



October 10, 2022

Senator Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator
261 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Bennet:

Thank you for your continued leadership for the people of Colorado. As the Farm Bill comes up for consideration, the City of Aspen requests you extend support for moving forward with partnerships between local communities and the U.S. Forest Service for redevelopment opportunities on Forest Service land holdings.

The City of Aspen, along with Roaring Fork Transportation Authority, Colorado Mountain College, Pitkin County, Aspen Valley Hospital, and Aspen School District are collaborating with our local White River National Forest staff to develop new facilities, including workforce housing, to meet needs for the Forest Service and government service providers in the Roaring Fork Valley. This is an exciting project that has the potential to attain community and Forest Service needs for decades.

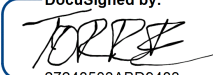
In support of this work, Aspen is requesting additional clarifications in the Farm Bill conversations to aid in bringing this project to fruition. They are:

1. **Extension of time for lease negotiations.** Aspen and the conglomerate of partners are working diligently in creating a project that the Forest Service and community can embrace. However, we do not want to be rushed by the expiration of the 2018 Farm Bill. **We request that the lease program be extended for an additional 5 years.**
2. **Lease Length.** Currently there is concern among our partners that the Forest Service is limited to only a 30–50-year land lease. The economics of development in mountain towns, particularly with construction inflation, make this partnership less attractive. **We ask that the Forest Service have explicit authority in the Farm Bill to enter into up to 100-year leases in exchange for the substantial local investment.**

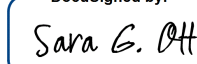
3. **Allow credit for off-site accommodation of Forest Service needs.** Currently the interpretation of the Farm Bill and supporting rule making omits the possibility for a community to receive credit for supporting the local ranger district with land and buildings off-site from the Forest Service parcel. As an example, for the Aspen site, this has become a major constraint to provide warehouse, shop, visitor, and administrative office space in a residential neighborhood. These needs could be better met on land owned by some of our partners. Receiving credit for making these improvements for the Forest Service through a mutual lease would assist in utilizing the right location for the right type of compatible activities. **We request that local communities have the flexibility to support the Forest Service with non-forest service lands and that credit for the U.S. Forest Service use be included in the calculation of local community contributions.**

Thank you, Senator, for your continued support and belief in partnerships. We would greatly appreciate any assistance you can provide by making these clarifications in the next Farm Bill. Please reach out with any questions or comments.

Sincerely,

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