



The Honorable USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

RE: Staffing cuts to the U.S. Forest Service

February 24, 2025

Dear Secretary Rollins:

The White River National Forest is the busiest forest in the United States, encompassing some of the country's best known ski areas, eight designated wilderness areas and four large reservoirs that store drinking water for nearby communities. Those 2.3 million acres of public land are the lifeblood of the Rocky Mountains and the Aspen community. They provide essential resources, landscapes, and a plethora of recreation opportunities, and are protected by the civil servants who process permits, protect our water resources, clean the bathrooms, and ensure that unattended campfires are doused. These areas also contribute significantly to the economy. Travel spending by visitors also contributed \$4.2 billion to the "Rockies Playground" region that includes Pitkin, Eagle and Summit Counties, according to a 2023 report for the Colorado Tourism Office.

I am writing to express concern over sweeping staff reductions in the Forest Service and an ongoing hiring freeze that impacts already understaffed offices.

Staffing shortages have already indefinitely closed a major office in our local region. The further reduction in Forest Service personnel of 90 people in Colorado has the potential to be devastating to the region and to the proactive approaches of forest management, including proscribed burns, watershed protection, road maintenance, and facility maintenance. Potential reduction in Forest Service permitting could shutter local businesses that rely on permits – such as outfitters and guides for fishing, skiing, and rafting trips.

Please steward and protect our communities and public lands from negative impacts on outdoor recreation, high-value wildlife habitat, watersheds, air quality, and the rural character of federal lands in our region.

It is time to direct more funding into the forest and restore these crucial positions.

Sincerely,

Torre
Mayor, City of Aspen

CC: U.S. Senator Michael Bennet
U.S. Senator John Hickenlooper
U.S. Representative Jeff Hurd