To: All Research and Development Employees

Today the Forest Service announced a comprehensive reorganization that includes the consolidation of research stations and R&D facilities. I am writing to explain what this means for your location and your position.

Facility Conditions:

For Research Stations and Labs that are closing: The facility that you report to has been identified for closure as part of the research station consolidation. Leases for this facility will not be renewed and/or owned facilities will be disposed of or repurposed. Research functions, programs, and positions currently based at this location will be relocated to alternative Forest Service facilities, labs, or R&D locations.

> **What This Means for You.** Your position is subject to reorganization, and your duty station may change. You will be relocated to an alternative forest, lab, or R&D facility. The specific details of which facility, which position, and on what timeline are being determined as part of the restructured R&D organization and will be communicated to you individually.

For Research Stations and Labs that are currently under evaluation: The facility that you report to has been identified as a location that is under evaluation for being kept, closed or repurposed. We are committed to completing this evaluation as quickly as possible.

> **What This Means for You.** Your position is subject to reorganization, but it is unknown at this time if your duty station will remain in your current commuting area. The specific details, whether your facility is closing or not, and on what timeline, are being determined as part of the restructured R&D organization and will be communicated to you as soon as possible. Regardless, you should expect changes to the organizational structure, your reporting chain, the composition of your work unit, and potentially your position description as functions are consolidated.

For Research Stations and Labs that will be kept: The facility where you work has been identified as a location that will absorb functions and personnel from other R&D facilities that are consolidating. Your duty station will remain in your local commuting area.

> **What This Means for You.** Your position is subject to reorganization, but your duty station will remain in your current commuting area. You should expect changes to the organizational structure, your reporting chain, the composition of your work unit, and potentially your position description as consolidated functions and new colleagues arrive at your facility. Some positions

outside of your current commuting area will be part of the reorganization and will be available through merit-based or negotiated processes if you are interested.

For R&D employees who work in a detached or remote location: Your position is subject to reorganization, and your duty station may, or may not change.

- If your current duty station is currently impacted, or later becomes impacted, then you will be relocated to a new duty station on a Forest, alternative lab or R&D facility. The specific details, exactly where, when, and into what position, have not yet been determined and will depend on the restructured organization that is currently being developed.
- If your current duty station will persist, even though your position is subject to reorganization, your duty station will most likely remain in your local commuting area.

For bargaining unit employees: The processes and procedures for this relocation are subject to negotiation with NFFE-FSC under the Master Agreement. A formal bargaining process will begin in April 2026. No changes to your duty station or position will be implemented until bargaining obligations are satisfied.

The Research Mission. I want to address something I know many of you are thinking about, the future of Forest Service research. The consolidation of research stations does not mean a retreat from the agency's research mission. Forest Service R&D has produced world-class science for over a century, and that will continue. The consolidation is about organizing the research enterprise more efficiently, not diminishing it. Your scientific expertise, your long-term datasets, your relationships with cooperators and universities these are irreplaceable assets, and the restructured R&D organization will need every one of them.

What We Know. The key facts for all R&D employees:

- There is a position for every permanent employee willing to accept reassignment.
- Employees required to relocate over 50 miles from their current duty station, are eligible to receive relocation assistance. Further detail will be provided in individual notices.
- The restructuring will unfold over the coming year. We do not expect anyone to move overnight. We understand that relocating a household, a family, and a life takes time.
- Research scientists' positions (GS and ST) will continue to follow the panel review process under Article 14 of the Master Agreement.
- VERA/VSIP. You may be eligible to participate in the Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA) or Voluntary Separation Incentive Payment (VSIP) programs in lieu of relocation. Information on those programs will be forthcoming.

What Happens Next. Over the coming months, more information will be shared about the consolidated R&D structure. Informational sessions will be held at your facility. Bargaining unit employees will be covered by the negotiated restructuring process. All employees will receive individual notification before any changes to their positions take effect.

Support Available. The following resources are available to you and your family:

- The Forest Service partners with Federal Occupational Health (FOH) to provide contracted Employee Assistance Program services. Information on services offered by FOH and internal

employee support specialists can be found on the Employee Support Hub, or by calling FOH directly at 800-222-0364. Refer to the employee support and development calendar for all upcoming webinars and trainings, which will be tailored to supporting employees through the reorganization process.

- Union Representatives: Contact your Local Lodge or NFFE-FSC representative with questions about your rights and the bargaining process
- Reorganization Information: The Forest Service intranet site Reorganization tab (*https://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/*) and the Forest Service Reorganization website (*https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/reorganization*) contain the most current information.

Point of Contact. If you have questions about this letter, please contact: F.S. Reorganization Inquiry Portal.

The Forest Service has always been distinguished by the quality of its science and the dedication of its researchers. That has not changed. What is changing is how we organize ourselves to deliver that science, and I am confident that with your continued commitment, the restructured R&D enterprise will be stronger for it.

Thank you for your continued service to the Forest Service and to the American public. I know this is a time of uncertainty, and I appreciate your patience and professionalism as we work through this transition.

THOMAS M. SCHULTZ, JR.
Chief