

April 3, 2020

The Honorable Vicki Christiansen
Chief, United States Forest Service
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington D.C., 20250

Dear Chief Christiansen,

Thank you for your leadership and commitment during this pandemic to protect the health and safety of Forest Service personnel and forest visitors while still meeting agency objectives. As the Forest Service continues enacting measures in response to the COVID-19 National Emergency, I request you also exercise appropriate authorities to provide immediate relief to guides, outfitters, and the outdoor industry that now face uncertainty and economic hardship due to a shortened season.

I was encouraged to hear that leadership at Region 1 of the U.S. Forest Service waived the requirement for guides and outfitters to submit itineraries and identify user days in advance of the season. I am also grateful that Region 1 has opted to substitute the minimum upfront payment for guide and outfitter permit holders rather than payments based on an unreliable estimate of seasonal use. Given the uncertainty guides and outfitters face going into what is typically their peak season, these flexibilities are commonsense. I encourage you to expedite implementing these policies agency-wide. Alternatively, I urge you to consider waiving these fees altogether for the remaining calendar year. This will provide even greater certainty and ensure outfit and guide businesses can sustain this crisis.

I request you consider implementing similar relief and flexibilities to other sectors of the outdoor economy including concessionaires, marina and campground operators, and ski resorts. Like outfitters and guides, these entities face uncertainty by a shortened season and could benefit greatly by reduced or waived permit and franchise fees.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to partnering with you to provide relief to the outdoor industry and rural communities that it sustains.

Sincerely,



STEVE DAINES
United States Senator