

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 18, 2026

The Honorable Tom Schultz
Chief
U.S. Forest Service
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Chief Schultz,

We write to request additional information about the U.S. Forest Service's (USFS) plans to hire seasonal employees for 2026. As you know, your agency disclosed during our January 21st Federal Lands Subcommittee hearing that the USFS is planning to hire seasonal workers this year, and further, committed on February 12th to hiring 2,000 seasonals. We write to request additional information about this hiring process.

As you know, seasonal employees play a critical role in the maintenance and stewardship of some of our most treasured public lands and national forests. Each year, more than 130 million people visit our national forests to enjoy the recreational, educational, and cultural benefits they offer, with a significant influx in the summer months. For decades, seasonal employees have been instrumental in trail and recreation site management, conserving forests, protecting wildlife, water, and cultural resources, providing visitor services, and fighting wildland fires during peak visitor season.

With the exception of fire-related positions, the USFS did not hire seasonal staff in 2025 due to budget constraints. The USFS has additionally lost more than a quarter of its full-time staff over the last year, which made the lack of seasonal staff particularly acute in 2025. The USFS's recent Trail Program Status Report found that trail maintenance is at its lowest level in 15 years due to the lack of seasonal staff.

Please answer the following questions about the Forest Service's plans to hire seasonal employees for 2026, specifically:

- How many seasonal employees in each sector of the USFS, such as recreation or trail management, will be hired by June 1, 2026?
- Do you plan to distribute the seasonal employees in a geographically equitable manner? Will forests or regions with the highest need for seasonal employees and additional staff be prioritized?
- How many seasonal firefighters does USFS plan to hire for the 2026 season? How does USFS plan to ensure its wildland firefighting workforce is adequately staffed and supplied with the necessary equipment to address the upcoming fire season?
- Will USFS conduct outreach to inform potential applicants that the USFS will be hiring seasonals for this summer, given the hiring freeze last year?

Our national forests are some of our most treasured public lands, and it is absolutely crucial that we maintain and protect them for every American and for generations to come. We appreciate your agency's commitment to hiring seasonal employees for 2026, and look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Joe Neguse
Member of Congress
Ranking Member,
Subcommittee on Federal
Lands



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress
Ranking Member, Committee
on Natural Resources