



Office of the Chief  
Records Officer for the  
U.S. Government

***Sent Via Email. No Hard Copy to Follow.***

September 27, 2024

William Meadows  
Forest Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
4000 Masthead St NE Mailstop 144  
Albuquerque, NM 87109

Dear Mr. Meadows,

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has received a complaint alleging the potential unauthorized disposition of federal records. A member of the public has alleged that the United States Forest Service (FS) may have improperly disposed of or managed records responsive to the citizen's July 10, 2024, freedom of information act (FOIA) request.

The FOIA request sought information related to all firearms training and use records from 2021 to the present for all districts in the Tongass National Forest. The complainant asserted that "the limited scope of the records provided raises concerns that required records may have been improperly disposed of or mismanaged."

FS's response to this FOIA request indicated that all records on file, within the scope of the request, were provided. However, the complainant reported that FS did not provide training rosters for years 2021 for 9 districts, 2022 for 8 districts, 2023 for 8 districts, and 2024 for 5 districts, as well as various annual reports between 2021 to present (see enclosures for details). In accordance with 36 CFR 1230.16(b), NARA is requesting FS investigate this allegation and provide a report within 30 calendar days. The report must include the following information:

- An explanation for the gaps in the firearm access rosters and annual reports.
- Details of the circumstances surrounding these gaps.
- A complete description of the records in question, including all associated disposition authority number(s).
- Any actions taken to recover or reconstruct the missing records.
- A statement describing what safeguards will be established to prevent future unauthorized disposition of federal records.

Your attention to this matter is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions or wish to discuss further, please contact the Records Management Oversight and Reporting Program by email at [UnauthorizedDisposition@nara.gov](mailto:UnauthorizedDisposition@nara.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William Fischer". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

WILLIAM FISCHER  
Chief Records Officer  
for the U.S. Government (Acting)

cc: Beatriz Collazo, Departmental Records Officer, Department of Agriculture

Enclosures (6)



Office of the Chief  
Records Officer for the  
U.S. Government

***Sent Via Email. No Hard Copy to Follow.***

December 18, 2024

William Meadows  
Forest Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
4000 Masthead St NE Mailstop 144  
Albuquerque, NM 87109

Dear Mr. Meadows,

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) received the Forest Service (FS) report dated November 22, 2024 regarding the allegation of a potential unauthorized disposition of FS records.

This report asserts that an investigation into the matter revealed different factors that contributed to gaps in responsive records to the July 10, 2024, freedom of information act (FOIA) request made by a member of the public for records related to firearms training, access rosters, and annual reports. These records are covered by the following disposition authorities:

- DAA-0095-2018-0050-0001: Training records, item # 6700 – Safety and Occupational Health – Safety and Occupational Health Program Management, Promotions, and reporting.
- DAA-GRS-2016-0011-0008: Inspection Reports, item # 6440 – Quarters and Facility Structure and Long-Term Maintenance.

The following factors led to record gaps:

- Not all Ranger Districts require firearm protection for field operations.
- Ranger Districts that do not have employees authorized to carry firearms are not required to receive training for firearms. These districts include the Ranger Districts on Prince of Wales Island, and at times have included the Petersburg Ranger District.
- The Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 6709.11, requires employees who carry firearms to attend training a minimum of once every 3 years which results in a varied amount of training records each year.
- Units are not required to maintain “firearm access rosters.”

- From 2020 to 2022, the Forest Service was in a max-telework or 100% remote work situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic and very few in-person training or firearm certification courses occurred during this time.
- Employee turnover accounts for additional gaps.
- Some units did not appropriately document conducted annual firearms inspections.

NARA acknowledges that the FS investigation of the allegation did not reveal any unauthorized disposition of federal records; however firearms inspections that did occur were not properly documented and corrective measures will be put in place to address gaps in the annual firearms inspection reports.

The Tongass National Forest is reviewing the current procedures and records management requirements for all firearms in the Forest. The Alaska Region and Tongass National Forests will issue updated instructions regarding the firearms policy, including annual inspections for firearms, in fiscal year 2025. These instructions will include recordkeeping requirements in accordance with the Records Management Handbook and disposition authority for the records in question.

Based on the information provided, FS has satisfied all reporting requirements of 36 CFR 1230.14 and NARA considers this matter closed. If you have any questions or wish to discuss this further, please contact the Records Management Oversight and Reporting Program by email at [UnauthorizedDisposition@nara.gov](mailto:UnauthorizedDisposition@nara.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William Fischer". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

WILLIAM FISCHER  
Chief Records Officer  
for the U.S. Government (Acting)

cc: Beatriz Collazo, Departmental Records Officer, Department of Agriculture