



OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

October 13, 2026

THE HONORABLE MAZIE K. HIRONO
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Hirono,

Thank you for your August 6, 2026, letter, cosigned by your colleagues, regarding the reorganization of the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Forest Service.

Since the time Secretary Rollins issued Secretary Memorandum SM 1078-015, the Department emphasized the Forest Service is retaining its research capacity and staffing while reducing facilities costs. This approach remains true. The Secretary specifically highlighted the Forest Service will retain the Fire Sciences Lab and Forest Products Lab.

The Forest Service's consideration of facilities closures included several factors and their impacts on the Agency's mission and goals. For example, we examined whether the locations would host State Offices or Service Centers in the future Forest Service organization. We also considered whether they are within operational spaces for the National Forest System, operate under zero-cost arrangements, have critical research and infrastructure, and/or are part of the Experimental Forest network. These reviews were practical, fiscally responsible, and focused on strengthening places that directly support our mission-critical research.

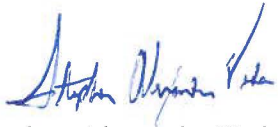
To become fiscally stable, it is necessary to consolidate and reduce our facilities portfolio and prioritize cost-effective locations for Agency buildings. Current funding for facility maintenance and leased space is unsustainable and misaligned with the Agency's operational priorities. For example, the Forest Service currently has a \$3B deferred maintenance backlog.

The Department and the Agency remain transparent about the reorganization. We provide regular updates via the USDA Reorganization website: <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/reorganization> and the Forest Service Reorganization website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/reorganization>.

Again, thank you for writing and for your interest in the Nation's forests and grasslands. If you or your staff have additional questions, please contact Jacob Donnay, Director of Legislative Affairs, at (571) 414-7077 or jacob.donnay@usda.gov. Alternatively, your staff can contact

USDA's Office of Congressional Relations at (202) 720-7095 or ocr@usda.gov. We sent a copy of this letter to your colleagues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Stephen Alexander Vaden".

Stephen Alexander Vaden
Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Enclosure: Secretary Memorandum: SM 1078-015