

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, D.C. 20510**

February 14, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Rollins:

We write with significant concerns about the decision to fire 3,400 US Forest Service (USFS) employees in accordance with Executive Order 14210: The Department of Government Efficiency “Workforce Optimization Initiative,” and urge you to immediately reinstate them. The USFS is already critically understaffed, and further employee cuts will have real and immediate consequences for Colorado’s economy, rural communities, and wildfire resilience.

USFS employees steward and manage nine national forests and two national grasslands in Colorado, including some of the most visited forests in the country. These public servants not only maintain the health of our headwaters and wildlife habitat but help keep our communities safe by decreasing the risk of wildfire destroying homes and critical infrastructure. They put out campfires, clear trails, clean bathrooms, and manage trailheads. They also help businesses with the permitting process to use Forest Service lands, including grazers, guides, outfitters, ski resorts, and oil, gas and mining operations.

The return on investment for the American people from USFS employees is enormous. With just 35,000 employees, the USFS manages over 193 million acres of forests and grasslands, or about one employee for every 5,500 acres of land. Using visitation data alone, national forests produce nearly \$400,000 in economic activity for every USFS employee.<sup>1</sup> These employees also live in and contribute to many of our country’s most rural communities, keeping downtowns vibrant and critical services intact.

Our offices have heard for years about chronic understaffing at the USFS. Today, the agency’s workforce is nearly 30% less than it was three decades ago.<sup>2</sup> This significant reduction in staff has occurred even as the country’s population grew by over 100 million people, visitation to national forests exploded, and wildfire risk increased drastically. Agency employees have entered public service despite low pay, the frequently seasonal nature of the job, and limited housing in the remote areas they serve. With the rising cost of living across the state, Colorado communities are already challenged with limited USFS staff to confront land management

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nationalforests.org/our-forests>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fs.usda.gov/rds/archive/catalog/RDS-2022-0053>

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challenges. Combined with the existing hiring freeze, yesterday's staff reductions will stretch the agency to its breaking point and place an enormous burden on Colorado communities.

Importantly, Forest Service employees are trusted and dedicated public servants, neighbors, and friends in communities across Colorado. The decision to terminate these employees reveals a complete disregard for the value of these public servants and the roles they fill. The decision will destabilize the agency and the rural communities they serve. Therefore, we urge you to reinstate these employees immediately.

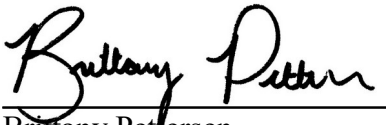
Sincerely,



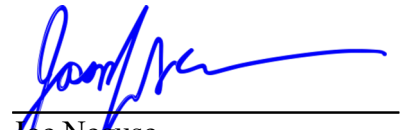
Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator



John Hickenlooper  
United States Senator



Brittany Pettersen  
Member of Congress



Joe Neguse  
Member of Congress



Jason Crow  
Member of Congress