



Office of the Under Secretary

Natural Resources and Environment
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250-0108

April 27, 2026

THE HONORABLE HILLARY J. SCHOLTEN
United States House of Representatives
1317 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Scholten,

Thank you for your April 16, 2026, letter to Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins, regarding the reorganization of the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Forest Service. This is an exciting opportunity to re-evaluate how the Forest Service functions, the services and opportunities that it provides, and how we serve the American people and steward shared landscapes.

Our newly proposed State-based model will bring our management and resources closer to field operations. Michigan will be primarily served out of our Great Lakes States Office and an Operations Service Center based in Madison, Wisconsin. Additionally, we are currently evaluating other nearby Michigan facilities for colocation of affected employees.

As part of the restructuring effort, we are closely evaluating our facilities to understand occupancy, cost of operations, and uses of the sites. In Michigan, the facilities under current evaluation are research sites and include:

- East Lansing Laboratory: Only about 50 percent occupied. We are assessing this facility and looking for nearby options that better fit staff needs.
- Houghton Site: Agency-owned with five buildings on site, one of which is a main office with laboratories. The site has \$440,000 in deferred maintenance, mostly to replace the main building's mechanical systems. The Agency is evaluating options for this site.
- L'Anse Site: Three employees work at this site and the lease ends in less than two years. We are looking at nearby sites where staff could continue to do localized work.
- Wellston (Harrietta) Site: This site has no assigned employees and is excess to the Agency's needs. The Agency is researching options to relocate the monitoring tower.

As a function of the broader USDA reorganization plan, the Forest Service is aligning its organizational structure to strengthen and empower local leadership, streamline operations, and improve mission delivery. Of note, the changes include a change in headquarters location to Salt Lake City, Utah, transitioning to a State-based leadership model, building a network of Operations Service Centers, and unifying the Agency's research program.

Moving the Forest Service's headquarters out of the national capital and into the communities we serve also unleashes a new, flatter State-based model that creates direct, senior-level points of

contact for Governors, Tribal leaders, and local partners. These State Directors, who will be career employees and subject to Federal hiring standards, will serve as National leaders with the authority to work alongside local partners, accelerate decision-making, and tailor solutions to meet local needs. This access for local leadership will be paramount in ensuring the Forest Service meets the needs of the American public. It will also empower local engagement and participation in the processes that dictate their access to the landscapes we collectively steward. Through reorganization, our important fire response functions will be unaffected. For additional information, please visit the Forest Service Reorganization website:
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/reorganization>.

Thank you, again, for your letter. If you have additional questions, please have a member of your staff contact USDA's Office of Congressional Relations at (202) 720-7095 or ocr@usda.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'MB', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michael K. Boren
Under Secretary
Natural Resources and Environment
U.S. Department of Agriculture