



Office of the Under Secretary

Natural Resources and Environment
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250-0108

May 20, 2026

THE HONORABLE TAMMY BALDWIN
United States Senate
141 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Baldwin,

Thank you for your April 29, 2026, letter regarding the reorganization of the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Forest Service. I am responding on behalf of the Department.

For decades, our regional and research station structure has served the Forest Service. I appreciate your recognition of that past work. It helped the Agency form strong relationships and carry out a mission that has only grown in importance. At the same time, the Forest Service has operated under long-standing budget constraints, which has increased demands on their workforce. There is a growing need to shift resources and authority closer to where the work happens - on the ground, alongside States, Tribes, partners, and neighboring communities. The challenges we face today call for a model that is more responsive, accountable, and locally connected. The Forest Service reorganization will simplify the chain of command, strengthen local partnerships, and give field leaders greater ability to respond to conditions on the ground.

Within Wisconsin, and around the Great Lakes, local national forests are minimally affected by the reorganization. They remain focused on their important work, including the Tribal relations functions raised in your letter. As the Agency shifts from a Regional Office model, the Milwaukee office will close. However, the Forest Service will establish a new State Office in Madison, Wisconsin. State Directors will bring leadership closer to the work and ensure the right span of control with fewer forests within each of their areas. They will include the line authority needed to operate effectively, including the ability to serve in the important government to government roles that are critical to Tribal relations.

This is a significant moment for the Forest Service. It reflects both the challenges the Agency faces and the opportunity to strengthen the mission for the long term. I want to be clear there is a position for every current employee in the new structure. We recognize their skills and experience are essential to the work ahead. The reality is, the Forest Service budget cannot sustain the number of facilities they have, let alone the \$3 billion in deferred maintenance. We are taking a hard look at the cost of each facility, its utilization, and its deferred maintenance needs, while supporting our people. These decisions are about facilities and upkeep, not jobs or programs.

Thank you, again, for your letter. If you have additional questions, please have a member of your staff contact USDA's Office of Congressional Relations at (202) 720-7095 or ocr@usda.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'MB', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Michael K. Boren
Under Secretary
Natural Resources and Environment
U.S. Department of Agriculture