



**Impacts of a Government Shutdown**  
**Department of Agriculture & Department of Interior**  
**October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025**

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The federal government shut down this morning at 12:01 a.m., following the Senate's rejection of [H.R. 5371](#), the House-approved resolution that would have maintained funding at current levels through November 21. The measure failed to meet the 60-vote threshold, with a vote of 55 nays to 45 yeas. Senator John Fetterman (D-PA), Senator Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), and Senator Angus King (I-ME), who caucuses with the Democrats, crossed party lines to vote in favor of the measure, while Senator Rand Paul (R-KY) voted with the majority of Democrats against the continuing resolution.

Despite failing to reach a resolution, lawmakers held multiple votes on continuing resolution proposals. Although the House has been out of session since passing its continuing resolution earlier in September, House Democrats returned to Washington for yesterday's pro forma session (Tuesday, Sept. 30), mounting a largely symbolic effort to pass the Democratic proposal the Senate had rejected two weeks ago. During the session, Rep. Morgan Griffith (R-Va.), who was presiding, refused to recognize Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.) and quickly gavelled the session closed, effectively blocking the effort amid protests from Democrats on the floor.

Following the failed Democratic House measure, Senate Democrats held a largely symbolic vote on the same proposal, [S.2882](#), which failed 53 - 47 along party lines. The measure would have extended funding through October, renewed enhanced Affordable Care Act subsidies, rolled back certain Medicaid cuts from the administration's "One Big, Beautiful Bill," and restricted the administration's ability to rescind congressionally approved funding.

With no deal reached, two key questions remain: how long the shutdown will last and which operations the administration will deem essential, and therefore continue. While the White House has already issued broad guidance directing agencies to prepare reduction-in-force plans for potential mass firings—a departure from past precedent—individual agencies, rather than OMB, are responsible for issuing their own contingency plans within that guidance.

#### *What to Expect in a Government Shutdown*

During a government shutdown, all "non-essential" activities are paused; this is defined by the Administration and can differ from previous shutdowns. Mandatory spending and essential services (i.e., Social Security, Medicare, air traffic controllers, etc.) will continue.

Of particular interest to RCRC, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Department of the Interior (DOI) have each released updated contingency plans for their operations during the shutdown.

### [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#)

USDA is set to furlough nearly half its workforce (42,256 of 85,907 employees) while maintaining operations that meet one of five legal exceptions: activities financed by non-annual appropriations, expressly authorized by law, necessarily implied by law, necessary to discharge the President's constitutional duties, or related to emergencies where delay would compromise the safety of human life or protection of property. Under this definition, several services relevant to RCRC will continue, including all wildland fire response, emergency operations, Section 521 Rental Assistance, and nutrition safety net program outlays. However, USDA has identified several programs relevant to RCRC that will be curtailed or suspended, including longer-term wildfire mitigation efforts like hazardous fuels treatments, along with most activities within Rural Development Programs.

#### *Rural Development Programs*

Rural Development programs will be operating at minimal capacity during the government shutdown, with most new program activity and technical assistance suspended. Of the agency's 3,193 employees, 2,640 (83 percent) will be furloughed while 553 (17 percent) will be retained, focusing on protecting existing government investments, preserving ongoing obligations, and ensuring the security of federal loans and properties.

#### **Activities Continuing During the Lapse:**

- Outlays of prior obligations under the Section 521 Rental Assistance Program, including continuation of existing rental assistance payments.
- Limited loan portfolio protection activities to safeguard the government's security interest, including:
  - Disbursements only as necessary to protect properties.
  - Issuing loan note guarantees solely to protect collateral.
  - Managing borrower funds held in escrow for real estate taxes and property insurance.
  - Processing protective advances when needed to preserve security, including inventory properties.
  - Reviewing borrower accounts to gather information for bankruptcy notifications related to FSA debts and assets.
  - Continuing liens.
- Administrative support for the ReConnect Program, which is funded outside the annual appropriations process.

- RD staff may be deployed to support the Department of Homeland Security in response to Presidentially Declared Disasters, when DHS provides funding.

**Activities That Will Be Reduced or Delayed:**

- All new loan processing and approvals.
- Grant programs and technical assistance related to rural communities.
- Routine program operations outside of preservation and emergency response.

*Forest Service*

The Forest Service will maintain core emergency and life-safety functions during a shutdown, while scaling back prevention and routine management activities. To sustain this balance, the agency will retain 61% of its workforce during the funding lapse, prioritizing emergency response while pausing most planning, prevention, and partnership work. Out of 32,390 employees, 19,646 (61%) will be retained and 12,744 (39%) will be furloughed.

**Significant agency activities that will continue during a lapse include:**

- Active wildfire response, including responding to existing fires and new starts, incident command, and emergency deployments to protect communities and property.
- Natural disaster response and coordination with local emergency management agencies beyond wildfire events.
- Law enforcement on National Forest System lands to protect public safety and federal property.
- Protection of federal lands, infrastructure, and other investments where suspension would create imminent threats to life or property.
- Timber production under [Executive Order 14225](#) to expand domestic timber supply for national security purposes.

**Activities that will be reduced or delayed during the lapse include:**

- Wildfire prevention measures, including hazardous fuels treatments, prescribed burns, mechanical thinning, brush removal, and vegetation management in the wildland-urban interface.
- Cooperative agreement payments to states, counties, and partner organizations conducting forest management work on non-federal lands will be suspended.
- Processing of new special use permits, including outfitter operations, events, commercial filming, and communications infrastructure.
- Mineral regulatory activities, statewide forest inventories, and long-term resource planning not tied to immediate life-safety concerns.
- Routine timber sales.

- Grants to state and local fire departments for forest management and wildfire preparedness may be delayed, limiting training and equipment acquisition.
- Public access to certain National Forest System lands will be reduced where staff oversight is required for safety, though self-directed recreation such as hiking and dispersed camping may continue in areas that don't require staff supervision. The Chief of the Forest Service will determine which specific locations remain accessible.

Looking ahead, the Forest Service's plan acknowledges that an extended lapse will require flexibility. The agency will reassess which activities can continue and adjust staffing to protect life and property or sustain priority operations supported by other funds.

### *General Disaster Assistance Programs*

During a government shutdown, most agricultural disaster assistance programs will be suspended, even as RCRC and California counties at large continue recovering from recent wildfire and flood events. These programs are spread across various divisions within USDA—including the Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service.

#### **Significant agency activities that will continue during a lapse include:**

- Emergency Watershed Protection Program projects addressing immediate threats from flooding, erosion, and watershed damage following disasters will continue, including damage survey assessments, dam monitoring through DamWatch, and servicing existing and future projects.
- Farm Service Agency leadership will remain on-call to coordinate natural disaster response and ensure continuity of operations.

#### **Activities that will be reduced or delayed include:**

- Disaster assistance claim processing will cease, including Supplemental Disaster Assistance programs authorized in the American Relief Act (SDRP Stage 1, SDRP Stage 2, ELRP for flood and wildfire), implementation and processing of disaster payments for weather-related disasters, block grants, and outstanding ECAP payment modifications.
- Technical assistance and cost-share for farmland and forestland rehabilitation following widespread disaster events will be suspended, including assistance after hurricanes, wildfires, tornadoes, and floods.

- Conservation Reserve Program annual contract payments will be delayed, affecting producers who rely on these payments as part of their farm income.

## **U.S. Department of the Interior**

### ***Bureau of Land Management***

Many activities of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will cease with the exception of law enforcement, emergency response functions, and operations necessary for the safety of human life or the protection of property, including fire suppression. Public lands will, in most cases, remain accessible to the public but not all services will be available during a shutdown.

BLM will furlough approximately 4,000 of its approximately 9,250 employees. All furloughed employees will spend up to four hours completing shutdown activities, which include securing facilities, completing personnel and financial processes, notifying external partners and customers of the shutdown, and cancelling meetings/events. Employees will be in a furlough status immediately upon completion of shutdown tasks.

#### **Significant agency activities that will continue during a lapse include:**

- Law Enforcement and Border Operations.
- Emergency Response.
- Management of wild horse and burro holding facilities.
- Inspections and enforcement for oil and gas and logging operations.
- Permitting activities such as Oil and Gas, Transmission and related Rights-of-way, where fees collected for processing activities are available for use, personnel will be classified as "Exempt."
- In order to protect human life and federal property and address the National Energy Emergency, BLM staff responsible for processing oil & gas permits / leases, coal energy leases, and other energy and mineral resources necessary for energy production will be excepted or excepted on call, to the extent such plans are necessary to protect human life and federal property. Otherwise, these activities may be considered exempt where associated fees are accepted.
- Activities necessary to protect life and property that are not otherwise exempted.

Fire management staff is designated as exempt based upon the availability of carryover balances in the Wildland Fire Management account. This exempt category includes personnel performing wildfire preparedness, suppression, post-fire response, fuels management, firefighter recruiting, hiring and training. This number is estimated at 3,300 personnel. Once these WFM account carryover balances are exhausted, a reduced number of fire personnel (estimate of 1,000) would continue to work on necessary

preparedness and suppression activities for purposes of protecting life and property, as well as assisting with emergency services, and they would become designated as excepted personnel.

BLM states and districts will retain staff as necessary, depending upon the local conditions, fire personnel sufficient for initial attack capability. Additionally, this will include necessary dispatch personnel, the minimum overhead personnel and administrative staff to oversee suppression activities and coordinate supplementation of suppression staff as needed. BLM's National Fire and Aviation office will ensure adequate personnel are available to support any ongoing needs of the states and districts.

**Activities that will be reduced or delayed:**

- Activities that will cease during the shutdown include day-to-day non-critical activities, such as visitor management, special recreation permit authorizations and concession/commercial recreational leases, volunteers, and some services on campgrounds and other recreation sites.

[Bureau of Reclamation](#)

During the government shutdown, BOR will furlough approximately 241 of its 4,111 employees. Under the long-term plan, additional employees will be furloughed as carryover funding is depleted during a lapse; it is estimated that it will take 2-3 months to reach the full furlough amount.

There are a number of continuing (non-lapsing) government activities that are funded by annual appropriations that Reclamation must continue despite a lapse. Many area and field offices will remain partially or fully open to perform exempted functions or operations funded by non-lapsing sources. There is a higher overall number of exempt employees in area offices given the nature of how water and power delivery activities are funded. To the extent they are available, apportioned carryover funds will be used to fund all otherwise exempted positions.

**Examples of Excepted functions and positions applicable to Reclamation include:**

- Law Enforcement.
- Providing local and national emergency response, disaster recovery support to the Nation, and coordination and provision of Federal emergency response capability on Department and Tribal lands (e.g., Control Center Operators).
- Protection of Reclamation's Federal lands, buildings, waterways, equipment, and other property and infrastructure (e.g., Security Guards, including contractors, Regional Security Officers, and intelligence Specialists).

- Activities essential to ensure continued employee and public health and safety (e.g., water supplies). Positions include Dam Tenders, Water Schedulers, and Water Treatment Plant Operators.
- Activities that ensure production of power and maintenance of the power distribution system, including Power Plant Operators and Dispatcher positions.
- Maintenance of IT systems that are critical to the activities being carried out by Excepted Employees (e.g., radio communication protecting the cyber infrastructure, to include industrial control systems).

### [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#)

During the lapse in appropriations, USFWS will furlough approximately 4,655 of its 7,001 employees (66%). The remaining 2,346 employees will be retained to carry out activities funded by permanent appropriations, prior-year or reimbursable funds, or to protect life and property. Most refuges, hatcheries, visitor centers, and permitting will be closed or suspended.

#### **Significant agency activities that will continue during a lapse include:**

- Law enforcement operations, including Federal Wildlife Officers, criminal investigators, and wildlife inspectors (funded by fees).
- Animal caretakers at fish hatcheries, endangered species breeding facilities, Fish Health Centers, Fish Technology Centers, and the Aquatic Animal Drug Approval Partnership Program.
- Monitoring of high-hazard dams and activation of Emergency Action Plans.
- Operation of captive breeding facilities for endangered species, and activities required to meet court-ordered Endangered Species Act deadlines.
- Fire management staff for wildfire suppression, Initial Attack capability, and interagency dispatch/coordination centers where needed.
- Refuge management and infrastructure staff necessary to protect federal property, ensure public safety, and safeguard records, including IT and building security.
- Continuation of operations supported by permanent accounts (e.g., Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration, Migratory Bird Conservation, North American Wetlands Conservation Fund, Land and Water Conservation Fund, Multinational Species Conservation Fund, Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act fees, and disaster supplementals).
- Reimbursable activities where outside funds are available (e.g., oil spill response, Federal Highway Trust Fund work).
- Essential emergency personnel, including Natural Resource Damage Assessment and spill response staff.

#### **Activities that will be reduced or delayed include:**

- Closure of National Wildlife Refuges, National Fish Hatcheries, and visitor centers, except where access does not require federal staffing (e.g., self-directed recreation, Alaska subsistence access under ANILCA).
- Suspension of most visitor services and concession contracts dependent on federal facilities or oversight.
- Halt to permit issuance or review, including hunting, fishing, scientific, or land-use permits requiring FWS staff involvement.
- Delay of surveys, habitat restoration, conservation planning, and long-term management projects not tied to imminent life or property concerns.
- Reduction in cooperative programs and grants unless funded by carryover or permanent appropriations.
- Contract work requiring federal oversight will pause unless an excepted employee is available to provide oversight.

### National Park Service

During the lapse in appropriations, NPS will furlough approximately 9,296 of its 14,500 employees (64%). The remaining 5,204 employees (36 percent) will be retained to carry out activities funded by permanent appropriations, reimbursables, or necessary to protect life, property, and public health and safety.

Some parks will be able to provide basic visitor services such as restrooms, trash collection, and campground operations using recreation fees, but most visitor centers, educational programs, and permits will be suspended. Concession and partner operations may continue only if they can function without additional federal resources. Public access will generally continue for open-air areas like roads, trails, and memorials, though closures will occur where safety, health, or resource protection issues arise. For DOI Wildland Fire Management, NPS will also follow DOI-wide guidance.

### **Significant agency activities that will continue during a lapse include:**

- Law enforcement and emergency response, including United States Park Police, border and coastal protection, and surveillance.
- Fire suppression for active fires, emergency stabilization, and staffing commensurate with Preparedness Level conditions.
- Protection of Federal lands, buildings, waterways, equipment, and research property.
- Essential public health and safety operations, including drinking water and sewage treatment, hazardous materials, and food/drug safety.
- Operation of power production and distribution systems where NPS has responsibility.



- Basic visitor services at some accessible park areas funded through retained recreation fees under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA): sanitation, restrooms, trash collection, road maintenance, campground operations, entrance gates, and law enforcement/emergency services.
- Continuation of certain activities funded by non-lapsing accounts, reimbursable agreements, or donations, subject to approval by the Director or Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks.

**Activities that will be reduced or delayed include:**

- Closure of many visitor centers, facilities, and secured areas (e.g., buildings, gated parking lots).
- Suspension of interpretive programs, educational programs, permit issuance, new concession contracts, and special events requiring staff oversight.
- Halt to maintenance of roads, walkways, and snow/ice removal, except where safety requires.
- Concession and partner operations may only continue if they can operate independently without additional NPS resources beyond excepted/FLREA-supported levels.
- Special events or uses not meeting the criteria for limited continuation will be cancelled; no new permits will be issued.
- If public access creates health, safety, or resource protection risks (e.g., weather hazards, garbage accumulation, or damage to sensitive cultural/natural resources), areas will be closed.