

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 26, 2024

Scott Tangenberg
Forest Supervisor
U.S. Forest Service
Cleveland National Forest
10845 Rancho Bernardo Road, #200
San Diego, CA 92127

Dear Supervisor Tangenberg:

We write regarding wildfire prevention and preparedness at the Cleveland National Forest (CNF). It has come to our attention that the CNF has had ongoing recruitment and retention challenges for at least one year. According to your website, the CNF has at least 19 fire-related job vacancies ranging from a fire suppression team leader, fire prevention technician, to a hotshot crew superintendent. What's worse, these wildfire suppression and prevention positions have remained unfilled since July, amid the peak fire season.

According to a letter from the Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA) to CNF on January 3, 2024, you were contacted by the OCFA Fire Chief to discuss staffing shortages at fire stations within the CNF. Furthermore, correspondence from the OCFA to CNF on April 9, 2024, indicated an offer to staff CNF fire stations at no cost to the U.S. Forest Service. Unfortunately, this request for assistance was not accepted and the CNF fire station closest to the outbreak of the Airport Fire has remained unstaffed by CNF personnel all year. We believe that such actions likely contributed to the outcome we have experienced thus far. We are extremely concerned about the decisions, or lack thereof, being made at CNF regarding its staffing challenges and demand greater transparency and accountability.

For these reasons, we request answers to the following questions:

- How long has the CNF experienced significant levels of job vacancies?
- Which individual is in charge of hiring at CNF and why has it taken so long to fill these positions?
- In the past year, what specific actions have been taken to address the recruitment and retention challenges at CNF?
- How many candidates have applied to each vacant position at CNF? Of the qualified applicants who applied, please provide specific reasons why each candidate wasn't offered the position.
- Did CNF contact USFS Region 5 and/or Washington, D.C. about these staffing shortages? If so, when were they contacted, and what was their response?

- Why did the CNF refuse to accept OCFA's offer to staff your fire stations at no cost?

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please contact any of our staff with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



KEN CALVERT
Member of Congress



Young Kim
Member of Congress



Mike Levin
Member of Congress



J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress



Darrell Issa
Member of Congress