managing fires on National Forests, but roads are also known to increase ignition frequency. Research published last year found that in all 8 contiguous Forest Service regions combined, wildfire-ignitions and the size of fires were greater on lands within 50 meters of roads than in Roadless Rule areas. Is the Forest Service considering this type of research that finds the presence of roads is heavily correlated with more frequent and larger fires due to more human activity?"**

Response: The USDA Forest Service has considered this research and acknowledges that most wildfire ignitions are associated with human activity, including roads. At the same time, roads can provide access for hazardous fuels mitigation, especially mechanical thinning, and fire control.

As part of the rulemaking process, USDA Forest Service has prepared an environmental impact statement, consistent with the Departmental NEPA regulations. The environmental impact statement uses credible and reliable scientific resources, data, and evidence to evaluate the potential effects of the proposed rule rescission on various aspects of forest health and

management, including wildfire risk, hazardous fuels management, and fire control (suppression).

While there is detailed analysis in the DEIS, in summary, the DEIS finds that substantial acreage within potentially affected inventoried roadless areas has a relatively high likelihood of burning under high-intensity conditions that are difficult to manage or that could expose communities, infrastructure, or drinking water sources. The proposed rule would provide additional opportunities to expand hazardous fuel treatments, especially those integrated with timber management, in priority firesheds, community wildfire risk reduction zones, and other high-risk areas. In addition, certain strategically placed roads may confer fire control benefits not currently attainable. At the same time, the DEIS notes that impacts from road construction could include increased fire frequency (human-caused) if there is an increase in public access, though the amount (intensity) of effects depends on the specifics of future decisions (for example, future travel management decisions about if constructed roads would be open to the public). The Forest Service would continue to use science-based tools to help prioritize where site-specific treatments occur and to deploy hazardous fuels program resources with emphasis on existing Forest priorities, integration with the timber/vegetation management program, and an outcome-based assessment framework.

4. **In April 2026, nearly 120 current and former wildland firefighters — people with decades of on-the-ground experience in our national forests — sent an open letter to Congress opposing revocation of the Roadless Rule. Those firefighters wrote that most logging roads in steep backcountry areas are - in their words - "bad tactical ground for holding firelines or staging crews." Their professional conclusion is that "Forest roads are mainly built for timber access, not for safe or effective fireline operations. New roads will be places where more wildfires will be started than stopped." The Forest Service's own interagency safety guidance from the National Wildfire Coordinating Group lists narrow, one-way roads as a specific hazard — warning that a rapidly spreading fire could trap vehicles and personnel before they can turn around or escape.**

   Chief Schultz, how does the administration square its claim that new roads will improve wildfire suppression with the professional judgment of 120 wildland firefighters who say those roads are tactically dangerous and will create more fires than they stop?

Response: Rescinding the 2001 Roadless Rule would provide greater flexibility for local Forest Service managers, working with States, Tribes, and communities, to make place-based decisions that tailor management to local land conditions, including local wildfire risk mitigation and control approaches. For nearly 25 years, the rule has restricted road construction and limited the Forest Service's ability to carry out critical active management work in inventoried roadless

areas. During this time, wildfire activity has intensified, and millions of acres of inventoried roadless areas have burned. These losses have placed communities, critical watersheds, and local economies at increasing risk. The flexibility to respond to local land and resource conditions is paramount to providing for active management at the right time and in the right places to address changing conditions.

Roads contribute to firefighter safety by providing for visibility, communications, escape routes and safety zones, but not all roads provide the same opportunities for containment and safety. The benefits and opportunities for fire suppression would depend on local decisions regarding the road network, placement of roads, and maintenance level. The environmental impact statement will evaluate the potential impacts of the proposed rule rescission on wildfire risk, mitigation, and control (suppression).

5. **In September 2024 the Forest Service announced through its Collaborative Wildfire Risk Reduction Program (CWRRP) a $100 million investment in 21 new projects to reduce the threat of wildfire to high-risk areas across the country. This includes a $2.1 million project on the Gila National Forest in New Mexico to reduce hazardous fuels and restore ecosystem health in grasslands and ponderosa pine forests.**
   - **While there were many projects in Western States, including New Mexico, the CWRRP also focused on high wildfire risk areas in Eastern parts of the country, like Minnesota, Virginia, and Mississippi. Investing in these hazardous fuels projects is necessary to protect lives, homes, and critical infrastructure within the wildland-urban interface.**
     a. **Of the $100 million in CWRPP funding announced in September 2024, please provide the amount of funding the Forest Service has obligated, the amount of outlays, and the amount of unobligated funding remaining in this program.**

Response: The agency did not allocate any direct funding for those projects in fall of 2024. In early 2025, the National Active Forest Management Strategy was developed and projects proposed to align with this strategy received funding. The majority of the funding intended for CWRRP has been utilized for direct support of wildfire risk reduction efforts associated with the hazardous fuels program or as part of the National Active Forest Management Strategy.

b. **Has the Forest Service cancelled any of the projects awarded and announced in September 2024?**

Response: The agency did not allocate any direct funding for those projects in fall of 2024. The agency is supporting many of these projects through our hazardous fuels program or as part of the National Active Forest Management Strategy.

c. Is the Forest Service collecting data on the number of acres treated for hazardous fuels under the CWRRP or any other metrics associated with wildfire risk reduction? If so, please provide the latest numbers on these metrics being monitored.

Response: The agency is not collecting data specific to CWRRP projects. However, we do track a broad set of metrics around our hazardous fuels program such as acres treated in areas with high or very high wildfire hazard potential or acres treated in the wildland-urban interface.

For FY26, the agency has accomplished 2.8 million acres of hazardous fuels reduction as of September 10, 2026.

6. In your written testimony, Chief Schultz, you note the Forest Service reorganization is designed to move leadership and other decision-makers closer to National Forests and the reorganization will strengthen local partnerships, streamline operations, and improve mission delivery. Despite the Forest Service reorganization being announced over 2 months ago, there remain many questions about the reorganization, including how the costs of the reorganization will be paid and if any cost savings will accrue in the course of reorganizing the Forest Service.

a. Does the Forest Service have an estimate of the costs and savings of the proposed Forest Service reorganization? If so, please provide this data, broken down by Forest Service function (i.e., Regional Offices, Research & Development facilities, etc.).

Response: These details are still being determined.

b. Will the Forest Service be providing relocation compensation and services to staff that are reassigned? What is the cost of these services?

Response: The Forest Service is evaluating relocation support options consistent with federal policy. Employees required to relocate 50 miles or more from their current duty station are eligible to receive relocation assistance. The Forest Service will offer relocation assistance consistent with federal policy. On June, 12, 2026, the Forest Service and NFFE finalized the reorganization MOU which outlines relocation requirements for bargaining unit employees (BUE). The Forest Service is modeling relocation offers for non-BUEs on the union process to the greatest extent possible.

c. How is the expertise of staff who are relocated from D.C. Headquarters (WO), Regional Offices, or Research Stations aligned with the needs of the field at the Forest or District level? If the expertise is not aligned, what is the Forest Service plan to staff the Forests and Districts with the skill sets needed for the program of work?

Response: The goal of the reorganization is to streamline leadership structures and move USDA closer to its customers, not reduce the workforce that carries out the Forest Service mission.

Small state offices and a number of "operations service centers" will focus on providing specific, specialized project implementation support to field units. The Operations Service Centers deliver place-based, specialized services and surge capacity through geographically distributed service centers that understand local contexts and prioritize work in coordination with State Directors and the Chief Field Operations Officer to help National Forests complete high-priority, on-the-ground work.

By bringing Research and Development within the Office of Field Operations, the Forest Service will better align research activities with on-the-ground needs for sound, accessible, and cutting-edge science.

This is an unprecedented scale of change in the Forest Service, and agency employees will experience it in a variety of ways. Agency leadership will continuously monitor workforce capacity and adapt as needed in support of the timeless mission of the Forest Service.

7. **The Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) is vital to many forest communities because it's a program that embodies the consensus needed to do active forest management that will restore healthy forests across large landscapes. Since its creation in 2009, CFLRP projects have treated hazardous fuels across 5 million acres, with over 3 million of those acres in the Wildland-Urban Interface. CFLRP projects have also accounted for roughly 14% of the Forest Service's total prescribed fire acres. The collaborative approach means that the NEPA is rarely held up by objections or process delays. The Rio Chama CFLRP project covers 3.81 million acres in New Mexico and Colorado and will invest $30 million over ten years to increase forest resilience, restore watershed and riparian areas, and support local rural economies. Do you agree there is value in CFLRP projects and that we should invest federal funds in landscape scale restoration?**

Response: The Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) invested in and encouraged collaborative approaches to active management for multiple benefits, including wildfire risk reduction, economic well-being in rural communities, and forest and watershed health. While there have been many benefits from this program, similar results can be achieved through many of the National Forest System programs.

8. **In 2024, the Forest Service achieved a record high, treating 4.4 million acres of national forest system land for hazardous fuels reductions in a fiscal year. Despite all the professed deregulatory actions, so-called streamlining of bureaucracy, and a raft of forestry executive orders, the U.S. Forest Service under this Administration**

treated only 2.6 million acres for wildfire risk in 2025, down 35 percent, according to an analysis published last month. Can you explain that concerning figure? Wouldn't you agree that the reductions in force the agency has experienced in the last 18 months have been detrimental?

Response: In FY25, several western regions exceeded their hazardous fuels targets. In the regions that did not reach their goal, a number of factors limited our ability to perform prescribed burns such as weather conditions and mobilization of resources to active incidents. Additionally, the Forest Service completed 3.3 million acres of hazardous fuels reduction in FY25, not 2.6 million acres. https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/accomplishments

9. **National Forests across the west are struggling to develop markets for the slash, woody debris and small trees that are removed in wildfire-risk reduction treatments. The executive orders calling for accelerated active management point primarily to increased timber production but leave the door open for expanding other markets. States with Shared Stewardship Agreements are partnering with the Forest Service to assist with the active management workload, motivated by a need to improve forest conditions ahead of the next catastrophic wildfire. What policies and practices is the agency working on to improve the efficiency, economics, and sustainability of slash, woody debris and small tree removal?**

Response: The Forest Service is engaged in a number of efforts to make the removal of non-sawlog material viable. As part of the Inflation Reduction Act, Congress authorized and made an initial appropriation to a new grant program called the Hazardous Fuels Transportation Assistance program. Since FY25 through this program, we have awarded $43M to 68 entities across the country to complete 131 projects to remove 2.67 million tons of material.

The Wood Innovations program also provides technical and financial assistance to expand wood product and wood energy markets which include utilization of small diameter timber and wood residuals. In 2025, the agency awarded $80 million across 189 projects through the Wood Innovations, Community Wood, and Wood Products Infrastructure Assistance grant programs supported with annual appropriations and supplemental IIJA funding. Furthermore, Wood Energy and Wood Manufacturing Assistance Teams support facility improvements and operational efficiencies, including enhancing utilization of byproducts from logging and wood manufacturing. These programs not only create market demand but accelerate forest management activities and reduce costs for all landowners. This helps retain industry by modernizing or expanding existing facilities and building new facilities.

In partnership with USDA Rural Development, we are providing loan guarantees through the Timber Production Expansion Loan Guarantee Program for new facilities or upgrades to facilities that process material from national forests. A subset of these projects will increase the processing capacity for small trees.

The Forest Service achieves economic efficiency with non-saw and biomass material on national forests through supporting forest products markets and managing for least cost disposal where removal is necessary and there are no markets. Forests are actively engaging with industry and partners now to consult on project design, layout and implementation to find the break-even point on timber sales to manage the highest volume of hazardous materials off the landscape current markets can economically consume. If funding is available, service contracts may be issued, and the least cost disposal method is the policy. Efficient disposal practices include decking small trees to be removed when markets allow, piling and burning slash, chipping wood to degrade onsite and in areas with lower fire danger leave wood standing. Internal practices are being developed to actively market forest material through providing data on NEPA compliant biomass to align the resource to a product, attract new, and expand existing industry.

10. **Please explain how the total number of non-fire employees holding red card qualifications increased at a time when the Agency workforce is not expanding non-fire hiring. Specifically:**
    a. **what personnel actions (reclassifications, temporary appointments, detail assignments, or other mechanisms) account for any such increase; and**

Response: Obtaining a red card as a non-fire employee is entirely voluntary and is not related to any hiring actions. On any given year, any employee in the Forest Service can choose to obtain a red-card, including temporary or seasonal employees.

    b. **provide a month-by-month accounting of red-card holders from January 2024 through the most recent pay period, broken down by employment category (permanent, seasonal, temporary).**

Response:

Red Carded Employees by Employment Category				
Year-Pay Period	Permanent	Seasonal	Temporary	Total
2024-05	13,745	2,305	387	16,438
2024-06	14,081	2,428	480	16,989
2024-07	14,108	2,484	633	17,224
2024-08	13,990	2,600	1,225	17,815
2024-09	14,149	2,711	1,593	18,453
2024-10	14,398	2,998	2,100	19,495
2024-11	14,379	3,095	2,131	19,605
2024-12	14,765	3,308	2,798	20,870
2024-13	14,751	3,306	2,880	20,938
2024-14	15,913	3,345	2,433	21,691
2024-15	15,886	3,335	2,352	21,573

2024-16	15,939	3,339	2,199	21,477
2024-17	15,993	3,351	2,114	21,458
2024-18	16,059	3,343	1,897	21,299
2024-19	16,042	3,316	1,559	20,917
2024-20	16,034	3,289	1,111	20,434
2024-21	16,091	3,275	688	20,054
2024-22	16,064	3,260	403	19,727
2024-23	16,026	3,242	289	19,557
2024-24	16,026	3,242	289	19,557
2024-25	15,396	3,200	188	18,784
2024-26	15,331	3,168	173	18,672
2025-01	15,289	3,076	182	18,547
2025-02	15,342	3,000	167	18,509
2025-03	15,395	2,947	167	18,509
2025-04	15,416	2,886	170	18,472
2025-05	15,638	2,896	166	18,700
2025-06	15,627	2,882	203	18,712
2025-07	15,586	2,915	318	18,819
2025-08	15,560	2,907	349	18,816
2025-09	15,642	2,966	1,120	19,728
2025-10	15,795	3,064	1,480	20,339
2025-11	16,482	3,095	1,654	21,231
2025-12	16,658	3,122	1,919	21,699
2025-13	16,756	3,147	2,012	21,915
2025-14	16,880	3,175	2,001	22,056
2025-15	16,985	3,209	1,973	22,167
2025-16	17,019	3,225	1,869	22,113
2025-17	17,026	3,226	1,765	22,017
2025-18	17,001	3,229	1,663	21,893
2025-19	16,580	3,211	1,459	21,250
2025-20	16,555	3,196	1,093	20,844
2025-21	16,503	3,186	697	20,386
2025-22	16,457	3,175	648	20,280
2025-23	16,413	3,159	433	20,005
2025-24	16,398	3,141	131	19,670
2025-25	16,719	3,115	114	19,948
2025-26	16,604	3,039	104	19,747
2026-01	16,580	2,971	105	19,656
2026-02	16,635	2,899	96	19,630
2026-03	16,658	2,861	97	19,616

2026-04	16,671	2,820	100	19,591
2026-05	16,693	2,859	103	19,655
2026-06	17,258	3,037	219	20,514
2026-07	17,303	3,089	617	21,009
2026-08	17,360	3,150	1,017	21,527
2026-09	17,419	3,214	1,435	22,068
2026-10	17,484	3,232	1,940	22,656

11. The agency reported a loss of approximately 1,400 red-card holders in 2025 and subsequently claimed a gain of 450. Please provide: (a) the precise baseline date and headcount from which the 450 figure is calculated; (b) the net change in red-card holders relative to December 31, 2025, December 31, 2024, and December 31, 2023; and (c) the data source and pay period used for each figure.

Response:

A) We do not have any additional data to provide. Available data is listed above. We do not have data prior to March of 2024 due to the modernization of the incident qualifications database.

B) the data we have available is listed in the table in question 10, with the caveat that those numbers do not reflect the loss of DRP employees as they were still considered employees of the Forest Service and were able to respond to fires during the summer of 2025.

C) all data is derived from our incident qualifications database.

12. Testimony cited an 8% increase in wildfire personnel compared to the previous year. The agency's 2026 Wildland Firefighting Capacity page shows a figure closer to 6% when comparing Pay Period 9 in 2025 to Pay Period 9 in 2026.

The table below shows the total number of wildland firefighters hired by date / pay period for comparison across years.

As of Date - PP	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2025 % of Target (11,300)
April 13 - PP 6	7,209	7,500	8,638	8,985	9,390	83%
April 27 - PP 7	7,539	7,892	8,969	9,223	9,749	86%
May 11 - PP 8	8,291	8,534	9,732	9,444	10,496	93%
May - PP 9	8,986	9,319	10,485	10,377	11,004	97%
June - PP10	10,182	10,068	10,967	10,856		
June - PP 11	10,733	10,778	11,192	11,057		
June - PP 12	10,714	10,778	11,330	11,236		
July - PP 13	10,908	11,150	11,457	11,349		
July - PP 14	10,965	11,187	11,393	11,364		

Source: https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire/workforce

Please identify:

a. the exact data source, pay period, personnel categories, and comparison years used to derive the 8% figure; and

Response: As of June 8, 2026 we have 11,553 GS/GW 09 and below wildland firefighters on board. That is 6% more than this time last year. The figures on the table cited are correct. This is consistent with our written testimony. It reads,

> "Our firefighting workforce is stronger than at any point in recent years. As of late May, the Forest Service has hired over 11,000 firefighters—a 6 percent increase over the same point last year and 5 percent above 2024."

b. any differences in how "wildfire personnel" is defined in the cited figure versus the public table.

Response: The table represents GS/GW 09 and below wildland firefighters and GW-10 Interagency Hotshot Crew superintendents. It does not include other wildland fire personnel.

13. Please describe the agency's current policy on red-card holders who do not deploy to a fire in a given year. Specifically:

a. does the agency consider non-deployment in a given year as evidence that a red-card holder is unnecessary or redundant;

Response: No. Obtaining and maintaining a red card is entirely voluntary.

b. what is the agency's documented rationale for maintaining a "bench" of qualified but non-deployed personnel; and

Response: We rely on a workforce that is continually prepared to respond to wildfires, which includes non-fire agency personnel who choose to support incident operations. Maintaining qualified personnel is essential to sustaining incident management teams and ensuring we can perform critical incident management functions. Non-fire red carded employees play a vital role in the national response system, filling key positions on incident management teams and providing surge capacity. Because wildfire response is highly seasonal and many positions require extensive training, these employees are indispensable for meeting periods of heightened demand across the country.

c. what factors, including but not limited to approval from supervisor, assignment conflicts, medical status, geographic location, and low regional fire activity, may explain why a qualified employee did not deploy in a given year?

Response: Non-fire employees support of wildfire response is fully voluntary. Employees decide whether they are available for fire assignments and whether they are willing to serve as nationwide resources. If an assignment does not fit with an employee's family or personal circumstances in a given year, they can choose not to make themselves available. USDA has

emphasized that when the national planning level reaches 3 or higher, support from the non-fire workforce becomes a priority, and lower-priority program work is adjusted accordingly. We maintain essential qualifications by keeping red card credentials current so staff can fill critical roles and provide surge capacity during periods of high wildfire activity. Although certification is voluntary, we encourage non-fire employees to be available nationally when needed, recognizing that many are balancing their regular job duties, family responsibilities, and fire response commitments.

14. Testimony suggested that red-card holders should deploy to at least one fire annually. Please clarify:

a. whether this represents current agency policy, proposed policy, or a general aspiration.

Response: There is no Forest Service policy that states red card holders must deploy once annually. Wildland fire certifications require active maintenance. The National Wildland Fire Coordinating Group, responsible for wildland fire qualifications and training, has currency requirements for each position. In most cases, employees need to perform the role or an associated trainee role at least once in a 3-to-5-year period to maintain qualifications. This is in addition to annual safety refreshers and successfully passing the annual work capacity test for arduous positions. When a qualification expires due to a gap in experience an employee is no longer certified to perform the job as a qualified individual.

b. what cost analysis, if any, supports mandatory annual deployment regardless of actual incident demand.

Response: There is no mandatory annual deployment of red card staff. Resources are only ordered to fires based on the needs determined by operations on incidents. Maintaining qualifications and mobilizing for a fire assignment is an individual employee's decision.

c. **what the projected impact on employee retention and morale would be if non-deployment became grounds for losing red-card status or affecting employment standing.**

Response: There are no agency policies impacting employees for losing red-card status. Obtaining a red card is voluntary unless your hired position requires one, e.g., a firefighter.

d. does the agency currently recognize, or is it proposing to recognize, a formal distinction between red-card holders who deploy annually and those who do not, and if so, what operational or personnel consequences attach to each tier; and

Response: No. The agency does not make this distinction and does not intend to.

e. if such a tiered distinction exists or is being developed, when and how has it been communicated to affected employees, and through what official policy vehicle?

Response: There is no tiered distinction that exists or being planned.

15. Adequate staffing of wildland fire engines is foundational to both initial attack capacity and operational readiness. Engine crews have the ability to respond quickly and their efforts are crucial to prevent small fires from becoming large and catastrophic ones. When an engine cannot respond on the days it is unstaffed, staffing gaps could lead to reduced protection of communities and our natural resources. Please provide the following for each of the seven western Geographic Areas (Northwest, Northern Rockies, Great Basin, Northern California, Southern California, Southwest, and Rocky Mountain) for calendar years 2024 and 2025:

a. The total number of engines assigned within each Geographic Area, by month, and for each engine the staffing designation, specifying whether they are effective for 5-days or 7-days;

Response: Staffing varies by day due to things like mechanical breakdowns, personnel fatigue, attrition, and inter-agency promotions. It is impossible to say with accuracy how many engines were staffed at what capacity during a given year because it changes daily. We can provide the number of engines we hire for and attempt to fill in each Geographic area. That data is as follows:

Number of Engines by Geographic Area

Geographic Area	Engines
Northern Rockies	87
Rocky Mountain	64
Southwest	107
Great Basin	83
California	272
Northwest	129
Southern	78
Eastern Area	48
Alaska	3
Total	**871**

b. For engines operating below 7-day effectiveness, the reason for that designation, specifying whether the limitation is due to insufficient staffing;

Response: Engines are staffed according to the current and expected fire danger and activity.

c. **The agency has cited a goal of 11,300 boots-on-the-ground wildland firefighters. Of that total, how many are qualified as engine bosses and how many are qualified as engine crew bosses? Given current qualification levels, can the agency fully staff all engines designated as 7-day effective in the western Geographic Areas identified above? If not, please specify the shortfall; and**

Response:

Number of Qualified ENGB Employees by Geographic Area - PP10, 2026

Geographic Area	Employees
Northern Rockies	587
Rocky Mountain	311
Southwest	473
Great Basin	426
California	889
Northwest	672
Southern	493
Eastern Area	277
Alaska	14
Total	**4,142**

Staffing an engine seven days a week requires two ENGB qualified personnel under the most efficient staffing model. Three provides opportunities for career development or personal time off during the summer. Each geographic area contains at least three qualified ENGBs per engine. The number of ENGB qualified personnel is not the barrier to seven-day staffing. Each engine requires a minimum of seven firefighters to effectively staff it seven days per week.

d. The number of permanent and temporary engine positions that are vacant.

Response:

Engine Vacancies By Geographic Area - PP10, 2026

Geographic Area	Filled	Vacant	Total	Avg. Vacancy
Northern Rockies	508	128	636	20%
Rocky Mountain	223	74	297	25%
Southwest	476	95	571	17%
Great Basin	410	168	578	29%

California	1442	463	1905	24%
Northwest	487	180	667	27%
Southern	292	99	391	25%
Eastern Area	166	45	211	21%
Alaska	12	3	15	20%
Total | Avg	**4,016**	**1,255**	**5,271**	**23%**

16. **Regarding planned fleet reductions and implications for wildfire response readiness, please provide the following:**
    a. **How will the 10% Agency wide fleet reduction in FY26 and the additional planned 10% reduction in FY27 affect the response capacity and the configuration of fire suppression resources (such as hand crews, initial attack crews, and engines) that are needed to support emerging incidents in the wildland-urban interface?**

Response: All fleet reduction decisions must preserve emergency response capability and operational effectiveness.

    b. **Has the agency conducted a formal readiness analysis evaluating the effect of planned fleet reductions on initial attack and beyond on the seven western Geographic Areas (Northwest, Northern Rockies, Great Basin, Northern California, Southern California, Southwest, and Rocky Mountain)? If so, please provide that analysis. If not, please explain why such an analysis was not conducted prior to approving reductions; and**

Response: Emergency response fleet, including but not limited to engines, water tenders, crew carriers, dozers, transports, superintendent trucks, command vehicles, prevention patrol units, helitack superstructures, and chase vehicles are to be retained. Any proposed changes to non-emergency fire fleet assets such as ATVs, UTVs, trailers and equipment are subject to review to ensure they do not impact hazardous fuels or prescribed fire missions.

    c. **What is the agency's plan to mitigate any reduction in response capacity resulting from fleet reductions?**

Response: All fleet reduction decisions must preserve emergency response capability and operational effectiveness.

Senator Raphael Warnock

1. **As part of the reorganization of the Forest Service, the Region 8 headquarters in Atlanta, which employs around 250 of my constituents, is slated to be closed. Will**

these 250 employees be relocated to the Southern Appalachian State Office in Athens or will they be assigned to a different office?

Response: The Forest Service is transitioning from a legacy regional structure to a State-based organizational model designed to simplify the chain of command, strengthen local partnerships, and give field leaders greater ability to respond to conditions on the ground. On Sept. 3, we completed our national review of regional offices and research and development facilities, identifying more than $16 million in cost savings through local facility consolidation while minimizing impacts to employees and preserving the agency's work across the country. The Forest Service will proceed with the previously announced regional office shifts in Atlanta, Milwaukee and Portland; however, all employees at these locations will have the option to remain in their local commuting area. None of the regional office closures will result in employees being involuntarily relocated.

Additional phases of the reorganization, including the formal elimination of regional and station structures and the full transition to a state-based model, will be implemented over the coming year. As those milestones approach, we will provide additional information and clear guidance to employees and partners.

2. **Following the 2019 relocation of the Economic Research Service and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, productivity temporarily declined. Given the critical role the Forest Service plays in supporting the health of forests, what steps are you taking to ensure the agency's research is not disrupted and that productivity does not decline?**

Response: The reorganization does not eliminate scientific positions, cancel research programs, or reduce our national research program. On Sept. 3, we completed our national review of regional offices and research and development facilities, identifying more than $16 million in cost savings through local facility consolidation while minimizing impacts to employees and preserving the agency's work across the country. The decision addresses building and maintenance costs but does not affect the science that happens in the field, in the lab, and in collaboration with partners. The agency's place-based research and development activities will continue as planned throughout the nation. Staff and programs will continue their work, relocated into fewer facilities while maintaining research presence across the country.

3. **The Forest Service oversees roads and bridges in Georgia and across the country. As you know, the Forest Service has a National Asset Management Program to address deferred maintenance, which was over $8.6 billion in FY2023.**
    a. **What effect do you expect the reorganization will have on the operation of the National Asset Management Program?**

Response: The Forest Service expects the National Asset Management Program (NAMP) to maintain its current operational approach following the reorganization. While there will be adjustments to the project review process, the primary objective will remain the same: to prioritize and select projects that deliver the highest value and align with the agency's mission and strategic priorities. In the early stages of the reorganization, some projects may be postponed to address more immediate needs associated with the transition. In the long-term, reorganization will help ensure that the Forest Service continues to effectively use funds to maintain, renovate, replace and construct new infrastructure that aligns with the agency mission in a cost effective and prioritized manner.

b. Please outline the steps you are taking to ensure this program is not disrupted.

Response: The National Asset Management Program (NAMP) is the Forest Service's full life-cycle asset management program. It provides an integrated framework to manage, track, and distribute multiple funding sources and to prioritize projects to receive funds, including Great American Outdoors Act Legacy Restoration Fund and Capital Improvement and Maintenance funds.

The program is supported by dedicated, experienced Forest Service staff, and continuity is expected through the agency's reorganization. The Engineering staff will maintain oversight of NAMP processes and systems, ensuring they remain streamlined, transparent, and effective. This includes evaluating and selecting projects, maintaining ongoing communication with local staff and partners, and supporting consistent project delivery.

Through this work, NAMP advances the agency's commitment to reducing deferred maintenance and improving the condition and performance of critical Forest Service infrastructure.

4. **Recent wildfires in southern Georgia burned over 54,000 acres. With approximately 89 percent of Georgia's forest lands being privately owned, the state, private, and tribal forestry program was critical in addressing these fires. However, I am concerned that the reorganization will disrupt this critical partnership. What details do you have to share on how state, private and tribal forestry (SPTF) programs will be administered under the new structure? What steps are you taking to ensure that cooperative forestry is adequately staffed and ready to work with State Foresters for SPTF?**

Response: Fifteen State directors will oversee Forest Service operations within one or more States and will serve as national leaders for forest supervisors, operational priorities, and relationships with States, Tribes, and partners. State Directors will be the primary points of contact for delivery of State, Private, and Tribal forestry programs in their geographic areas. Future phases of the reorganization will outline how this transition will occur, the locations of

offices, and the timing of changes. We defer to the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Services Agency for other programs that assist private landowners particularly related to cost-share assistance following a natural disaster.

5. **Forest Inventory Analysis is "America's Forest Census" and has been recognized as a world leader in national-scale forest inventory data collection and analysis, providing critical insights to policymakers and stakeholders. However, I am concerned the reorganization will disrupt the administration of the FIA program.**
    a. **How will the operations of the FIA program change under the reorganization plan?**

Response: Thank you for recognizing the importance of the Forest Inventory and Analysis program. The reorganization does not eliminate scientific positions, including those supporting FIA, cancel research programs, or reduce our national research footprint. The change focuses on leadership structure, not the scientific work itself. Staff and programs will continue their work, relocated into fewer facilities while maintaining research presence across the country. Future phases of the reorganization will outline how this transition will occur, the locations of offices, and the timing of changes.

    b. **Will any of the planned facility closures impact staff related to the FIA program?**

Response: All Forest Service employees impacted by reorganization, including those in the FIA program, will have the opportunity to remain with the agency at their same grade and job series. Where facility closures may happen, we are exploring opportunities to consolidate people and programs into nearby Forest Service, USDA, and partner facilities in order to minimize the impact on employees and program delivery. On Sept. 3, the agency announced that all research and development employees, including FIA, will have the opportunity to remain in their current local commuting area.

6. **I co-lead the bipartisan *Forest Bioeconomy Act* to expand forest product research and build new markets by formally establishing an Office of Technology Transfer at the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). Expanding product research will help create new jobs in rural Georgia. However, I'm concerned the president's budget proposing to eliminate USFS Research & Development (R&D) funding and the announced closure of most USFS R&D facilities may harm the agency's ability to implement the *Forest Bioeconomy Act*, if passed. While I appreciate that the USFS R&D facility located in Athens, GA isn't considered for closure, I remain troubled by the proposal to close 57 other facilities around the country.**
    a. **What role should the USFS play in supporting the development and commercialization of new, innovative forest products and technologies?**

Response: The Wood Innovations program has provided technical and financial assistance to expand wood product and wood energy markets which include utilization of small diameter timber and wood residuals. The Wood Energy and Wood Manufacturing Assistance Teams have supported facility improvements and operational efficiencies, including enhancing utilization of byproducts from logging and wood manufacturing. These programs not only create market demand but accelerate forest management activities and reduce costs for all landowners. This helps retain industry by modernizing or expanding existing facilities and building new facilities.

b. Do you agree that USFS R&D facilities and personnel are needed to maintain the USFS's ability to work with nonfederal partners, including the forest products industry, to research new forest products and technologies?

Response: The reorganization does not eliminate scientific positions, cancel research programs, or reduce our national research footprint. The change focuses on leadership structure, not the scientific work itself. Staff and programs will continue their work, relocated into fewer facilities while maintaining research presence across the country. Future phases of the reorganization will outline how this transition will occur and the timing of changes.

7. Outdoor recreation is key to Georgians connecting to National Forests and supporting small, rural towns. I was troubled by a December 2025 U.S. Forest Service (USFS) report on the status of the USFS's National Trail Program, which warned of significant challenges in sustaining trail operations and recreation access, as well as potential loss of decades of investments in trail infrastructure. I joined more than 20 of my Senate colleagues in sending you a letter that raised questions about the report. While I appreciate your response, questions remain about what steps the USFS is taking to respond to the agency's own findings.

a. **What is the Forest Service's plan and timeline for addressing all the issues raised in the December 2025 report?**

Response: The Forest Service is actively working to address the issues identified in the December report. The Forest Service has worked to hire 1,600 seasonal employees this year, the majority of which are working in recreation and trails, which has helped provide much needed capacity in the trail program to implement trail projects and coordinate with and oversee partner and volunteer work. This summer, the agency has been filling permanent positions at the field level. Additionally, the trail program plans to complete a trail workforce analysis in the coming months to identify key vacancies to prioritize filling when permanent hiring resumes. The agency is also working to simplify the process for authorizing partners to conduct trail work projects in collaboration with local units and is working on an interagency agreement where the Federal Highway Administration will provide funding to assist with trail training efforts. Lastly, through reorganization, the agency is focused on establishing positions that directly serve field units through technical support and assistance. This additional capacity and focus on delivering

technical trail training will provide support to field units and result in better maintained trails and improved public access.

b. How is the Forest Service planning to ensure appropriate staffing levels are restored and maintained for trail maintenance and other recreation responsibilities?

Response: The Forest Service has been hiring seasonal trails staff as well as permanent positions at the field level this year.

c. How will the Forest Service invest in training for partners and volunteers on trail maintenance and operations?

Response: The agency recognizes trail work is a profession and area of expertise. Well trained staff, partners, and volunteers are key to having well maintained trails that provide public access and enjoyment. The agency is committed to investing in training and is planning to begin establishing annual trail skills colleges, in collaboration with partner organizations, in every geographic region of the Forest Service beginning in Fiscal Year 2027. The agency is also working to identify key positions to be established during the reorganization that would provide hands-on technical support and training to trail staff, partners, and volunteers.

d. The National Trails System Act of 1968 requires the Forest Service to provide for the development and maintenance of the National Scenic and Historic Trails (NSHT) under its jurisdiction. Given the report's findings, what is the Forest Service's plan for ensuring all statutory requirements of the National Trails System Act of 1968 are met for the NSHT under the Forest Service's jurisdiction?

Response: The Forest Service takes its responsibilities to administer NSHTs seriously and has full-time trail administrators responsible for overseeing NSHT program implementation and operations. The agency is fortunate to have a number of very strong and engaged partner organizations who also assist with providing trail information and on the ground trail stewardship. Additionally, this year seasonal employees were brought on board in order to ensure that all statutory requirements for the National Trails System Act of 1968 were met.

Senator Peter Welch

1. **In the President's budget request for Fiscal Year 2027, he proposed zeroing out funding for State, Tribal, and Private Forestry programs at USFS. In Vermont, we rely on these programs, but uncertainty about the future status of funding makes forest management more difficult. How does uncertainty around STPF programs impact forest management plans for state, tribal, and private forest partners?**

Response: The FY 2027 President's Budget Request seeks to ensure fiscal responsibility with American taxpayer dollars and to better balance the appropriate roles of federal and State governments. The Budget request anchors to a return to federalism and encourages increasing State authority to fund the management of State and privately-owned forests. We will continue partnering with States, Tribes, and local communities to ensure America's forests are healthy and resilient.

2. **The reorganization plan also adds further uncertainty related to who will lead STPF under the new state-based organization model. Will the state directors now handle State, Tribal, and Private Forestry? If not, who will handle this organization of the U.S. Forest Service?**

Response: Fifteen State directors will oversee Forest Service operations within one or more States and will serve as national leaders for forest supervisors, operational priorities, and relationships with States, Tribes, and partners. Each State Office will include a small leadership team responsible for legislative affairs, communications, and intergovernmental coordination. Future phases of the reorganization will outline how this transition will occur, the locations of offices, and the timing of changes.

3. **The Forest Service Reorganization plan proposes closing all regional offices and shifting to a state-based organization model. For the Northeast, this means relocating staff that service 13 states in one small office in Warren, Pennsylvania.**
    a. **Can you share your plan to ensure that there is adequate space available for all the staff in region 9 that will be impacted by field office closures to relocate to Warren, PA if they choose to do so?**

Response: The Forest Service is transitioning from a legacy regional structure to a State-based organizational model designed to simplify the chain of command, strengthen local partnerships, and give field leaders greater ability to respond to conditions on the ground. Fifteen State directors will oversee Forest Service operations within one or more States and will serve as national leaders for forest supervisors, operational priorities, and relationships with States, Tribes, and partners. Future phases of the reorganization will outline how this transition will occur, the locations of offices, and the timing of changes. Additional phases of the reorganization, including the formal elimination of regional and station structures and the full transition to a state-based model, will be implemented over the coming year. As those milestones approach, we will provide additional information and clear guidance to employees and partners.

    b. **How do you plan to ensure that there isn't a loss of institutional knowledge from staff who choose not to relocate?**

Response: All employees will be given the opportunity to stay with the agency in positions at their current grade, though some positions will require relocation. For those employees who will

relocate the agency is providing transfer of station benefits and/or relocation incentive pay. The goal of the reorganization is to streamline leadership structures and move USDA closer to its customers and communities, not reduce the workforce that carries out the Forest Service mission.

In place will be small state offices and a number of "operations service centers" that focus on providing specific, specialized project implementation support to field units. The Operations Service Centers deliver place-based, specialized services and surge capacity through geographically distributed service centers that understand local contexts and prioritize work in coordination with State Directors and the Chief Field Operations Officer to help National Forests complete high-priority, on-the-ground work.

The reorganization does not eliminate scientific positions, cancel research programs, or reduce our national research program. In many locations, "closure" refers only to individual buildings currently housing small teams. Staff and programs will continue their work, relocated into fewer facilities while maintaining research presence across the country.

This is an unprecedented scale of change in the Forest Service, and agency employees will experience it in a variety of ways. Agency leadership will continuously monitor workforce capacity and adapt as needed in support of the timeless mission of the Forest Service.

c. Our state works closely with USFS to make good forest stewardship decisions. This is not possible without the help of federal funding and collaboration with USFS. What is the rationale behind the decision to only have one state office to service the mid-Atlantic and New England?

Response: The Forest Service is transitioning from a legacy regional structure to a State-based organizational model designed to simplify the chain of command, strengthen local partnerships, and give field leaders greater ability to respond to conditions on the ground. In its place will be small state offices and a number of "operations service centers" that focus on providing specific, specialized project implementation support to field units.

One of the primary roles of the State Directors and their offices includes developing and maintaining strong relationships with the local, state, Tribal and federal governments in their areas. With 15 State Directors and their staffs, these Senior Executives will have fewer states to work with compared with the current 9 Regions model, and a greater ability to understand, support and collaborate with the unique needs of our State and Tribal relationships.

Additional phases of the reorganization, including the formal elimination of regional and station structures and the full transition to a state-based model, will be implemented over the coming

year. As those milestones approach, we will provide additional information and clear guidance to employees and partners.

4. **At a time when the USFS has lost 5,680 employees, how do you plan to improve the U.S. Forest Service workforce without shifting the reliance of managing our federal lands onto the state?**

Response: Establishing the agency's headquarters in Salt Lake City and streamlining how the Forest Service is organized will position the Chief and operation leaders closer to the landscapes we manage and the people who depend on them.

Effective stewardship and active management are achieved on the ground, where forests and communities are found. Through this transition, we will strengthen our connection to the forests and the people who depend on them, while supporting our employees and honoring the dedication that has always defined our service.

This approach is intended to simplify the chain of command, strengthen local partnerships, and give field leaders greater ability to respond to conditions on the ground.

Reorganization will also reduce management layers and redistribute positions into field- and customer-facing roles, enhancing the agency's on-the-ground mission delivery.

Senator John Fetterman

1. **Mr. Shultz, like many Democrats on this committee, I have concerns with the impacts USDA's broader reorganization plan will have on the U.S. Forest Service. The Allegheny National Forest (ANF)—in northwest Pennsylvania—is an economic engine for the commonwealth, drawing tourism and natural resource industry development alike. The ANF hosts USFS's Irvine Forestry Sciences Lab, which contributes significantly to the economic, social, and ecological health of northwest PA. I was disappointed that USFS's research functions only received a passing mention in your testimony, in reference to deregulation and purported organizational efficiency arising from USDA's reorganization efforts. The many research locations your agency operates across the country all serve specific regional functions, and consolidating their functions will hinder the agency's work. For example, among many functions, Irvine's lab studies black cherry tree populations, which are native to northeast region states. It also studies other topics directly relevant to PA, and with little relevance outside the commonwealth or region. Black cherry is of economic importance to the commonwealth, but does not grow in significant amounts outside the Mid-Atlantic region, and not at all in the proposed USFS headquarters.**
    a. **Will you commit that the Irvine location will not be closed?**

Response: The reorganization does not eliminate scientific positions, cancel research programs, or reduce our national research footprint. The change focuses on leadership structure, not the scientific work itself. Staff and programs will continue their work, relocated into fewer facilities while maintaining research presence across the country. On Sept. 3, we announced that the we plan to retain the Irvine site.

b. If the Irvin location is closed, where will the Forest Service staff and any cooperating research partners located at the Irvine location be relocated to? Does the Forest Service have a plan to minimize disruptions to the Irvine location's research if the location is closed?

Response: On Sept. 3, we announced that we plan to retain the Irvine site.

c. What will the economic impact of Irvine's closure be to USFS and, separately, to the communities surrounding ANF?

Response: On Sept. 3, we announced that we plan to retain the Irvine site.

d. How does the USFS justify these overall impacts to my constituents who are losing their jobs and the economic research that supports their community?

Response: The reorganization does not eliminate scientific positions, cancel research programs, or reduce our national research footprint. Staff and programs will continue their work, relocated into fewer facilities while maintaining research presence across the country. On Sept. 3, we announced that we plan to retain the Irvine and Williamsport sites in Pennsylvania while closing the Long Pond and York sites. Decisions were based on occupancy, use, cost, and availability of alternate local commuting options for impacted staff. We also announced that all research and development employees will have offices in their local commuting area.

All Forest Service employees impacted by reorganization will have the opportunity to remain with the agency at their same grade. Where facility closures may happen, we are exploring opportunities to consolidate people and programs into nearby Forest Service, USDA, and partner facilities in order to minimize the impact on employees and program delivery.

e. How can you assure me that USFS will continue studying important Pennsylvania forestry issues if the Irvine location is closed?

Response: On Sept. 3, we announced that we plan to retain the Irvine site.

Senator Adam Schiff

1. **There is a lot of confusion about which Forest Service Research and Development facilities are under consideration for closure because the Forest Service has only provided the city and state of the facilities, but not the exact name and address of the**

facilities under consideration. Could you provide the exact names and addresses of the facilities under consideration for closure?

Response: The reorganization does not eliminate scientific positions, cancel research programs, or reduce our national research program. On Sept. 3, we completed our national review of regional offices and research and development facilities, identifying more than $16 million in cost savings through local facility consolidation while minimizing impacts to employees and preserving the agency's work across the country. The decision addresses building and maintenance costs but does not affect the science that happens in the field, in the lab, and in collaboration with partners. The agency's place-based research and development activities will continue as planned throughout the nation. Staff and programs will continue their work, relocated into fewer facilities while maintaining research presence across the country.

Please see https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/reorganization for details on the status of research and development facilities.

R&D facilities include:

- Southern Research Station – Auburn, AL
- Pacific Northwest Research Station – Anchorage, AK
- Pacific Northwest Research Station – Juneau, AK
- Rocky Mountain Research Station – Flagstaff, AZ
- Pacific Southwest Research Station – Arcata, CA
- Pacific Southwest Research Station – Placerville, CA
- Pacific Southwest Research Station – Redding, CA
- Pacific Southwest Research Station – Riverside, CA
- Rocky Mountain Research Station - Fort Collins, CO
- Northern Research Station – Hamden, CT
- Southern Research Station – Athens, GA
- Pacific Southwest Research Station - Institute of Pacific Islands Forestry, Hilo, HI
- Rocky Mountain Research Station – Boise, ID
- Rocky Mountain Research Station – Moscow, ID
- Southern Research Station – Pineville, LA
- Northern Research Station – Baltimore, Baltimore/ Catonsville, MD
- Northern Research Station – Amherst, Amherst/Westfield, MA
- Northern Research Station – Lansing, MI
- Northern Research Station – Houghton, MI
- Northern Research Station - St. Paul, MN
- Northern Research Station - Grand Rapids, MN
- Forest Products Laboratory – Starkville, MS
- Northern Research Station – Columbia, MO

- Rocky Mountain Research Station – Bozeman, MT
- Rocky Mountain Research Station - Missoula; Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute; National Genomics Center, Missoula, MT
- National Agroforestry Center, Lincoln, NE
- Rocky Mountain Research Station – Reno, NV
- Northern Research Station - Durham, NH
- Rocky Mountain Research Station – Albuquerque, NM
- Southern Research Station – Asheville, NC
- Southern Research Station - Durham/Research Triangle Park, NC
- Northern Research Station – Delaware, OH
- Pacific Northwest Research Station – Corvallis, OR
- Pacific Northwest Research Station - La Grande, OR
- Pacific Northwest Research Station – Portland, OR
- Northern Research Station - Irvine/Warren, PA
- International Institute of Tropical Forestry, Rio Piedras/San Juan, PR
- Southern Research Station - Clemson, SC
- Rocky Mountain Research Station - Rapid City, SD
- Southern Research Station – Knoxville, TN
- Southern Research Station – Nacogdoches, TX
- Rocky Mountain Research Station - Cedar City, UT
- Rocky Mountain Research Station – Logan, UT
- Rocky Mountain Research Station – Ogden, UT
- Northern Research Station – Burlington, VT
- Pacific Northwest Research Station – Olympia, WA
- Pacific Northwest Research Station – Seattle, WA
- Pacific Northwest Research Station – Wenatchee, WA
- Northern Research Station – Morgantown, WV
- Northern Research Station – Parsons, WV
- Forest Products Laboratory; Center for Forest Mycology Research, Madison, WI
- Northern Research Station – Rhinelander, WI

We are not shutting down experimental forests and ranges as part of the reorganization. We have carefully identified a small number of facilities associated with EFRs for closure. These evaluations are about facilities and upkeep – not the experimental forests and ranges themselves, or research jobs or programs. Research at these locations will continue as planned regardless of whether the local buildings employees are working from changes. This is about the choice to fund research over buildings.

2. **The USFS reorganization website lists six out of eight research and development facilities slated for closure in California. This is more than any other state. The website also lists R&D facilities as still "under evaluation," meaning there are**

dozens of other research and development sites across the country with unclear status. These research stations study wildfire risk as well as the most effective ways to restore land in a more resilient way after wildfires.

a. There remains skepticism about the Forest Service's ability to maintain wildfire response coordination during this fire season due to reorganization. How will the Forest Service's ability to reduce wildfire risk in the future *not* be harmed by shutting down these research stations?

Response: The agency desires to maintain critical research functions which directly benefit our wildfire risk reduction efforts and is working closely with research community to ensure alignment. The reorganization does not eliminate scientific positions, cancel research programs, or reduce our national research footprint. The change focuses on leadership structure, not the scientific work itself. Staff and programs will continue their work, relocated into fewer facilities while maintaining research presence across the country.

One of the key principles of implementation is to minimize impacts on firefighting and public-facing roles, and the Forest Service will not do anything that does not allow for safe and effective fire suppression. Operational firefighters are not included in the reorganization. We are not going to do anything that doesn't allow for safe, effective fire suppression this year. Our firefighting workforce is stronger than at any point in recent years.

b. **Why was California compared to other states hit so hard by targeted facility closures?**

Response: On Sept. 3, we completed our national review of regional offices and research and development facilities, identifying more than $16 million in cost savings through local facility consolidation while minimizing impacts to employees and preserving the agency's work across the country. The decision addresses building and maintenance costs but does not affect the science that happens in the field, in the lab, and in collaboration with partners. The agency's place-based research and development activities will continue as planned throughout the nation.

We plan to retain Fort Bragg, Mt. Shasta, Placerville; Riverside, and Arcata and to close Chico, Fresno, Hat Creek, and Anderson (specific outbuildings only). Staff will continue their research work at alternate local facilities within their local commuting area. Decisions were based on occupancy, use, cost, and availability of alternate local commuting options for impacted staff, not on the individual states.

c. What criteria is USDA using to determine if additional offices will be subject to closures?

Response: We looked at each facility individually to determine their operating costs, amount of space, utilization rate, number of employees, availability of other proximate USDA/USFS owned

office space, available partner office space (e.g., university/state facilities), partner contributions at current facilities, etc.

d. What is the Forest Service's plan to ensure that the agency is able to perform the work it is required to undertake in the face of reduced staffing capacity?

Response: All employees will be given the opportunity to stay with the agency in positions at their current grade, though some positions will require relocation. The goal of the reorganization is to streamline leadership structures and move USDA closer to its customers, not reduce the workforce that carries out the Forest Service mission. On Sept. 3, we announced that all research and development employees will continue to work within their local commuting areas, even if their facility has been identified for closure.

This is an unprecedented scale of change in the Forest Service, and agency employees will experience it in a variety of ways. Agency leadership will continuously monitor workforce capacity and adapt as needed in support of the timeless mission of the Forest Service.

3. **The Forest Service's own researchers have been recommending respiratory protection for wildland firefighters since 1997, and yet today the agency does not offer respirators to protect against carcinogens that wildland firefighters are exposed to at alarming rates. That is why I introduced the Healthy Lungs for Heroes Act, which is cosponsored by Senators Curtis, Sheehy, Padilla, and Daines.**
    a. **What steps is the Forest Service taking to develop respiratory protection that meets the unique needs of wildland firefighters?**

Response: N95 respirators are authorized for use on the fireline and in incident command posts and fire camps. This is an expansion of prior voluntary use policy and introduces standard guidance for fireline use. N95 respirators are an interim protective measure while the agency develops a full respiratory protection program that is compliant with Occupational Safety and Health Administration requirements. A new foundational respiratory protection training is required for all personnel who choose to use an N95 respirator on the fireline and all fireline supervisors and fire managers. Now available through the Wildland Fire Learning Portal, the one-hour N95 Respirator Interim Use for Wildland Fire Personnel training provides awareness of inhalation hazards, health impacts, hierarchy of controls and field use considerations.

b. If the Forest Service cannot develop this technology on its own, what is the agency doing to partner with agencies and organizations that can in order to protect our wildland firefighters?

Response: The Forest Service will be field testing existing half-face cartridge style masks with the Department of the Interior in 2027 to inform updates to standards and the development of a full respiratory protection program. A full respiratory protection program involves a layered

protection approach including training, medical examinations, fit tests, occupational hazard hierarchy of controls, as well as personal protective equipment.

4. **Proactive and sustainable management of Forest Service lands and natural resources is a critical part of managing wildfires, which are becoming increasingly frequent and severe. This is especially true in California. The Forest Service budget request indicates that the administration is moving to rip the wildland firefighting program out of the Forest Service and place it within the Department of the Interior, while leaving the rest of the Forest Service within USDA.**
    a. **Though such a move should not be carried out absent explicit Congressional approval, if the firefighting component of the Forest Service is dislocated from the land management component, what steps has USDA taken to ensure that the Forest Service's land management work continues to inform the overall strategy to fight wildfires in our national forests?**

Response: The Government has not identified the specifics of a proposed consolidated wildland fire management structure. The Division C Joint Explanatory Statement for the 2026 Appropriations Act (P.L. 119-74) directs the Secretary of Agriculture, in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior, to engage an independent, non-partisan research organization to conduct a feasibility study on the consolidation of federal wildland fire management operations as proposed in the President's Budget. This direction expects the study to assess how a consolidation may change how the Agencies would reach proposed timber targets, continued cohesion between wildland fire management and the hazardous fuels program, continued use of the available red card-certified workforce, and how a new consolidated service would differ from the role the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) already plays in coordinating fire response, and state, localities, and Tribes.

The Explanatory Statement further directs the Secretary of Agriculture to submit the study and a comprehensive response to the findings of the study, including funding estimates, staffing plans, and the legislative proposal required to complete the transfer to such Committees upon completion. Decisions regarding future organizational structures, roles, and responsibilities, including coordination between land managers and wildland fire management, will be informed by this study.

    b. **How will the agency ensure continued integration between wildfire response, fuels reduction, timber management, watershed restoration, and ecosystem resilience efforts?**

Response: See above.

    c. **The final FY26 Interior appropriations bill directed USDA to conduct a feasibility study of this move. How is USDA ensuring that this study is being**

conducted in a thorough and unbiased way that includes viewpoints from all sides?

Response: In the joint explanatory statement accompanying the FY 2026 Interior Appropriations, Congress directed USDA and DOI to conduct a study examining potential options for consolidating Forest Service fire programs with the U.S. Wildland Fire Service. The statement provides direction to USDA and DOI to consult with the Committee on Appropriations in both chambers prior to beginning the study to consider additional aspects of a consolidation that the study should address. The USDA conducted market research pursuant to FAR Part 10 through a Request for Information (RFI) in March to assess industry availability and feasibility to support the USDA Feasibility Study on Consolidating Wildland Fire Management Operations. The majority of RFI respondents were capable General Services Administration (GSA) vendors with existing agency or government wide contract vehicles. The USDA opened a Request for Quotes (RFQ) for the Feasibility Study on May 19, 2026. The Forest Service awarded the contract on August 4th, 2026 to Research Triangle Institute. The final report is due February 15th, 2027.

The USDA Feasibility Study will assess the financial, organizational and operational impacts of decoupling wildfire suppression from the agency's core land management functions. The study will be limited to a 6-month timeframe that will begin upon contract award and will include language from the conference report.

d. Would transferring USFS Wildland Fire Management functions to the DOI-USWFS require congressional action?

Response: Yes. The Administration is committed to working with Congress on unifying Forest Service wildland fire management into the U.S. Wildland Fire Service at the Department of the Interior.

e. If wildfire and fuel management are moved out of the USFS, how would that affect your ability to implement forest plans, which are designed to produce multiple uses from the National Forest System?

Response: The USDA Feasibility Study will assess the financial, organizational and operational impacts of decoupling wildfire suppression from the agency's core land management functions.

5. The Forest Service went from 4.4 million hazardous fuels acres treated in 2023 and 4.3 million acres treated in 2024, the last year of the Biden administration, down to 3.1 million acres in 2025, the first year of the Trump administration. Can you provide an explanation for this drastic decrease in treated hazardous fuels?

Response: Hazardous fuels treatment is one of the agency's most critical tools to protect communities, critical infrastructure, and natural resources from catastrophic wildfire. However, annual accomplishment totals are influenced by a complex combination of operational factors,

environmental conditions, and multi-year funding cycles. In FY 2025, Forest Service completed 3.3 million acres of hazardous fuels treatments https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/accomplishments).

Hazardous fuels accomplishments should be viewed in the context of the annual acreage targets established for each fiscal year. Those targets are informed by available funding and expected program capacity, while actual accomplishments are influenced by operational factors such as wildfire activity, workforce availability, contracting capacity, weather, environmental compliance, and project readiness. As a result, annual accomplishments may exceed or fall short of the target even when program performance remains strong.

In FY 2025, the agency was able to achieve 92 percent of the target for FY25. Operational challenges disproportionality impacted the ability to implement prescribed fire across the country. Additionally, active fires that began in California in January—followed by significant fire activity in the Southeast and the upper Midwest—combined with extremely dry conditions, limited our ability to conduct prescribed burns in many parts of the country. Early and sustained support to Canada through the spring and early summer further reduced available resources to conduct prescribed fire. The continued high level of fire activity and extreme conditions the West required significant resources and personnel, which constrained our capacity to treat additional acres. Several Forest Service regions in western states, however, surpassed their annual targets in excess of 100 percent.

Despite year-to-year environmental and operational shifts, FY 2025 accomplishments of over 3.3 million acres represent a substantial increase over baseline historic levels (e.g., FY 2020). The Forest Service remains committed to working alongside state, local, Tribal, and private partners to maximize treatments where the risk to communities and watersheds is greatest.

6. **Does the Forest Service's FY27 budget request account for all the resources that will be needed to effectively implement its reorganization effort? Why does the President's FY27 request propose a 75 percent cut to the Forest Service's discretionary funding? How will the Forest Service carry out any of the goals enumerated in your opening testimony with less funding? In your opening statement, your emphasize that wildfire seasons are now "year-round". Wouldn't you agree that having year-round fire seasons necessitates more support for fire-prone states, not less?**

Response: The FY 2027 President's Budget Request focuses on the Forest Service's core land management responsibilities while ensuring efficient use of taxpayer's dollars. We are prioritizing active forest management to keep forests healthy, expanding timber productions and energy development, reducing barriers to grazing, and ensuring access to National Forest System lands for every American.

Wildfire response is a shared responsibility. The FY 2027 Budget seeks to restore federalism by encouraging States and local partners to fund their wildfire preparedness activities and continues the proposal to unify the Federal wildland fire activities into the U.S. Wildland Fire Service (USWFS) within the Department of the Interior, which will streamline Federal wildfire suppression policy, resources, response, and risk mitigation efforts. The federal government will continue working with States, Tribes and local communities to strengthen the interagency wildfire response system.

7. **Last August, Senator Curtis and I sent a letter to Secretary Rollins urging USDA to ensure an adequate level of Incident Qualification Cards – commonly referred to as "Red Cards" – including through their issuance and renewal, for wildland firefighters operating at the Forest Service. Based on reporting in the past year, I am concerned that USFS potentially lost more than 1,600 red card-holding personnel in 2025.**
    a. **How many non-fire, red card-holding personnel were employed at the USFS as of June 2, 2026? How many non-fire, card card-holding personnel were employed at the USFS as of January 20, 2025?**

Response:

- January 20, 2025: 9,423
- May 30, 2026: 10,354

    b. **How do non-fire, red card-holding personnel assist with wildfire response?**

Response: Fire assignments include many functions beyond frontline suppression. Qualified personnel may serve in incident command, operations support, safety, planning, logistics, finance and administration, dispatch, communications, aviation, medical support, public information, resource tracking, supply, facilities, or liaison roles. These functions are essential to safely managing personnel, equipment, information, costs, and coordination during wildfire incidents.

    c. **What other functions do *wildfire personnel* perform when not actively suppressing wildfires or otherwise on a fire assignment?**

Response: While their primary focus is fire response and readiness, wildfire personnel contribute to other agency priority work when available to do so.

Senator Elissa Slotkin

1. **The President's budget proposes eliminating Forest Service Research & Development staff and facilities. These federal researchers are responsible for the science and research that helps land managers better understand forest management practices and how to tackle insect and disease outbreaks. And the Forest Service**

reorganization proposes moving staff away from where they conduct research with many unanswered questions about how the transition will work.

a. What analysis did the Forest Service conduct on the costs incurred by continuing to operate the 57 research facilities slated for closure versus other options, including the preferred option of closing the facilities and rehousing employees at other federal buildings or universities?

Response: On Sept. 3, we completed our national review of regional offices and research and development facilities, identifying more than $16 million in cost savings through local facility consolidation while minimizing impacts to employees and preserving the agency's work across the country. The decision addresses building and maintenance costs but does not affect the science that happens in the field, in the lab, and in collaboration with partners. The agency's place-based research and development activities will continue as planned throughout the nation. We considered a number of factors, including: occupancy rates; deferred maintenance, operations, and lease costs; proximity to other Forest Service, USDA, and partner facilities; colocation options; current research portfolios; estimated costs of relocation, and other factors.

b. For each of the research facilities proposed for closure, was a detailed analysis of costs to retain staff in the same facility versus relocating staff conducted prior to the decision to close the facilities?

Response: Implementing this reorganization will more effectively utilize taxpayer dollars and restore Agency flexibility to be responsive to the needs of the American people. The decision addresses building and maintenance costs but does not affect the science that happens in the field, in the lab, and in collaboration with partners. We considered a number of factors, including: occupancy rates; deferred maintenance, operations, and lease costs; proximity to other Forest Service, USDA, and partner facilities; colocation options; current research portfolios; estimated costs of relocation, and other factors. This approach ensures resources are directed to the locations and buildings that best support mission delivery and long-term sustainability.

c. The cost of facilities, including deferred maintenance, has been cited as a primary reason for many proposed facility closures. For each of the 57 research facilities slated for closure, please provide: the address, facility ownership, number of staff stationed at that facility, annual cost of maintenance, and for facilities that aren't owned by the Forest service, the annual lease or rent cost (for agency-owned facilities, provide detailed deferred maintenance costs).

Response: On Sept. 3, we completed our national review of regional offices and research and development facilities, identifying more than $16 million in cost savings through local facility consolidation while minimizing impacts to employees and preserving the agency's work across the country. The review responds to a significant long-term facilities challenge facing the agency. The Forest Service owns more than 16,000 facilities and holds more than 500 leases and

space-occupancy agreements. Half are rated in "poor" condition and deferred maintenance exceeds $3 billion. Currently, a third of agency office space falls below the 60% utilization standard set by the USE IT Act.

The decision addresses building and maintenance costs but does not affect the science that happens in the field, in the lab, and in collaboration with partners. The agency's place-based research and development activities will continue as planned throughout the nation. Implementing this reorganization will more effectively utilize limited budgets and restore Agency flexibility to be responsive to the needs of the American people.

Please see https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/reorganization for details on the status of research and development facilities.

R&D facilities include:

- Southern Research Station – Auburn, AL
- Pacific Northwest Research Station – Anchorage, AK
- Pacific Northwest Research Station – Juneau, AK
- Rocky Mountain Research Station – Flagstaff, AZ
- Pacific Southwest Research Station – Arcata, CA
- Pacific Southwest Research Station – Placerville, CA
- Pacific Southwest Research Station – Redding, CA
- Pacific Southwest Research Station – Riverside, CA
- Rocky Mountain Research Station - Fort Collins, CO
- Northern Research Station – Hamden, CT
- Southern Research Station – Athens, GA
- Pacific Southwest Research Station - Institute of Pacific Islands Forestry, Hilo, HI
- Rocky Mountain Research Station – Boise, ID
- Rocky Mountain Research Station – Moscow, ID
- Southern Research Station – Pineville, LA
- Northern Research Station -Baltimore, Baltimore/ Catonsville, MD
- Northern Research Station – Amherst, Amherst/Westfield, MA
- Northern Research Station – Lansing, MI
- Northern Research Station – Houghton, MI
- Northern Research Station - St. Paul, MN
- Northern Research Station - Grand Rapids, MN
- Forest Products Laboratory-Starkville, MS
- Northern Research Station – Columbia, MO
- Rocky Mountain Research Station – Bozeman, MT
- Rocky Mountain Research Station - Missoula; Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute; National Genomics Center, Missoula, MT

- National Agroforestry Center, Lincoln, NE
- Rocky Mountain Research Station – Reno, NV
- Northern Research Station - Durham, NH
- Rocky Mountain Research Station – Albuquerque, NM
- Southern Research Station – Asheville, NC
- Southern Research Station - Durham/Research Triangle Park, NC
- Northern Research Station – Delaware, OH
- Pacific Northwest Research Station – Corvallis, OR
- Pacific Northwest Research Station - La Grande, OR
- Pacific Northwest Research Station – Portland, OR
- Northern Research Station - Irvine/Warren, PA
- International Institute of Tropical Forestry, Rio Piedras/San Juan, PR
- Southern Research Station - Clemson, SC
- Rocky Mountain Research Station - Rapid City, SD
- Southern Research Station – Knoxville, TN
- Southern Research Station – Nacogdoches, TX
- Rocky Mountain Research Station - Cedar City, UT
- Rocky Mountain Research Station – Logan, UT
- Rocky Mountain Research Station – Ogden, UT
- Northern Research Station – Burlington, VT
- Pacific Northwest Research Station – Olympia, WA
- Pacific Northwest Research Station – Seattle, WA
- Pacific Northwest Research Station – Wenatchee, WA
- Northern Research Station – Morgantown, WV
- Northern Research Station – Parsons, WV
- Forest Products Laboratory; Center for Forest Mycology Research, Madison, WI
- Northern Research Station – Rhinelander, WI

We are not shutting down experimental forests and ranges as part of the reorganization. We have carefully identified a small number of facilities associated with EFRs for closure. These evaluations are about facilities and upkeep – not the experimental forests and ranges themselves, or research jobs or programs. Research at these locations will continue as planned regardless of whether the local buildings employees are working from changes. This is about the choice to fund research over buildings.

