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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

October 11, 2013

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The Honorable Tom Tidwell
Chief
USDA Forest Service
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Chief Tidwell:

The Committee on Natural Resources ("Committee") requests that the U.S. Forest Service take steps as necessary to keep and not destroy documents related to the recent decisions to order certain activities located on National Forest System lands to cease operations, including grazing, concessionaires, and other privately-funded businesses, while allowing others to remain open for business.

According to recent media reports, a Forest Service spokesman has advised campground operators that these facilities must be shut down due to the lapse in appropriations, and that this action is being undertaken to be consistent with closings that have been implemented by the National Park Service. Most disturbingly, many of these concessionaires have stated that their facilities were not ordered closed during previous government shutdowns and were initially told they could remain open. The Forest Service has seemingly reversed course, as closure orders were given to campground operators and ranchers a week after the lapse in appropriations first occurred.

Finally, the Committee has also been contacted by individuals who have been advised by the Forest Service that the agency may close roads that provide access to cabins and other private property, as well as for recreational-use of National Forest System lands that are otherwise open to the public with minimal support from the Forest Service.

The Committee is considering an oversight hearing in the near future to better understand the selective closures being implemented by the Forest Service. It has become abundantly clear that Forest Service resources and staff time are being used to erect barriers, lock gates, and

otherwise prohibit the American public from visiting public lands that ordinarily require minimal, if any, Forest Service resources and staffing to operate and to order the closure of privately operated businesses and concessions that are located on Forest Service land that actually provide revenue *to* the federal government.

Among the issues of most concern to the Committee are why the Forest Service made a determination that certain privately-funded businesses operating on National Forest System land must be closed while others in similar situations are allowed to remain open; whether direction or guidance came from the Department of Agriculture or the Office of Management and Budget to actively restrict operation of these facilities and public access; and why these actions are being taken now when no similar closures have occurred during previous periods of a lapse in appropriations.

It is expected that the Forest Service will cooperate with the Committee's oversight by not destroying potentially responsive records and providing records to the Committee upon request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Doc Hastings", written in a cursive style.

Doc Hastings
Chairman