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**United States Senate**  
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6150  
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June 10, 2025

The Honorable Brooke Rollins  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins:

I write to express deep concern regarding the devastating impact of the *Department of Government Efficiency's* (DOGE) actions at the United States Forest Service (USFS). New layers of red tape installed by DOGE have created dysfunction, confusion, and uncertainty at the agency. Elon Musk and DOGE promised to make government more efficient and to root out waste. Instead, their actions have made the agency less efficient, and as a result, critical supplies are missing and garbage is piling up across the National Forest System.

As you know, USFS manages more than 30,000 recreation sites around the country where Americans hike, bike, picnic, camp, fish, and engage in other recreational activities.<sup>1</sup> Nearly 160 million people visit the National Forest System annually.<sup>2</sup> A visit to our public lands not only improves visitors' physical and mental health, but also provides access to cultural and heritage opportunities that build community and a sense of national pride. The economic benefits associated with the National Forest System are equally as pronounced. Outdoor recreation on the National Forest System alone contributes over \$13 billion to the economy and supports more than 160,000 jobs.<sup>3</sup> Despite the clear benefits of a fully-functioning USFS, DOGE has undermined the agency at every turn and prevented USFS from carrying out its core responsibilities.

According to a recent report, USFS has suffered significant operational failings since DOGE personnel arrived at the agency.<sup>4</sup> New processes instituted by DOGE have led to lengthy approval times for contracts, significantly diminishing the agency's ability to meet basic functions and needs. Contracts for janitorial services that previously received approval in mere days are now reportedly taking a month or longer to complete.<sup>5</sup> The delay has led to garbage piling up at recreation sites and toilets going uncleaned or unemptied.

The threat to public health and safety from contracting delays is not limited to custodial services. The additional levels of review mandated by DOGE have also reportedly slowed down or halted wildfire

<sup>1</sup> "Visit Destinations," U.S. Department of Agriculture – Forest Service. <https://www.fs.usda.gov/visit/destinations>.

<sup>2</sup> "U.S. Forest Service National Visitor Use Monitoring Survey Results," United States Department of Agriculture – Forest Service. <https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2022-National-Visitor-Use-Monitoring-Summary-Report.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> "Recreation Makes for a Healthy Economy," U.S. Department of Agriculture – Forest Service. <https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/features/recreation-makes-healthy-economies>

<sup>4</sup> Biohazard: Forest Service Employees Warn Cuts Having Devastating, and Disgusting, Impact," Government Executive, May 5, 2025. <https://www.govexec.com/management/2025/05/biohazard-forest-service-employees-warn-cuts-having-devastating-and-disgusting-impacts/405021/>.

<sup>5</sup> Id.

preparedness efforts, including the acquisition of firefighting equipment and helicopters.<sup>6</sup> Firefighting operations are extremely equipment intensive and must often set up in remote locations. Operational flexibility and contracting speed are therefore critical to successful firefighting efforts and public safety.

You appeared with Secretary Burgum at an event last month and said, “[w]e are taking this fire season very seriously, and our federal wildland firefighters are prepared to respond.”<sup>7</sup> Despite your assurances, it is clear that massive staff reductions, coupled with operational delays at USFS, have left the agency ill-prepared to meet the many challenges brought on by the summer months.

In light of these concerns, I request responses to the following questions by June 24, 2025:

1. According to recent reporting, the process for getting new procurements or contracts approved has changed several times.<sup>8</sup> Please describe in detail the process for getting new procurements approved at the agency. In responding to this question, please include the following:
  - a. The amount of time typically needed to receive approval.
  - b. How many personnel are required to approve procurements or contracts related to routine equipment replacement or maintenance.
  - c. Whether the approval chain includes the General Services Administration or other personnel outside the Forest Service.
2. Please describe in detail the process for getting modifications to existing contracts approved.
  - a. The amount of time typically needed to receive approval.
  - b. How many personnel are required to approve procurements or contracts related to routine equipment replacement or maintenance.
  - c. Whether the approval chain includes the General Services Administration or other personnel outside the Forest Service.
3. In February 2025, President Trump signed Executive Order (EO) 14222 establishing requirements for new and existing contracts.<sup>9</sup> Please provide the following information:
  - a. The EO states, “[e]ach Agency Head, in consultation with the agency’s DOGE Team Lead, shall conduct a comprehensive review of each agency’s contracting policies, procedures, and personnel. Each Agency Head shall complete this process within 30 days of the date of this order and shall not issue or approve new contracting officer warrants during the review period, unless the Agency Head determines such approval is necessary.” Have you completed this process? Did you determine any contract approvals were necessary during the review period?
  - b. The EO states, “[f]ollowing the review specified in subsection (c) of this section, and prior to entering into new contracts, each Agency Head shall, in consultation with the agency’s DOGE Team Lead, issue guidance on signing new contracts or modifying existing contracts to promote Government efficiency and the policies of my Administration. The Agency Head may approve new contracts prior to the issuance of such guidance on a case-by-case basis.” Did you approve any new contracts or modifications prior to the issuance of guidance?

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<sup>6</sup> Id.

<sup>7</sup> “Trump Admin Downplays Wildfire Preparedness Concerns,” Greenwire/Politico, May 21, 2025, <https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/eenews/2025/05/21/trump-admin-downplays-wildfire-preparedness-concerns-00362323>


<sup>8</sup> See note 4.

<sup>9</sup> “Executive Order 14222: Implementing the Presidents ‘Department of Government Efficiency’ Cost Efficiency Initiative,” The White House, February 26, 2025, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/03/03/2025-03527/implementing-the-presidents-department-of-government-efficiency-cost-efficiency-initiative>.

4. Please provide a list of all Department contracts for goods and services DOGE has identified for termination or renegotiation. In responding to this question, please provide the following information:
  - a. A description of each contract DOGE has identified for termination or renegotiation and the current status.
  - b. DOGE's justification for terminating or renegotiating the contract.
5. Since January 20, 2025, has the Department terminated or recompleted any contract for goods and services? If so, please provide the following information for each contract terminated or recompleted:
  - a. A description of the contract terminated or recompleted.
  - b. The reason the Department terminated or recompleted the contract.
6. Since January 20, 2025, has the Department entered into any new contracts for goods and services? If so, please provide detailed information.
7. Since January 20, 2025, has the agency received any complaints from staff about lengthy times to get janitorial services contracts approved or awarded? If so, please explain.
8. DOGE reportedly denied funding to continue using smoke detection devices called "sniffers." The agency also reportedly got rid of support for a platform used by firefighters to acquire equipment and track critical supplies.<sup>10</sup> Are these reports accurate? If so, please explain your rationale.
9. Is DOGE approval required each time contracted fire aviation assets are mobilized for water or fire-retardant drops?
10. Is DOGE approval required for each contract for locally-owned equipment that the Forest Service can mobilize through individual contracts with farmers and ranchers, such as bulldozers and backhoes?
11. Is DOGE approval required for fire camp contractors, such as caterers, medical personnel, or providers of portable toilets and showers?

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact my staff at (202) 224-4971.

Sincerely,



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Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator  
Ranking Member, Committee on  
Energy and Natural Resources

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<sup>10</sup> See note 4.