

# United States Senate

December 22, 2025

The Honorable Brooke Rollins  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20250

The Honorable Howard Lutnick  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Rollins and Secretary Lutnick,

We are gravely concerned that diminished services within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and U.S. Department of Agriculture pose unnecessary risks to California lives and property and harm the state's ability to prepare for dangerous storms and floods and to provide essential water. We write to ask you to reconsider these reductions for the safety and well-being of Californians, and the many Americans that depend on timely weather and water services and forecasting.

For decades, the State of California and the federal government have worked in partnership to produce forecasts and collect water supply data essential to California's capacity to protect people and property from dangerous flooding. However, in recent months, unprecedented staffing cuts at your agencies have strained this vital partnership and greatly diminished the joint state-federal responsibility to perform essential forecasting functions and conduct snowpack monitoring and a significant amount of snow surveys as planned.

There have been several reports about the continued impacts and dangers of staffing shortages, including reduced overnight operations, less frequent collection of comprehensive data, and delays in severe weather warnings. An article in the San Francisco Chronicle further highlighted that weather service scientists in California are currently having to simultaneously monitor multiple flood-prone areas beyond their usually assigned regions due to vacancies. This could force staff to cut back on the frequency of written forecasts, which are typically issued every six hours during winter storms.

Cuts to National Weather Service operations within NOAA pose considerable risks. Staffing cuts to the Weather Service's observations and forecasting capabilities could have ramifications for airplanes that can't fly without accurate weather observations and forecasts, and ships that rely on storm forecasts to avoid dangerous high seas. Farmers also rely on seasonal forecasts to plant and harvest. Additionally, staffing reductions at the California-Nevada River Forecast Center (CNRFC) and weather forecast offices in California could pose serious threats to public safety. River forecast center employees save lives by providing advanced warning of flood risks, which is essential information used by emergency managers to issue timely evacuations and position emergency resources in advance of disaster.

Additionally, federal agency staffing reductions will impact the State's ability to conduct all of the snow surveys needed this winter to accurately forecast the State's water supply. The State has a long history of collaboration with federal, state, and local agencies to collect key snow data that is essential to forecast California's water supply each year. Historically, the United States Forest Service, National Park Service, and Natural Resources Conservation Service have participated in

the data collection. Staff cuts and regional consolidation of duties away from these important actions will severely impact the ability to perform snow surveys in as many as one third of the State's watersheds, leaving a fundamental gap in the data needed for supply forecasting. Lacking this data not only severely undercuts the State's ability to properly plan and manage the water resources for Southern California, the Bay Area, and the Central Valley's agricultural industry, it also debilitates our ability to prepare for the critical needs of communities in years of drought.

Sincerely,



Alex Padilla  
United States Senator



Adam B. Schiff  
United States Senator