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**To:** Bridger-Teton National Forest Employees

As we move through this new year, let's regroup ourselves and reflect on the fundamental "why" that initially drew each of us to serve with the Forest Service. At the core of all we do is the U.S. Forest Service mission: "...to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations." This powerful mission statement perfectly captures what it means to responsibly manage national forests and grasslands for sustainable, multiple uses, balancing resource protection with public needs. This principle resonates deeply within the Bridger-Teton National Forest (BTNF) Vision:

*The Bridger-Teton National Forest is home to world-class headwaters, wildlife, Wilderness and wildlands. Conserving these values with providing for sustainable uses is our legacy.*

This vision, coupled with our tagline – "**We are leaders committed to SERVICE, ACTION and EXCELLENCE**" – forms the foundation of every action we take. It's important to recognize that your work, no matter your specific role, is incredibly significant and directly contributes to this mission. For FY26, our forest's priorities directly align with the Chief's eight key priorities.

Despite significant administrative changes, new directives, staff reductions, and budget constraints, our commitment to the Forest Service mission and the communities we serve remains unwavering. This year will bring more changes, and success hinges on strong collaboration across all districts and program areas. We expect all employees to reprioritize tasks and embrace additional duties, understanding that not every item may be completed. Our collective goal is to make the necessary efforts to be successful in these critical priority areas. You will be instrumental in addressing our priorities, your contributions are needed, highly valued, and very much appreciated.

Our priorities for FY26 are as follows:

## 1. Employee Well Being

### a. Prioritize Safety

Our people are our most important resource, and safety is our core value. We are dedicated to fostering a supportive work environment with a strong emphasis on workplace safety and health. No work on the Bridger Teton is worth endangering ourselves, our co-workers, or the public. While external challenges are beyond our control, we can empower everyone to take control of what is within their influence. We encourage taking care of each other, focusing on strong relationships, and reaching out when in need of help.



## **b. Employee Housing**

Continuing to provide and maintain government housing is essential to employee wellbeing and the long-term sustainability of our workforce. The plan is to keep moving forward across the Forest to assess our needs and look at possibilities. Even with our recent progress, the need continues to rise. Communities where housing is manageable today will inevitably face the same pressure we are already seeing in Teton County. Prioritizing housing is ultimately about retaining talent, recruiting the workforce we need and ensuring our employees can have a healthy work-life balance with stability in the communities they serve.

## **2. Core Mission Delivery**

### **a. Wildfire Response**

This year the Chief prioritized wildfire readiness and response in order to protect communities and natural resources from negative effects from wildfire. His expectation is that we continue to respond to all fires with an aggressive and safe initial response. For the Bridger-Teton, it's critical that we continue our work in fuel treatments and prescribed fire. Our planned treatments for FY26 address critical Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) needs that mitigate wildland fire risks for the communities we serve. We also ask non-fire employees to continue to seek opportunities to support both suppression and fuels reduction efforts across the Forest.

### **b. Active Forest Management: Expand Timber and Reduce Barriers to Grazing**

Last year, the Forest made strides in creating enough timber shelf stock to meet future timber targets. This year, we will continue to implement our 10-year vegetation plan while working with our partners and industry for out-year success. Four timber sales will be offered this year totaling 5,643 MBF. Vegetation management NEPA will be focused towards projects that offer a timber component. By the end of this FY, we will have at least one-year of sale prep and two-years of fully cleared shelf stock.

Efforts will be focused on optimizing range management, including addressing vacant allotments. This year, we will complete the Muddy Canyon EA; which is the last CE Lawsuit Allotment on the Forest that needs NEPA completed. Additionally, we will be re-initiating the NEPA for the Elk Ridge Vacant Allotments as part of the USDA-DOI Grazing Action Plan to assess the viability of vacant grazing allotments and reopening them for permitted use.

### **c. Recreation Access and Infrastructure: Maintain Access and Visitor Services**

A core priority is to keep our facilities, visitor centers, and front desks operational for the public. This year we will be hiring temporary seasonal employees to help us provide better services to the public. This will include maintaining critical trails and recreational facilities. Efforts will be directed towards road improvements on Union Pass and Green River Lakes Road to improve access. We will consider special authorized access for firewood cutting purposes. Furthermore, we will implement new requirements introduced by the Explore Act and coordinate with the State of Wyoming where partnerships will benefit the

public cost effectively. We are committed to keeping critical infrastructure safe for our employees and the public we serve.

As our special use program provides critical access for members of the public, we will continue to efficiently process and administer special use authorizations.

### **3. Strengthen Partnerships and Public Service:**

The Forest represents one of the best investments the American people can make in their future—providing clean water, healthy ecosystems, recreation opportunities, and economic benefits. To maximize this value, we need strong partners working alongside our dedicated employees to deliver measurable results on the ground for all forest users. Our goal is to empower our workforce and celebrate successes and innovations that translate into real, tangible improvements across the landscape. We are committed to fostering collaboration while celebrating innovation and recognizing successes. Through active partnership within our communities, we will continue to foster these relationships and build alliances within our communities while continuing to serve as good stewards of the land.

### **4. Advance Forest Plan Revision:**

This is a vital undertaking for the long-term health and future management of our forest. The Forest Plan serves as our foundational blueprint, guiding all major decisions on how we protect our natural resources, manage land uses, and provide for the public. This year, with the ongoing support of the Mountain Planning Service Group, we will focus on crucial steps like completing the Assessment (which helps us understand the current conditions and trends of the forest), evaluating areas for Wild and Scenic River eligibility, and conducting a Wilderness Evaluation. These efforts are essential to ensure we continue to care for the land and serve the people effectively for generations to come.

Our FY26 Forest priorities and overall program of work will maintain a narrow focus to align expectations with our current capacity. While this does not imply our work will be limited solely to these programs, it does mean that the scope of other work will be less than in previous years.

As we encourage flexibility in job duties, training opportunities will be provided to support you in new responsibilities. If you feel untrained for a particular task, please seek guidance. We aim to maintain a healthy work-life balance and do not expect employees to exceed 80 hours per pay period, except in specific circumstances. This year, we empower you to communicate your needs, as understanding your skills and efforts is essential for our collective success.

The Forest Leadership Team is dedicated to valuing our employees, and together, we must collaborate to ensure the success of our Forest. Thank you for your hard work and commitment.

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