



Tony Evers

Office of the Governor | State of Wisconsin

July 21, 2025

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins:

I once again write to you to strongly oppose reported reductions in United States Forest Service (USFS) programs that support states, including Wisconsin, in order to cover the costs of the Trump Administration's decision to purge the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) of its expert workforce. Specifically, Wisconsin officials have already been warned by USFS officials to expect less funding from the Urban and Community Forestry grant program, presumably to cover the cost of terminating dedicated federal workers. These cuts to federal programs, coupled with the purging of critical USDA staff, will be devastating to states like Wisconsin that depend on these resources to support our forestry industries, which are critical to our way of life and economic success.

As I warned when I wrote to you in May, Wisconsin's forestry products industry contributes \$42 billion to the state's economy and supports about 126,000 jobs, which could experience significant consequences and impacts from these reckless cuts to federal investments and mass firings of federal workers. I urged you then to take immediate action to prevent funding and staff cuts that could impact Wisconsin's forests and the state's critical forestry industry. I am disappointed to have to be writing to you again to underscore the same concerns and urgency I raised now months ago.

Reductions to the USFS State, Private, and Tribal Forestry (SPTF) funding and workforce are detrimental to Wisconsin's forests, impacting programs required to maintain healthy forests and protect the forestry industry. The loss of USFS personnel affects Wisconsin's forestry capacity at nearly every level. Securing grant funds requires coordination with federal staff. Even if new grants are eliminated, Wisconsin holds existing grants that span up to five years, leaving our state with significant gaps in administration. Additionally, industry partners that receive pass-through grants will encounter payment delays and reduced ability to operate effectively.

States rely on facilitation and expertise from SPTF staff to closely collaborate on regional priorities. Efforts to address forestry and wildland fire issues that span state boundaries are less effective when approached individually in silos, as they lack the scale and coordination required for meaningful results. With a reduction in SPTF staff and funding, regional collaboration and expertise will become increasingly neglected, especially when states are already strained by reductions in other areas. Important multi-state regions like the Driftless Region in western Wisconsin that spans state lines will suffer from a lack of USFS coordination, which has been pivotal in past landscape-scale projects.

Additionally, forest health threats do not adhere to political boundaries. The USFS plays a key role in tracking pests across multiple states, enabling coordinated and proactive planning. Without this resource, mapping and tracking will lapse, leaving Wisconsin vulnerable to the spread of invasive species with damaging effects on ecosystems and forests.

SPTF grants allow Wisconsin to leverage state dollars, increase capacity, and invest in programs that cannot be fully implemented with state budget allocations alone. Without that support, state operations will become less efficient and lack capacity in critical areas such as wildfire preparedness and suppression, forest health and conservation, and urban and community forestry. Wisconsin currently receives over \$2 million in annual support from USFS, as well as valuable technical support from USFS staff for these efforts. Reducing USFS funding to cover cuts in staffing will result in exponential harm for Wisconsin communities.

In addition to potential SPTF reductions, I am very concerned about potential reductions in research and development. Forest management decisions, policies, and investments rely on data and analysis from the Forest Inventory Analysis (FIA), Urban Forest Inventory Analysis, and Timber Products Output (TPO) Survey. These tools capture information on 16.4 million acres of forestland and support over 60,000 forest-based jobs in Wisconsin. The USFS is instrumental in collecting and analyzing this data and summarizing ecological and economic trends for public use. Wisconsin depends on these findings to meet the research, innovation, protection, and investment needs of forest landowners, managers, and businesses.

It is untenable to expect Wisconsinites to take on the additional workload caused by cuts to the federal workforce while also gutting the investments necessary to support that effort. Using the very funds that are being eliminated to compensate for the workforce reduction undermines the trust and commitment that this important work requires.

Wisconsin remains committed to this work and our state's critical forestry industry. I am hopeful you and the Trump Administration will join in supporting this essential Wisconsin tradition and this important work. To that end, I once again urge you to reverse these misguided funding and staffing cuts that will negatively impact Wisconsin's forestry industry.

Respectfully,



Tony Evers
Governor

cc: Tom Schultz, Chief, United States Forest Service