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Date:

Mr. Randy Rasmussen
Director, Public Lands and Recreation
Back Country Horsemen of America
Post Office Box 1182
Columbia Falls, Montana 59912
wildernessadvisor@bcha.org

Dear Mr. Rasmussen:

Thank you for your letter of September 26, 2024, cosigned by your colleagues, to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service Chief Randy Moore regarding the Agency's fiscal year 2025 temporary and seasonal hiring practices. Chief Moore has asked me to respond.

The Forest Service is focused on fulfilling our commitments by maximizing all resources available. We have had to make difficult decisions to address the current budget challenges and hiring is at the forefront of those decisions. We are carefully considering the longer-term effects of all hiring decisions. Critical hiring and resource sharing will continue to address critical needs where possible. To help navigate hiring challenges, Regional Foresters have the authority to identify exceptions to hire temporary (1039) employees, including cases when partners fund a position.

Over the past two years, the Forest Service has increased our permanent workforce by over 20 percent. The Agency has hired more than 1,200 permanent seasonal employees instead of a similar number of temporary (1039) employees. Hiring permanent seasonal employees provides the Agency with greater stability. It also improves workforce retention by affording health and retirement benefits to many employees previously hired in temporary (1039) positions year after year without those benefits.

Again, thank you for writing and for your interest in the Nation's forests and grasslands. If you have further questions, please contact the Forest Service's Human Resources Management (HRM) helpdesk at 1 (877) 372-7248, option 2, or hrm_contact_center@usda.gov. We encourage you to share this response with your colleagues.

Sincerely,

LISA NORTROP
Associate Deputy Chief, Business Operations

