



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

June 3, 2026

THE HONORABLE CHRIS VAN HOLLEN
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Van Hollen,

Thank you for your April 24, 2026, letter, cosigned by your colleagues, regarding the reorganization of the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Forest Service and specifically, the Baltimore Urban Field Station. Ongoing decisions around reorganization are about facilities and upkeep, not jobs or research programs.

The Forest Service shares your enthusiasm for the site and its work.

Evaluation of the Forest Service facilities at Catonsville, Maryland, continues. The facility currently houses 12 agency employees and costs \$129,637 annually in leasing expenses. Union negotiations for the reorganization have begun and will include discussions concerning the employees in Catonsville. There is a job in the reorganized Forest Service for every employee in the Agency; there are no plans to terminate employees. Additionally, it is the Agency's intent to relocate displaced employees at other Federal offices or with partner organizations within their commuting area, when possible.

Nationwide, it is important to note that our budget cannot sustain the number of facilities we have, let alone their \$3 billion in deferred maintenance. We are undertaking a strenuous review of the cost of each facility, its utilization, and its deferred maintenance needs, all while supporting our employees and the communities they serve. These are proposed closures, and the Forest Service has not yet finalized any decisions. Consolidating research locations while protecting the research itself makes such sense, a May 2024 memorandum reveals the Biden Administration planned to do the same.

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. We sent a copy of this letter to your colleagues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Stephen Alexander Vaden", is positioned above the printed name.

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