

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 14, 2026

Mr. Michael Boren
Under Secretary for Natural Resources and
Environment
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Under Secretary Boren,

Thank you for your April 14 response to our letter regarding U.S. Forest Service trails maintenance.

In our initial letter, we raised concerns that the Forest Service's actions dramatically reduced the agency's ability to adequately maintain these public facilities. We appreciate your stated commitment to work alongside partners to meet expectations for safe and accessible recreation opportunities. You shared plans for seasonal hiring, volunteer opportunities, and reducing the administrative burden for effective trail stewardship.

Now, as we near the end of the summer field season, we write to inquire about the outcomes of these efforts. Your response will help inform our efforts to ensure that Congress is adequately supporting continued safe and responsible recreation on public lands. We respectfully request responses to the following questions by October 30, and we ask that you share updated information following the close of the summer field season:

- You stated that the Forest Service planned to hire “up to 2,000 non-fire seasonal employees before the summer field season”.
 - a. How many such employees were ultimately hired?
 - b. Were all such employees successfully onboarded before the start of summer field season?
 - c. Please provide a breakdown of where these employees were assigned.
 - d. Many non-fire seasonal employees (1039 positions) were posted as GS-0462 Forestry Technician jobs with multiple duties. How many seasonal staff, who were fully onboarded in 2026, were primarily focused on trail maintenance and construction?
 - e. How many miles of trails have these employees maintained? What percentage of Forest Service trail maintenance was accomplished by agency employees this year?
 - f. You later raised the possibility of extended tours for seasonal employees funded by external partners.
 - i. Can you share how many extended tours have been made possible through such external funding arrangements?
- The internal report from 2025 indicated that some forest units had lost their entire trails staff, and you stated that the Forest Service was “identifying critical field level vacancies affecting trail program accomplishments and will develop a plan to address these roles and responsibilities.”
 - a. How many vacancies currently exist for trails maintenance positions across the Forest Service?

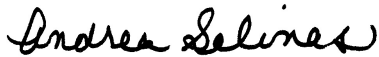
- b. How many critical vacancies did you identify, and how were those vacancies addressed? Were the responsibilities rolled into other existing positions, were new staff hired, were existing staff relocated, etc.?
 - c. How many new hires for permanent staff has the Forest Service made for trails maintenance positions?
 - d. Please provide a list of forests identified as having most “critical field level vacancies affecting trail program accomplishments.” Similarly, please provide a list of ranger districts that have less than 1 full time equivalent staff position primarily focused on trail management and maintenance.
 - e. Is the agency able to determine the amount the agency spends on salary and expenses for all staff associated with the management and maintenance of the agency’s trail program? How has that funding level changed over the last two decades in inflation adjusted dollars? If this is not possible, how can the agency determine whether sufficient funding is being appropriated to improve the deteriorated on-the-ground conditions of trails that prompted our initial letter.
- Your letter raised the possibility of expanding partnerships with external partners to improve volunteer engagement and increase on-the-ground support for trail maintenance, including by strengthening the adopt-a-trail program and reducing administrative burden to enhance award management.
 - a. How have many new adopt-a-trail volunteers participated in the program this summer field season?
 - i. How does this compare to previous years?
 - ii. How many miles of trail did they maintain?
 - iii. What is the geographic distribution of these volunteers?
 - b. How has the Forest Service reduced administrative burden for external partners?
 - i. Please include specific examples, including any measurable impact on trails management outcome.
 - ii. Did the agency seek any deviations to the general terms and conditions requirements promulgated by the Department of Agriculture in 2025 for trails-related grants and agreements?
 - iii. How is the agency expanding training and support for partners to expand shared stewardship while simultaneously ensuring trails are maintained to agency standards and volunteers are operating safely?
 - c. Please provide the number of trails-related grants and agreements awarded or entered into by the Forest Service for each of the last five years.
 - d. How have National Trails Day events contributed to the growth of durable partnership that further the agency’s long-term trail maintenance plans? What is your plan for using this event to create measurable improvements in resource conditions.
- In total, how many miles of Forest Service trails have been constructed, maintained, or improved in 2026 and for each of the last five years?
 - a. How many miles of trails are in the current trail maintenance backlog? What is the current estimate for federal funding necessary to address that backlog?
 - b. Given the backlog of maintenance on trails, bridges and other infrastructure that the public relies on for access to our federal lands, why did the Forest Service’s budget justification propose

reducing annual appropriations for the maintenance of national forest trails by approximately two-thirds (Capital Improvement and Maintenance, Trails cut from \$22M in FY26 Enacted level to \$8M in the White House's FY27 budget)?

- The Forest Service is in the middle of a Ten-Year Trail Stewardship Challenge. Are you on track to achieve the objectives in that challenge by 2030? What barriers do you face?

Thank you for your continued commitment to ensuring the Forest Service meets its trail maintenance obligations. We look forward to your response and working with you to ensure safe, responsible, and sustained access to public lands.

Sincerely,



Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress



Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress



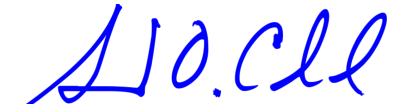
Angie Craig
Member of Congress
Ranking Member, Committee on
Agriculture



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



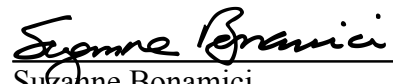
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