



March 7, 2025

The Honorable Patty Murray  
 United States Senate  
 154 Russell Senate Office Building  
 Washington, D.C. 20510

# **RE: Concern over unprecedented and indiscriminate mass firings of federal employees**

Dear Senator Murray,

The undersigned 300 conservation, recreation, and wildlife organizations, along with elected officials and local businesses which serve or represent Washington citizens, are writing to express our outrage and deep concern regarding recent indiscriminate freeze and firings of critical staff that ensure our public lands and resources are effectively managed and protected.

The directives by the Trump administration affecting federal employees are undermining the ability of federal agencies to do the work that is needed, and which benefit the people of Washington and our nation.

Our national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and other public lands depend on the dedication of tens of thousands of federal employees. From leading educational programs and conducting backcountry rescues to maintaining trails and cleaning facilities, they work tirelessly—often behind the scenes—to protect our irreplaceable ecosystems and wildlife. The work they do is integral to effective management and protection of our water, lands, and use by the public. Their unwavering commitment ensures that these natural treasures continue to thrive for generations to come. Thousands of federal employees now find themselves without a job after signing leases, relocating families, and dedicating their lives to protecting these treasured places. Many more remain in limbo, uncertain about their future. These are hardworking public servants with families, and they deserve respect, stability, and gratitude for their service.

## Unprecedented Attack on Federal Employees

As of mid-February, the Trump Administration fired more than 10,000 federal workers across multiple agencies as part of its “large-scale reductions” in the government workforce. Included among those jobs lost were 10% of the US Forest Service (~3,400 employees) and 5% of the National Park Service (~1,000 employees).

The Administration has put forward a four-stage Reduction in Workforce (RIF) federal employees and civil servants, all of which provide important and critical duties related to our national security, trade and commerce, local economies, managing our public lands like national parks and forests, keeping Americans safe and healthy and addressing the impacts of Climate Change.

1. Hiring Freeze (1/20/25) – Immediately upon taking office, President Trump issued a hiring freeze prohibiting all federal agencies from hiring new positions or filling vacant positions in federal agencies.
2. Deferred Resignation or “Buyout” Program (1/28/25) – The Administration a week later offered the government’s largest “buyout” ever in both the number of employees eligible and the amount offered. The program gave federal employees just 10 days to make a decision to take the offer despite questions about legality and certainty of the promised paid administrative leave through September 30, 2025. It is estimated that 75,000 federal employees took the buyout offer which, combined with the hiring freeze, equates to a permanent reduction in the federal workforce and capacity.
3. Mass Workforce Firings (2/13/25) – Shortly after the deadline for the buyout program ended, the Administration sent emails to targeted federal employees who were within one or two years from a standard “probationary period (any new hire or current federal employee accepting a position is automatically placed in a one to two year probationary period) or were identified to be working on DEI-related work pursuant to the [“Department of Government Efficiency Workforce Optimization Initiative” Executive Order](#) firing them. At least 10,000 federal employees were estimated to be fired during this stage (more than 1,000 of them veterans). The EO also stipulates that no more than one federal employee can be hired in the future for every 4 that are fired.
4. Reduction in Force Plans (est. Mid-March 2025) – Pursuant to the Executive Order, agencies will be required to provide data to the Department of Government Efficiency by mid-March which is anticipated to result in as much as an additional 20% of job cuts in some agencies including the land management agencies.

Due to the lack of accountability and transparency of these efforts, it is difficult to get a full accounting of the number of employees fired but below is a conservative estimate for key agencies:

- National Park Service (NPS): The Trump administration has fired approximately 1,000 newly-hired National Park Service employees and approximately 700 NPS staff have taken the early buy-out option, further reducing the workforce. Olympic, Mount Rainier, and North Cascades national parks are a few of the most popular and most visited parks in Washington State.

- U.S. Forest Service (USFS): The Trump Administration has fired about 3,400 workers nationwide amounting to about 10% of the agency's total workforce. Washington State is home to 5 National Forests providing world class recreational opportunities, scenic beauty, and key natural resources for local economies.
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM): The Trump Administration has fired as many as 800 employees from the largest land management agency in the federal government. There are 400,000 acres of BLM lands in Washington State including San Juan Island National Monument, Juniper Dunes Wilderness, and Yakima River Canyon.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS): The agency responsible for enforcing the Endangered Species Act and managing more than 500 national wildlife refuges lost approximately 420 employees in the recent mass firings, including the entire staff of Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge in Florida focused on habitat for the endangered Florida Manatee.
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA): 800 workers at NOAA nationwide have been fired to date. NOAA employs more than 700 workers across Washington State and provides vital fisheries stock surveys and analysis for salmon and other marine species, coastal and marine ecosystem management, weather monitoring, ecosystem restoration work, and other important scientific research.
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): Approximately 1,700 employees were fired at the EPA including those in positions that monitor levels of toxins, regulate pollution in our rivers and streams, and track air quality for all Americans.
- Department of Energy (DOE): An estimated 1,200 – 2,000 employees have been fired from the DOE including a dozen at the Hanford Nuclear Energy Site in Washington State. These positions include safety engineers, environmental scientists, and others who are critical to the Hanford cleanup mission and the safety of the workers there as well as the general public.
- Bonneville Power Administration (BPA): Between employees who were fired, those whose job offers were rescinded, and those who took the early buyout option, BPA is estimated to have lost between 450 and 600 electricians and engineers to dispatchers who help keep the lights on in the Northwest. Importantly, these are positions funded by ratepayers—not with federal funding.

## Impacts on Washington State

As we look ahead to the coming weeks and the summer season, it's crucial to understand the impact of these mass firings on our public lands right here in Washington State:

**Reduced Recreational Access** – Our National Parks, Forest Service, and other federal land management agencies are already understaffed and the reckless decision to further reduce the workforce impacts these agencies even more. For example, since 2010, staffing to operate national parks has declined by 20% and at the same time visitation has increased 16%. Without adequate staff this spring and summer we will see closed visitor centers and campgrounds, longer lines, unmaintained bathrooms, and reduced guided programs and trips. Already, the Franklin Falls and Denny Creek Trailheads were closed near Snoqualmie Pass by the Mt. Baker - Snoqualmie National Forest due to staff firings.

**Wildfire Response** – We have all witnessed and been impacted by the wildfires that threaten our public lands and adjacent forests each summer due to climate change and past fire management practices. Federal employees at the Forest Service and other agencies are critical to containing these fires and protecting life, property, and infrastructure. Despite statements by the Administration that wildland firefighting jobs are considered public safety positions that are exempted from the hiring freeze, it takes more than just those with “firefighting” in their job descriptions to respond to wildfires. Most Forest Service personnel from NEPA coordinators to Forest Supervisors are trained in firefighting, or provide critical incident management functions, and are called when needed to assist either on their own forest or other forests. The Forest Service also relies heavily on Administratively Determined staff that are temporary assignments to fill leadership and management positions on incident response teams during a wildfire. If these positions are not filled with

qualified individuals, many crews may refuse missions if they feel wildfire suppression responses will not be managed in a safe manner. Additionally, many Forest Service personnel play an important role in coordinating with state and municipal firefighting crews so they can help with responding. This loss of capacity will significantly impact public safety at the local level. Many fire officials are already warning that this and any further cuts will be a disaster for wildfire response this season.

**Economic Support for Rural Economies** – Our parks and forests are mostly located away from urban centers near small rural communities that are inextricably linked economically, socially, and culturally. These are landscapes that they call home and where they work, whether it be logging, mining, recreation, or land management. Reduction in federal staff has a direct effect on these communities and local businesses.

**Failure to Ensure Tribal Treaty Rights and Lifeways** – There are 29 tribes throughout Washington State that are recognized as Sovereign nations or have treaty rights with the federal government related to hunting, fishing, and gathering on federal public lands. Federal employees play an essential role in upholding the federal government's obligation to tribes whether they are in the Bureau of Indian Affairs or in one of the land management agencies where they have shared interests in managing fish, wildlife, and natural resources for cultural uses.

**Compromised Public Safety** – The mass firings will result in longer emergency response times for lost or injured visitors due to less staff available to assist with search and rescue, provide EMS, and proactively warn visitors of hazards.

**Lack of Enforcement** – Land management agencies are already challenged to provide sufficient enforcement against wildlife and plant poaching, permit violations, wilderness trespass, and dumping and vandalism violations. Mass firings will exacerbate this issue to the detriment of visitors, wildlife, and other natural resources.

**Poorly Maintained Facilities** – Insufficient staff will result in further reductions in road and trail maintenance after storm events resulting in more lost access. The agencies will have little or no capacity to pump toilets, clean and restock restrooms, empty trash, and ensure that buildings, bridges, and other infrastructure are safe for visitors.

**Public Education** – Ranger or campfire programs educating visitors about our public lands and what they have to offer will be reduced. Even educational and guided programs that are provided by organizations outside of our parks and forests will not be able to move forward without federal staff coordinating them.

**Unfinished Scientific Research** – Our public lands provide important opportunities for scientific research on wildlife, habitat, natural resources, climate change, natural disaster warning and response, and other important efforts. Many of these studies take years to complete and without the support of federal employees will result in disruption of long-term monitoring projects, loss of critical data and institutional knowledge, and unfinished projects. The Pacific Northwest National Laboratory saw workers who work on cutting-edge research and groundbreaking innovations on everything from energy storage to nuclear security fired recently.

Please speak out in support of our skilled and hard-working public servants in the federal government that have been and may be fired as part of this Administration's current efforts to drastically terminate tens of thousands of employees government wide. Please urge Secretary of Interior Burgum and Secretary of Agriculture Rollins to articulate the impacts of these actions to outdoor recreation, scientific research, health and safety, rural communities, our treasured landscapes, and Tribes.

Sincerely,

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Washington State Senate

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State Senator, 21st Legislative District  
Washington State Senate

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State Senator, 27<sup>th</sup> Legislative District  
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Here Today Brewery & Kitchen

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Fast Fashion Brewing & The Masonry

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Friends of Grays Harbor (Westport)

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Friends of Heybrook Ridge (Index)

Janet Strong  
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Mark Larabee  
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Pacific Crest Trail Association

Dave Schaub  
Executive Director  
Inland Northwest Land Conservancy (Spokane)

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Stoup Brewing & Stoup Distro

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Co-owner/Head Brewer  
Obec Brewing

Rachel Baker  
Forest Program Director  
Washington Conservation Action

Howard Garrett  
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Ron Swarner  
Owner  
Peaks & Pints (Tacoma)

Kenneth Trease  
Director of Brewing  
Burke-Gilman Brewing Company

Katherine Gooding  
Head Brewer  
Flying Bike Cooperative Brewing

Art Wolfe  
Photographer  
ArtWolfe.com

Amanda Parrish  
Executive Director  
The Lands Council (Spokane)

Shanon Tysland  
CEO  
Experience Momentum (Lynwood)

Brian Nelson  
President  
Wild Sky Community Trails Association (Index)

Scott Schell  
Executive Director  
Northwest Avalanche Center (North Bend)

Fitz Cahall and Becca Cahall  
Founders  
Duct Tape Then Beer

Jeff Kish  
Executive Director  
Pacific Northwest Trail Association (Sedro-Woolley)

Shanleigh Thomson  
Beer Education Specialist  
Shan Ferments

Steve Luke  
Owner  
Cloudburst Brewing

Elizabeth Dunne  
Director of Legal Advocacy  
Earth Law Center

Michael Roy  
CEO  
Roy Farms (Moxee)

James Alexander  
Co-Owner  
Structures Brewing

Zach Turner  
Co-Owner  
Single Hill Brewing (Yakima)

Genia Moncada  
Advocacy Chair, Polly Dyer Seattle Broads  
Great Old Broads for Wilderness

Kelsey, Ben, Liz & Craig Curran  
Owners  
Watershed Pub & Kitchen

Pat Hesselgesser  
Council Chair  
Washington Council Trout Unlimited

Stacy Carkonen  
Deputy Director  
Backbone Campaign

Bill Moyer  
Executive Director  
Solutionary Rail

Whitney Neugebauer  
Director  
Whale Scout (Woodinville)

Helen Cherullo  
Executive Director  
Braided River

Denis Tuzinovic  
Store Manager  
Patagonia Seattle

Cody Lee Morris  
Owner  
Potlatch Brewing (Hoodsport)

Tom Stevens & Mark Burr  
Owners  
Jellyfish Brewing Company

Lucas and Jamie Haines  
Owners  
Volition Brewing Company (North Bend)

Chris Tompkins  
Owner and Photographer  
Superclick Photography (Bothell)



Frieda Cohan  
Event Director  
Ravenna Brewing Company

Sarah Moorman  
Sales & Operations  
Big Time Brewery

Robin Warma  
Owner  
Phinney Station, Ridgewood Bottle & Tap and Citizen  
Collective

Molly Whitney  
Executive Director  
Cascade Forest Conservancy (Vancouver)

Bob Brenlin  
Owner  
Latona Pub, Fiddlers Inn and Hopvine Pub