

Mike Crapo
United States Senator
239 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

James E. Risch
United States Senator
483 Russell Senate Office Building
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Mike Simpson
Member of Congress
2084 Rayburn House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515

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Member of Congress
1520 Longworth House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515

April 6, 2022

The Honorable Randy Moore
Chief
United States Forest Service
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Chief Moore:

We are writing in regard to the United States Forest Service's (USFS) proposed rule published on December 22, 2021 to amend the annual programmatic administrative fee for new and existing communications use authorizations. This rule and the resulting increase in the annual fee will have a severe, detrimental effect on amateur radio operators and emergency communication operations.

As you know, the USFS currently manages 31,367 communications sites. These sites are an essential component of the nation's telecommunications infrastructure and support vital connectivity and communication needs in rural communities. In addition to thousands of users including local governments, railroads, utility companies, and television stations, amateur radio operators also rely on Forest Service communications facilities.

The proposed increase in this annual fee would unduly affect amateur radio operators and state, local, and tribal emergency communications across the country. Many amateur radio clubs in Idaho and other states have small annual budgets, which, even when tripled, would not be able to cover the cost of the proposed fee. Amateur radio provides volunteer communications services in times of disaster or civil emergency by utilizing state-, tribal-, and county-owned emergency communications equipment, which is often sited on land managed by the Forest Service. Rural communities, in particular, would be put at a serious disadvantage without amateur radio operators.

With this in mind, we respectfully request that you review the proposed rule and ensure amateur radio operators and the state, tribal, and county communications equipment they use be exempt from this proposed fee increase. Their service to our rural communities is indispensable and must be protected. Thank you for your attention and prompt action regarding this request.

Sincerely,



JAMES E. RISCH
United States Senator



MIKE CRAPO
United States Senator



MIKE SIMPSON
Member of Congress



RUSS FULCHER
Member of Congress