



May 8, 2026

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Dear Chief Schultz:

On behalf of the National Association of Forest Service Retirees (NAFSR), I write to follow up on our ongoing dialogue regarding the proposed reorganization of the U.S. Forest Service.

We were very encouraged by the meeting held on April 1, 2026, with you and Associate Chief Chris French had with our Board of Directors. That engagement was substantive, candid, and genuinely helpful in advancing our collective understanding of where the reorganization effort currently stands. It reflects the commitment to transparency that we know you take seriously, and we are grateful for the time you invested with our Board. That kind of open dialogue between agency leadership and those affected by this reorganization is precisely what is needed as consequential decisions of this nature are being made.

Nonetheless, we must be direct: NAFSR continues to hold serious concerns about aspects of the reorganization proposal and its implementation. The questions our members are raising go to the heart of the Forest Service's ability to fulfill its legislatively mandated responsibilities — to manage and protect over 193 million acres of National Forests and Grasslands, meet its legally mandated responsibilities for all our nation's forests, support rural communities

and economies, sustain clean water for millions of Americans, and respond effectively to wildfire and other emergencies.

Following our April 1st meeting, NAFSR convened our broader membership to gather their

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perspectives and questions about the reorganization. That process produced a significant volume of thoughtful, experience-based questions that we believe deserve responses. In the continued spirit of transparency you have demonstrated, we are requesting your responses to the member questions compiled in the attachment to this letter so we can share them with our members and the broader community of people who care deeply about the future of our National Forests and the Forest Service reorganization.

Our members are seeking clarity on a wide array of concerns, including the reorganization justification, accountability, transparency, workforce impacts, cost savings, operational continuity and technical expertise, legal authority, consultation, rural communities and their economies, along with Research and Development, State, Private and Tribal Forestry and wildfire response and recovery.

NAFSR's members represent literally thousands of years of institutional knowledge and an enduring commitment to the Forest Service mission. We are not critics for the sake of criticism; we want this reorganization to succeed if it can be designed in a way that truly advances efficiency and public service. We remain ready and willing to serve as a resource as that work continues.

Thank you for your continued openness to our engagement. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Bill Avey

Bill Avey, Chair
National Association of Forest Service Retirees

NAFSR Member Questions related to USFS Reorganization Proposal

1. What are the key justifications to trigger this reorganization?
2. What metrics will you use to determine if this plan succeeds or fails?
3. What is the expected cost, the projected savings and when will they accrue?
4. Since funding for this reorganization is not included in the President's Budget, what is the plan for paying for this reorganization?
5. Do you believe the Forest Service will be more or less capable of fulfilling its mission with fewer people after these changes? It seems like you are expecting to do more with less.
6. How will the reorganization make implementation of requirements like NEPA and ESA more efficient?
7. How will historical artifacts in the Yates Building, like the Chief's desk, be preserved when the Chief is relocated to Salt Lake City? What about artifacts and historical documents located in the Regional Offices that will be closed?
8. As part of the reorganization is it expected that funding will be shifted to State or private entities? If so, how much is being considered?
9. How many people and/or positions will this reorganization move/eliminate?
10. On NPR's 1-A, the Chief said several times that 'only' 500 employees would be moved, yet I heard him also say 200+ employees from the WO will need to relocate and all the Regional Offices will be closed – which means all those employees will be relocating to Forests or the Service Centers. That is considerably more than 500 employees. Can you help us understand why only 500 employees are expected to be moved? Also, why did approximately 6,000 employees receive letters indicating position changes if only 500 total will be moved?
11. How many experienced personnel—firefighters, ecologists, land managers—are expected to leave or have already departed under this plan?
12. We have heard employees are being asked to sign non-disclosure agreements

and loyalty agreements? Is this true? How does this demonstrate transparency?

13. What is the proposed structure of the State Offices? Will those directed reassignments be considered managerial forced moves and as such will relocations be paid for?

14. What is the reporting structure between State Offices and Service Centers? How will the consolidation of functions into the new Service Centers be different and work more effectively than the centralization of HR into the Albuquerque location?

15. What analysis was done to inform reorganization decisions and are those reports available? Do they demonstrate that there will not be impacts to National Forest resources, watershed conditions, threatened and endangered species, recreation opportunities, acres burned, etc. due to this reorganization?

16. What alternatives were considered to the current plan?

17. How does the movement of the Chief to Salt Lake City bring leadership closer to the field and align with the movement of R&D to a few locations which moves researchers away from the field sites where they work?

18. Will new State Directors be SES employees or political appointees?

19. How will the new structure maintain a geographic balance in agency policy and connections with states? The shift to 11 western state offices covering 16 states and 4 eastern offices covering 33 states diminishes Forest Service customer service to much of the population and timberland.

20. What is the vision for an agency communication program? Will all such work be centralized in a Salt Lake headquarters or in the remaining Washington Office? Will new State Offices be empowered to communicate and identify priorities?

21. How will technical expertise that was at the Regional level be provided? Examples are Engineering, Environmental Engineer, Structural Engineer, Architect, FERC relicensing, Special Use Permitting, etc.

22. We understand that Service Centers will be created, but we don't understand what functions will be located in them or how they will operate between the state offices?

23. Going from 9 regions, mainly based on state lines, to 15 state offices appears

very costly and inefficient. Why not keep the 9 regional offices and look at how to operate them more efficiently?

24. How will this plan affect rural economies that depend on Forest Service jobs and recreation?

25. Have tribal governments and local stakeholders been formally consulted? Are their responses available for review?

26. The Forest Service reorganization is proceeding without the congressional approval required by Section 716 of the Agriculture Appropriations Act and Section 421 of the Interior Appropriations Act. How do you intend to proceed with reorganization when it does not have Congressional approval?

27. What criteria are being used in the determination of which research facilities will be retained? What were the criteria for selecting those already slated for closure?

28. What plans are in place for preserving the data and any long-term studies underway at research facilities being closed?

29. What does the closure of R&D facilities mean for the employees located there? Is the line of research carried out at closed facilities being eliminated or will employees be expected to relocate and commute to conduct their research?

30. What is the future of SP&TF? As the nation's forestry agency, what role will the Forest Service continue to have with our nation's forests outside of the National Forests?