

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3203

June 2, 2025

The Honorable Tom Schultz
Chief
United States Forest Service
1400 Independence Ave
Washington, DC, 20250

Dear Chief Schultz:

We write to strongly oppose increased logging and staff reductions at the Finger Lakes National Forest (FLNF) following recent executive actions and budget decisions. It is imperative to the ecological health of this ecosystem and the Finger Lakes vital tourism industry you ensure that additional FLNF trees will not be unnecessarily cut down, subject to commercial logging, and you immediately reverse recent staff cuts that threaten the ongoing health of the Forest. The Administration must respect the unique ecological, economic, and recreational value of this treasured public resource and the Upstate NY communities it sustains.

The Finger Lakes National Forest is more than a beautiful landscape – it is a living asset for the region, supporting tourism, recreation, and a healthy environment, while also serving as a source of pride for generations of Upstate New Yorkers. According to a [report from the U.S. Forest Service](#), the Finger Lakes National Forest supports over \$174 million in annual revenue from recreational activities. The natural beauty and economic benefits this landscape provides far outweighs any potential profits from future timber sales and the Forest Service must take every step to ensure the sustainable management of the Forest. Because the Forest Service already supports logging on up to 800 acres of FLNF land specifically for forest health, it is unclear why additional logging in the FLNF is necessary or productive, and local communities are justifiably concerned this could threaten the economic and environmental health of the region.

We are alarmed by new reports of significant staff reductions at the FLNF, leaving just a handful of rangers to oversee more than 16,000 acres. The cuts of the dedicated staff and rangers who are vital for the forest's stewardship, visitor services, and forest health are wrong and seriously undermine the FLNF's ecological integrity and its enjoyment by the public. The reduced number of staff will jeopardize regular maintenance of the forest, including replanting native trees in the section of forest lost to invasive Emerald Ash Borer infestations. Without full staffing, the Forest health could be compromised, jeopardizing the countless jobs and economic benefits it supports in the surrounding communities.

Many in the Finger Lakes region – residents, environmental groups, small businesses, and local governments – have raised their voices out of concern for the future of the Forest. The community deserves immediate answers on what the U.S. Forest Service's future plans are for the Finger Lakes and we urge the U.S. Forest Service and USDA to immediately:

- Restore Fiscal Year 2024 staffing levels across Finger Lakes National Forest operations and invest in the jobs needed for forest stewardship, restoration, and public safety.
- Remove the Finger Lakes National Forest from any consideration for increased logging.
- Engage directly with local communities, conservation organizations, and forestry professionals before taking any action affecting the FLNF.

- Ensure that any prior commitments to replanting and habitat restoration, especially following previous clear-cutting for ash borer mitigation, are fully funded and completed.
- Publish a justification detailing the increased acreage that would be logged beyond current activities supporting forest health, describing whether the administration intends to clear cut or sustainably thin areas of the Forest, which areas are too sensitive for logging activities, which areas would be avoided due to recreational activities, how threatened and endangered species would be protected or avoided when logging, and the necessary staff increases to complete these actions.
- Publish the Forest Service's plan for public engagement, including input from New York forestry experts regarding any potential plans to log the FLNF.

The Finger Lakes National Forest is a unique ecological and economic asset. Any changes to its management or staffing should strengthen – not weaken – its role as a model for conservation, recreation, and sustainable rural development.

We look forward to your prompt response on this timely concern and stand ready to work with you and the community to protect the Finger Lakes National Forest.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator