



USDA Writes to Every Forest Service Grazing Permittee About Its June Grazing Directive: Restore 500,000 Head Months in Two Years, Reopen Vacant Allotments, No Net Loss of AUMs

Public paper · October 14, 2026 · Forest desk · Ryan Standley / Record of Sale, LLC / Notice Nearby

Agriculture Secretary Brooke L. Rollins sent a letter on October 8, 2026 to all livestock ranchers holding grazing permits on U.S. Forest Service allotments, outlining USDA's June 12, 2026 Grazing Directive, which tells the Forest Service to restore at least 500,000 head months on National Forest System lands within two years, keep a no-net-loss policy for animal unit months, make vacant and closed allotments available and use tools such as virtual fencing.

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins sent a letter on October 8, 2026 to all livestock ranchers holding grazing permits on U.S. Forest Service allotments, according to a USDA press release issued that day. The letter outlines the Department's June 12, 2026 Grazing Directive and invites permittees to "put it to work" on their allotments.

What the Grazing Directive tells the Forest Service to do

USDA says the directive, issued by Secretary Rollins and Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment Michael Boren, directs the Forest Service, consistent with applicable law and regulation, to:

- Take appropriate measures to restore at least 500,000 head months across National Forest System lands within two years.
- Implement a policy of no net loss of Animal Unit Months (AUMs) within allotments.

- Make vacant and closed allotments available for grazing.
- Improve wildfire planning, coordination and recovery, including the use of virtual fencing.
- Improve National Environmental Policy Act efficiencies.
- Improve coordination and build positive relationships with ranchers.

The documents behind it

USDA says the letter builds on two earlier documents:

- The October 20, 2025 USDA Plan to Fortify the American Beef Industry.
- The March 31, 2026 memorandum of understanding, "Advancing Grazing on Forest Service and BLM Lands," signed by Secretary Rollins and Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum.

Together with the directive, USDA says the three documents describe Administration policy to streamline and expand livestock grazing on federal lands, elevate grazing as a priority and strengthen support for ranchers "within the framework of existing law and regulations."

Scale of federal rangelands

According to USDA, the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management administer about 240 million acres of rangelands across 28 states, supporting more than 23,000 permittees and lessees. USDA says Secretary Rollins noted that restoring the nation's beef and sheep herds will "by necessity" include both Forest Service and BLM lands.

What the Secretary said

"I encourage you to familiarize yourself with the Grazing Directive as we work together to accomplish shared goals on your respective allotments," Rollins said in the release.

Where to find more

- The full letter is linked from the USDA release (PDF).
- USDA points permittees to its Ranchers First page at usda.gov/ranchers-first.
- USDA says grazing-specific concerns may be sent to grazing@usda.gov.

Why it matters

Grazing permits cover a large share of national forest and grassland acreage in the West. Changes in how allotments are opened, stocked and reviewed affect ranch families, forest users, wildfire planning and the federal environmental review of projects on public land.

Source

- U.S. Department of Agriculture, press release No. 0130.26, "Rollins Urges Federal Land Ranchers to Put June Grazing Directive to Work," October 8, 2026 (usda.gov/about-usda/news/press-releases/2026/10/08/rollins-urges-federal-land-ranchers-put-june-grazing-directive-work).

Notes

- Image: A rancher herds cattle on a grazing allotment reopened after the 2013 Rim Fire on the Stanislaus National Forest near Groveland, California, July 10, 2014 (file photo). Photo: Keith Riggs, USDA Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region, via Wikimedia Commons (Public domain).

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