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COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE
JOINT COMMITTEE ON TAXATION

March 04, 2026

Tom Schultz
Chief
United States Forest Service
1400 Independence Ave., SW,
Washington, D.C. 20250-0003

Dear Chief Schultz,

Wildfire preparedness and response capabilities are perennial topics of concern for Oregonians who have suffered through devastating, catastrophic wildfires in recent, record-breaking years. Unfortunately, historic drought coupled with the Trump administration's ongoing staffing and budget cuts, and failure to maintain necessary hazardous fuels treatment mean communities across Oregon and the Western United States are potentially facing an unprecedented fire season. I ask that you respond with a detailed plan for addressing these issues and reducing the fire risk to communities in my state and across the West.

Oregon is currently in the midst of a worsening climate crisis that has produced one of the lowest recorded snowpacks in history, while most of the West is suffering from similar conditions. As a result, Oregonians and Westerners will no doubt face a longer, drier, and more dangerous fire season this year. That makes it critically important that action be taken now to prepare and protect vulnerable communities. This administration's decision not to recognize the climate crisis as a threat to our communities is having catastrophic consequences for Oregonians. I urge this administration to take proven measures to mitigate these elevated risks and ensure resources will be available to respond quickly when disaster strikes.

Last year, you acknowledged that "operational challenges" had limited the acres your agency had treated for hazardous fuels. Donald Trump's budget and staffing cuts led to a reduction in wildland firefighters, and directly resulted in fewer acres being treated for hazardous fuels. If not replaced, this lost capacity will result in insufficient capacity to fill much-needed resource orders during the heart of fire season. Furthermore, your agency delayed hazardous fuels treatments during the nearly two-month government shutdown, which coincided with the colder, wetter months of October and November, during which these treatments would traditionally take place.

In order to provide clarity on how these outstanding issues and public safety concerns are being addressed, please ensure your response includes answers to the following questions.

1. The drastic decline last year in acres treated for hazardous fuels by the Forest Service as compared to 2024, especially in Oregon, is deeply concerning. Will you commit to identifying the failures that led to this outcome, how you plan to prevent a recurrence this year, and commit to returning to or exceeding 2024 treatment acres in Oregon?

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2. Last year, you confirmed in response to my inquiry that the U.S. Forest Service lost wildland firefighting personnel as a result of Donald Trump and DOGE's budget and staffing cuts. Have you fully restored capacity to pre-Trump administration levels, including available Forest Service personnel with Incident Qualification Cards in response to my prior requests? If not, will you commit to doing so immediately?
3. Limitations and delays on grant funding and partnership agreements significantly limited prevention work in Oregon in 2025. Will you commit to ensure such delays do not occur in 2026?
4. Will you commit to providing Congress with a budget request that will allow the Forest Service to rapidly increase the pace and scale of prevention work in order to avoid more frequent deadly and costly wildfire disasters?

Given the urgency of this request, I ask that you respond no later than March 20, 2026 with the information requested, as well as any other information that is responsive to these concerns around wildfire preparedness, response and public safety. I appreciate your attention to this matter and remain committed to working with you to keep our communities safe during the difficult year ahead.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator

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