

March \_\_ 2025

Congressman Jeff Hurd  
Third District, Colorado  
1641 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Hurd:

As a member of the Montrose, Colorado community, I am writing to express my deep concern about the recent personnel and budget cuts at the National Park Service (NPS). I urge you to act in the best interest of our community and call on the White House and Secretary Burgum to exempt the NPS workforce from these crippling administrative directives, including reinstating jobs and halting any further workforce reductions.

The future of my local economy is at stake.

You have previously invested a significant amount of time in our community, and you understand that the fast-approaching peak travel season is a crucial time for our local businesses and families. Visitors come to Montrose to experience its stunning, rare, and unique Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park (Black Canyon) and to fish and boat in the three reservoirs throughout the captivating Curecanti National Recreation Area (Curecanti). These national park units are beloved places that not only protect our natural and cultural heritage but also sustain local jobs and serve as the heart of our tourism economy.

Crippling the NPS is counterintuitive to preserving our economy. Every dollar invested in national parks generates at least a \$15 return on investment. Tourism brings in revenue through entrance fees, hospitality accommodations, camping, dining, and other activities. Travelers come from all over the country expressly to visit our national parks; if they believe their experience may be impacted by these cuts, they will cancel their trips, creating a devastating ripple effect throughout our economy.

In 2024 alone, Black Canyon and Curecanti welcomed a combined 1,316,761 visitors. The latest economic impact records from the NPS show that in 2023, national parks contributed a record high of \$55.6 billion to the U.S. economy. That same year, visitors spent an estimated \$25.6 million in our local communities while visiting Black Canyon, supporting 295 jobs, \$11.1 million in labor income, \$18.5 million in value added, and \$31.9 million in economic output.

Meanwhile, visitors to Curecanti spent an estimated \$48.1 million, supporting 539 jobs, \$19.4 million in labor income, \$32.2 million in value added, and \$56.4 million in economic output in our surrounding communities.

In just the past four weeks, nearly 30 full-time employees have been lost at the park, including nine probationary staff who were indiscriminately fired and several others forced into impossible positions due to the "Fork in the Road" buyout. This is on top of the Administration's continued freeze on vacant permanent positions, delayed hiring of seasonal employees, and the closure of multiple NPS offices across the country, including the Natural Resource Stewardship and Science Directorate in Fort Collins.

If these parks continue to lose decades of institutional knowledge, suffer from inadequate staffing, and experience further budget cuts—including the elimination of funds for essential maintenance like trails, restrooms, and waste disposal—our economy will face extreme jeopardy.

Beyond the economic impact, this issue is deeply personal. Park rangers are not just employees—they are members of our community. They work closely with local schools and organizations to inspire the next generation to protect our national parks. Their children and families are our neighbors. Community members, myself included, take part in clean-up efforts, trail maintenance, and educational programs that help preserve these parks. Cutting NPS jobs threatens not only conservation efforts but also the strong connection between the parks and the people who love them.

As my elected representative, I urge you to stand with our community and call on the White House and Secretary Burgum to suspend further financial and personnel cuts and reevaluate the funding freezes and layoffs affecting our region's NPS employees.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A Concerned Citizen