



**Organization of Biological
Field Stations**

*Supporting environmental research, education, and
public understanding*



**AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF
BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES**

5 August 2025

The Honorable Brooke L. Rollins
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

The Honorable Tom Schultz
Forest Service Chief
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Re: Maintaining USFS Experimental Forests and Ranges

Dear Secretary Rollins and Chief Schultz,

On behalf of the Organization of Biological Field Stations (OBFS) and the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS), we write to express our strong support for the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Experimental Forests and Ranges – 84 critical research and product management sites administered by the USFS Research Stations. OBFS represents over 300 field stations and marine laboratories across the United States, serving hundreds of thousands of visitors, scientists, students, and researchers each year. AIBS is a national scientific organization with 98 member scientific societies and organizations that represent the breadth of the biological sciences.

We write to ask for clarity on how USDA's re-organization plan, outlined in the July 24, 2025 Secretary Memorandum (SM 1078-015), **would impact the USFS Experimental Forests and Ranges (EFRs)**, which are currently administered by the USFS Research Stations. The memo states that the "current stand-alone Research Stations will be consolidated into a single location in Fort Collins, Colorado," but does not specify plans for the EFRs.

The EFRs constitute the world's largest and longest-running ecological research network, established progressively since 1908. The EFR network provides an incredible wealth of records and knowledge that **inform sustainable and profitable forest product harvesting** across the nation's natural and managed forest and grassland ecosystems. EFRs are also essential to understanding how fires start and how to successfully and affordably fight fire across our nation's varying geographies, forest types, and weather conditions.

The EFRs have long been one of the American customer's closest connections to the USDA's vital research programs. As 84 place-based programs across the country, **producing great and positive impact in American backyards**, the EFRs actively and effectively serve the four key pillars you identify in your Memorandum. The USFS' Fire

Sciences Lab and Forest Products Lab, both identified to be retained for their essential service in your Memorandum, are directly informed by and leverage the EFRs. Thus, **maintaining the 84 EFRs across the Nation is valuable to the American people and mission aligned with the USDA's future.**

The existing decentralized structure of five independent USFS Research Stations, each situated in a distinct U.S. region, aligns directly with the second pillar of your memorandum—bringing the USDA closer to its customers. This geographical dispersion is instrumental in fostering engagement and responsiveness with diverse stakeholders. Therefore, **preserving these stations is essential to achieving USDA objectives and sustaining operational efficiency**, rather than consolidating them into a single facility in Fort Collins, Colorado.

For decades, USFS research stations have supported collaborative, interdisciplinary research with public and private partners. The EFRs are indispensable, having trained thousands of students, foresters, scientists, and land managers. **The modest federal investment in the EFRs yields enormous returns** in public safety, forest health, water resources, and economic sustainability. Reducing support for the EFR's would cripple a critical infrastructure for forestry and education essential to the country's ability to adapt to challenges and serve our citizens. Further, it would undermine America's global leadership in forest science, product management, and wildfire research.

OBFS and AIBS are eager to see and highlight the increased impact of the EFRs for patriotic farmers, ranchers, producers, and citizens that result from your reorganization of the USDA. **We strongly urge that all the EFRs be maintained as they serve USDA's four key pillars**, generate important public safety protocols, demonstrate essential product management, and bolster local American economies, often in rural areas.

We look forward to answering any questions and continuing our dialog as you undertake this important phase in the history of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Forest Service.

Sincerely,
Organization of Biological Field Stations (OBFS)
American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS)

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