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June 23, 2025

*A personalized copy of this letter was sent Senators Murkowski and Merkley and Representatives Simpson and Pingree.*

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

The National Association of Forest Service Retirees (NAFSR) asks for your support to fund the USDA Forest Service's Forest and Rangelands Research program during the FY 2026 Interior Appropriations bill process. The President's Budget Request calls for terminating research programs and closing research stations with the exception of the Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program.

The Forest and Rangelands Research (FRR) program is a high-return project that is the cornerstone of the nation's land stewardship strategy. Its innovations are also the foundation for the economic health of the nation's forest sector, and in turn, the economic health and well-being of hundreds of counties and thousands of rural communities.

The FRR budget accounts for half of the nation's total research capacity focused on forests. In recent years, a portion of the FRR budget has funded over 2,000 cooperative agreements with university researchers and others. These agreements with partners, valued at over \$47 million, will also be terminated if the President's budget is enacted as proposed.

The FRR program supports a broad range of critically important fields of activity for the entire forest sector of the economy. Its research spans fire science that develops strategies and tactics that reduce risks, promote forest resilience and protect communities; timber management that supports sales and logging; forest management activities that limit damages from pests; silvicultural practices for reforesting areas burned by catastrophic

wildfires and promoting forest vigor and productivity; and methods to protect watersheds, wildlife and fish habitat, and forest recreation opportunities.

FRR scientists have demonstrated the importance of using active forest management and silvicultural practices to reduce the risks of wildfire and pest outbreaks—invaluable not only to National Forest System land managers, but also to state forestry agencies and both private and corporate forest landowners. Further, FRR has developed and trained federal and state land managers and consulting foresters on how to best implement these management practices in the hundreds of forest types found across the nation. No one else can do that as well as Forest Service researchers.

FRR's specialty is long-term research that leads to strategic insights and market innovations. Universities, industrial firms, and non-governmental organizations rarely focus on long-term research unless it's through partnerships with Forest Service researchers. Only Agency researchers have experimental forests and laboratories with scientific equipment and experienced staff needed to solve complex problems and translate technological innovations into marketable products. Although long-term research can take some years, the implementation and commercialization of the agency's innovations creates long-term benefits for the nation's economy and communities.

Our nation's forests are too important to risk the uncertainties and lost opportunities created by terminating the Forest and Rangelands Research program.

Sincerely,

*Steve Ellis*

Steve Ellis, Chair  
National Association of Forest Service Retirees