



February 16, 2025

**Statement of Support  
for  
Forest Service Employees**

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**The National Association of Forest Service Retirees (NAFSR) strongly supports the dedicated workforce of the USDA Forest Service.** We know from experience that this workforce is full of hard-working, conscientious people deeply dedicated to the Forest Service mission of maintaining the health and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands for the benefit of current and future generations, as well as active members of their communities.

**To current Forest Service employees,** we appreciate your service in producing valued benefits for the American people. We encourage you to stay proud and strong in your commitment to the agency mission. Forest Service retirees are here to support you.

**To employees adversely affected by current workforce actions,** we value your public service. We are heartbroken by the sudden, severe impacts on you and your families.

**To NAFSR members and other Forest Service retirees,** we urge you to support agency employees by offering assistance with navigating existing workforce challenges. We ask you to join us in advocating on behalf of the workforce by engaging at all levels in support of public land management. We also encourage you to support other organizations working to assist Federal civil servants.

**To those less familiar,** the Forest Service is an agency within the Department of Agriculture which manages 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands for the benefit of the public. It also assists state forestry agencies and private forest landowners in keeping their forests healthy and productive. This complex mission requires a workforce of industrious people, in both career and temporary positions. These employees:

- provide critical wildfire suppression to protect communities and natural resources.
- maintain safe and beautiful public lands as settings for outdoor recreation by hunters, campers, hikers, nature lovers, and those seeking space and solitude.
- restore and maintain populations of native fish and wildlife and their habitats, and the clean water and air and productive soils that help hold our natural world together.
- prepare and sell forest products for industry and administer permits for oil and gas and mineral exploration and development.
- conduct research in support of scientific forest management, wood utilization, and the rapidly evolving wildland fire environment.
- administer permits that provide a vast variety of special commercial and private uses of national forest lands.

Many of these land management activities bring in funds to the U.S. Treasury. Forest Service projects managing natural resources also provide non-federal job opportunities in rural communities across the country and contribute to our nation's economy, infrastructure, energy independence, and security.

**Forest Service employees are our neighbors throughout the country.** They are coaches of our youth sports teams, leaders in our community service organizations, and sit beside us in church. They often live in communities adjacent to the national forests and grasslands where their jobs are located. They are involved in our communities because they are conscientious, public service-oriented people. They have a profound effect on the quality of life, economics, and social health of communities across our country. The agency contracts, agreements, and partnerships that they make possible contribute significantly to local business success and rural economies.

**Jobs in the Forest Service require knowledge, experience, and talent.** Turnover of experienced employees and hiring and development of new ones is a continuous process that is critical to meeting the agency mission. Major disruption of this process will have long-term detrimental consequences to benefits the public expects from the Forest Service.

**NAFSR is an organization comprised of retired Forest Service employees.** As former civil servants who spent our careers caring for the land and serving people, we understand the value of the workforce and the jobs they perform. We care about Forest Service employees and their well-being and the long-term success of the mission we continue to share with them. We ask you to join us in caring for and supporting our dedicated public servants.

Attached is a document identifying resources that may be useful during this this time.

Sincerely,

***Board of Directors***

National Association of Forest Service Retirees

**Here are some recommendations from the National Association of Forest Service Retirees (NAFSR) and resources for Forest Service employees who may be faced with sudden notice of termination, administrative leave, reduction in force, or other job changes:**

- **Continue to do your job.** Until you are notified of a change, continue doing your job to the best of your ability.
- **Document what happens to you.** During highly stress situations, it is difficult to remember details of how things happened, what you were told, and who was there. Take time to write a “memo for the record” as soon as possible after you are given verbal directions that significantly change your job status, conditions of work, and the work you are normally assigned. Document what you were told, when, by whom, and who else was there to hear the conversation. Retain these notes for future reference.
- **Anticipate the loss of computer access.** If you are terminated or placed in a leave status, expect to immediately lose access to your email, computer systems, and internal intranet and Sharepoint information.
- **Gather Your Personal Records and Contacts.** Take these actions NOW, before you lose agency computer access.
  - Download to a personal drive and keep copies of your personal employment records (you may also request copies from the HRM Contact Center):
    - Your recent **performance** plans and ratings
    - Your **electronic Official Personnel File (eOPF)**, especially SF 50 Notifications of Personnel Action documenting your appointment type and job assignment, including pay plan, occupational series, grade, step, salary, and service computation date (SCD). The SCD is a key factor in a reduction in force (RIF) action.
    - Your **position description** and organization chart where you are assigned
    - Your most recent **earnings and leave statement (ELS)** showing balances for your leave and any credit hours.
    - Your most recent **benefits statements** from CONNECTHR showing health insurance (FEHB), life insurance (FEGLI), Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), and retirement details.
  - Ensure you have phone, email, and public web site information for supervisors, colleagues, and organizations you may need to contact after you leave.
  - Be ready to gather personal items at the office in case of a short-notice dismissal.
- **Is your position in a union bargaining unit?** Check with your supervisor or check the bargaining unit code on your SF-50. If your code is NOT 7777 (exempt), then your position is likely covered by a union contract and you can contact a union representative for help, even if you are not a dues-paying member. Over 20,000 jobs are covered under the master agreement between Forest Service and the National Federation of Federal Employees – Forest Service Council (<https://www.nffe-fsc.org/>). A small number of jobs are in units covered by the American Federation of Government Employees (<https://www.afge.org/about-us/agencies/USDA/AFGE>).
- **If you are notified of termination or other personnel action**, ask questions about anything you need clarity on, including the reasons for the change, what happens to your leave, timesheet, and benefits, and if you have appeal rights.
- **If you are placed on administrative leave, ask:**
  - Who is your point of contact if you have questions during the leave period?
  - Who will be updating and approving your timesheet and what will happen to your accrued annual leave and credit hours?
  - Will your health and life insurance, retirement and TSP contributions continue?
  - What options do you have to continue FEHB health insurance when your job ends?
  - Can you access your TSP funds when your job ends?

- Are you eligible for early, optional, discontinued service, or deferred retirement?

- **Ask about the Forest Service [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#).** The following info is currently available on the public Forest Service web page.

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offers free professional guidance to you and your family members when personal or work-related problems become difficult to manage.

Working with the EAP to find solutions to problems or develop better coping techniques will help you navigate life's difficulties. Take advantage of free assessments, short-term counseling, and referral information.

- Life adjustments
- Childcare referral
- Substance abuse
- Relationship issues
- Eldercare resources
- Marital and family problems
- Financial matters
- Emotional issues
- Crisis
- Legal issues
- Work problems
- Stress

This service is available to **all employees and their families**. Further, employees and their families may **continue to use the EAP for up to six months after separation from employment**.

**EAP company name:** Acentra

- **Call:** [1-833-621-2989](tel:1-833-621-2989) Acentra offers a toll-free line answered by certified clinicians 24 hours a day, seven days per week. Clinicians with experience supporting first responders (fire and law enforcement) will also be available to help you.
- **Text the EAP:** [1-833-621-2989](tel:1-833-621-2989)
- **Web:** <https://forestservicееap.com/> (Member login/Company ID: USFS)
- **App:** Acentra Connect (Install on work or personal cell phone using [Google Play](#) or the [App Store](#).)

- **Talk to your family about what could happen** and what options you might have if you lose your job. What options do you have for health care and paying monthly bills if you lose your job?
- **Are you eligible for retirement now, early, or deferred?** There are numerous scenarios in which you may be eligible to retire. This article from [www.govexec.com](http://www.govexec.com) explains how to navigate retirement amid the current chaos.
- **Get help with federal benefits and retirement questions.** The National Association of Active and Retired Federal Employees [www.narfe.org](http://www.narfe.org) has loads of information on federal employee benefits including webinars, FAQs, and pending and proposed legislation applicable to current, former, and retired employees.