

**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

August 25, 2025

The Honorable Brooke Rollins  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins,

On July 24, 2025, you proposed a consolidation and reorganization of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, including the U.S. Forest Service. In the related Secretary Memorandum, you committed to “phase out the nine Regional Offices” of the Forest Service and consolidate the current stand-alone Research Stations into a single location in Fort Collins, Colorado.<sup>1</sup>

I support efforts to modernize the Forest Service so it better serves the American people and can address the climate and wildfire crises, but I question whether this proposal will achieve its purported goal of moving the agencies closer to its customer, particularly if USDA moves the current Forest Service regional offices and research stations away from communities, National Forests, and researchers. I am especially concerned about this proposal in a year when the Forest Service has already lost a drove of valuable expertise; roughly 3,400 probationary employees at the Forest Service were fired in February<sup>2</sup> and it has been reported that as many as 3,000 red card employees have been lost since January 2025.<sup>3</sup>

The July 24<sup>th</sup> memo containing the reorganization plan was announced without advanced notice to or input from Congress, employee unions, or key USDA partners. Concerningly, the memo lacks key details that enumerate why and how USDA chose the new proposed model. Subsequent briefings for Committee staff on July 25 and August 4 failed to offer further details about the Department’s actions, including plans to relocate Forest Service staff who currently serve in Regional Offices, close research stations while continuing key research projects, and whether or not the Yates building in Washington, DC would continue to house the Forest Service’s headquarters.

Multiple organizations, including the National Association of Forest Service Retirees, have expressed that the proposed consolidation of research stations in particular would prevent the agency from conducting practical research on specific forest types, in coordination with individual National Forests and with the timber and forest product industry.<sup>4</sup> During an August 4 staff briefing, USDA leadership were unable to offer specifics about whether individual Forest Service labs would stay open during the reorganization, including the Redwood Sciences Laboratory in Arcata, California on the Cal Poly Humboldt Campus.

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<sup>1</sup> Secretary Memorandum, [Department of Agriculture Reorganization Plan](#), SM 1078-015.

<sup>2</sup> Legislative Hearing to Review H.R. 471, the Fix Our Forests Act, and Options to Reduce Catastrophic Wildfire: U.S. Senate Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation, Forestry, Natural Resources, and Biotechnology, 119 Cong. (2025) (Testimony of Frank R. Beum) [https://www.agriculture.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/7666d09e-0b17-4374-ca03-b38269379e87/Testimony\\_Beum\\_03.06.2025.pdf](https://www.agriculture.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/7666d09e-0b17-4374-ca03-b38269379e87/Testimony_Beum_03.06.2025.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Letter to the Hon. Brook Rollins, Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture from Congressmembers. April 29, 2025. <https://www.hickenlooper.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/red-card-letter.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> National Association of Forest Service Retirees, [Letter to Senate Agriculture Committee](#), July 29, 2025.

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Historically, the Arcata laboratory focused its research on young-growth redwood stand management as well as harvesting and regenerating old-growth stands at the Yurok Redwood Experimental Forest. Today, among other issues, the lab researches wildland fires, wildfire risk reduction, fuels treatment monitoring, traditional and cultural burning, the relationship between fire and watersheds, post-fire recovery and restoration, and hydraulic processes management practices— all key issues for the health of the redwood forest ecosystems and the communities that rely on them.

Please provide documents and responses to the following questions before the Department implements the proposed reorganization:

1. How will the Forest Service maintain its relationships, research, and experiments with partner universities?
2. Will the Experimental Forests remain operational at the same capacity as on January 20, 2025? If not, please detail the ways in which their capacity will be reduced.
3. Will individual research labs, such as the Redwood Sciences Lab, remain open and funded by the Forest Service's research arm?
4. What are the lease costs for each research station and regional office for the last five years?
5. Please explain in detail how the Forest Service plans to continue conducting research on National Forests and emerging issues in places where they no longer have local research staff. Where will samples be stored and data be processed?

Research lies at the heart of the Forest Service and has since the agency's establishment. I have deep concerns that the proposed reorganization will result in a massive research backlog and lead to key research projects ending due to budget cuts, lack of staff, and lack of access to samples, data, and on-the-ground knowledge. I urge your Department to reconsider consolidating the Forest Service's research stations and to keep the Regional Offices open.

Sincerely,



Jared Huffman  
Ranking Member, Committee on Natural Resources