

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 1, 2026

Chief Tom Schultz
U.S. Forest Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Chief Schultz:

We write to seek much-needed transparency regarding immigration enforcement activities on Forest Service lands. As Members of Congress representing the Pacific Northwest and Democratic leadership of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the House Natural Resources Committee, and the House Agriculture Committee, we are concerned that the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) is misusing taxpayer dollars by neglecting their mission and directing career staff to prioritize immigration enforcement on federal public lands. Particularly during a difficult wildfire season, we want to express our gratitude to the Forest Service for fighting wildfires in the Pacific Northwest and across the country.

The mission of the Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.¹ However, over Labor Day weekend, USFS Law Enforcement Officers (LEO) reportedly took photographs of the identification of Washington families who were camping in the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest and issued tickets to the families for alleged violation of park rules. Hours later, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents arrived at the campsite with the LEOs, woke up the sleeping families by shaking their tents, and arrested five men who were later separated from their families and placed in immigration detention. A Department of Homeland Security (DHS) spokesperson confirmed that the five men were arrested during a joint operation with the USFS.²

The Forest Service is facing a myriad of crises: increased natural disasters like wildfires, deteriorating infrastructure, and a shrinking workforce—all exacerbated by the Trump administration's budget and staffing cuts. Redirecting strained resources away from pressing natural resources, recreation and land management priorities, and towards immigration enforcement undermines the Forest Service's mission to care for the land and serve people. In recent years, the Forest Service has prioritized increasing access for public lands users from all backgrounds and tourism has brought an economic boost to surrounding communities. However, the recent immigration raids on National Forest System lands as well as the August 2025 immigration raid on wildland firefighters at the Bear Gulch fire have shown a dramatic and concerning shift in agency policy regarding immigration enforcement and cooperation with ICE. There have been reports of similar immigration enforcement at Pisgah National Forest in North Carolina, which raises concerns that USFS is spending precious resources on immigration enforcement which is not fundamental to USFS' mission or operations.³

To further our understanding of the joint operation conducted by USFS and ICE, please answer the following questions as soon as possible, but no later than October 15, 2026.

Questions for the U.S. Forest Service:

¹ <https://www.federalregister.gov/agencies/forest-service>

² <https://www.outsideonline.com/outdoor-adventure/environment/ice-arrests-national-forest-granite-falls/>

³ <https://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/state/north-carolina/article316686109.html>

1. Which agency first identified those arrested as targets for investigation, when were they identified, and what information about the targets was used to justify the raid?
2. Can you confirm that the law enforcement officers that first approached the families were employees of the USFS?
3. To what extent did USFS participate in the raid, and under what authority? Please provide any agreement or memorandum that governs cooperation between the U.S. Forest Service and DHS.
4. Please provide any agreement or memorandum between the U.S. Forest Service and DHS that governs the collection and sharing of visitors' identification and reservation data with DHS or ICE.
5. What other immigration raids has the U.S. Forest Service participated in since January 21, 2025?
6. What appropriations account(s) has the USFS used to fund its participation in immigration enforcement operations since January 21, 2025, and how much funding has been obligated or expended for this purpose?
7. Has any USFS law enforcement personnel time, budget, or resources been reallocated from other law enforcement priorities (e.g., resource protection, search and rescue, wildfire-adjacent enforcement) to support immigration enforcement operations? If so, how much of this reallocation has been disclosed to Congress since these funds were appropriated for land management and resource protection purposes rather than immigration enforcement?
8. Given limited agency resources, why is it a priority of the USFS to use employees in the targeting of families on public land?

We are asking the USFS to reprioritize their efforts to support its mission of being trusted stewards of our public lands. Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Emily Randall
Member of Congress



Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress



Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



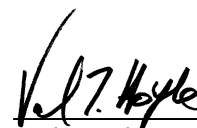
Adriano Espaillat
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Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress



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Val Hoyle
Member of Congress



Marilyn Strickland
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

cc: Acting Director Venturella, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement