

**CITY OF HAMILTON
RESOLUTION #1548**

A Resolution of the Hamilton City Council Expressing Opposition to U.S. Forest Service, and Rocky Mountain Laboratories (RML) NIH Lab Workforce Reductions, Calling for the Restoration of Positions, Programs and Facilities and Requesting Formal Consultation between the City of Hamilton and the Federal Government Regarding Workforce Reductions.

WHEREAS, the Hamilton City Council recognizes the vital role of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) in managing public lands, ensuring public safety, and supporting the economic well-being of our region's communities; and

WHEREAS, the Hamilton City Council recognizes the importance of RML as a central component of our community and our economy for a century. RML's roughly 450 employees live in Hamilton and Ravalli County. They, and their family members live, work and volunteer in our community, and their children go to our schools. In addition to the vast human health and safety benefits to the nation that come from RML's work on infectious diseases, RML provides substantial economic benefits -- nearly \$250 million annually -- to our community and the State of Montana; and

WHEREAS, RML plays a long-proven role in protecting America's health and well-being through research on infectious, and some contagious, diseases. Its campus includes a Level 4 lab, which allows RML scientists to handle and research the most dangerous pathogens known to humans. Any changes to employee status raise serious safety questions for Hamilton and Ravalli County. These include concerns for the safety of RML staffers, local emergency responders and, if the integrity of the research labs is compromised, the broader community; and

WHEREAS, workforce reductions have occurred for both the Bitterroot National Forest and RML without consultation with local government. The full extent of workforce reductions is not known, and anecdotal information suggests it could be in the range of dozens of employees for each organization; and

WHEREAS, public land use on the Bitterroot National Forest is a large economic driver for our community. As one example, the Bitterroot National Forest manages the Lake Como Recreation Area, which is the busiest National Forest Recreation Area in the Forest Service Northern Region with roughly 250,000 annual visits. This natural jewel provides significant economic benefits to Hamilton and Ravalli County, and changes to staffing levels and Forest services that are not informed with local knowledge risk public safety and the destabilization of our rural economy; and

WHEREAS, workforce reductions can adversely affect essential functions such as recreation management, invasive species control, and the implementation of critical fuels reduction projects that enhance community resilience to wildfires and promote forest health; and

WHEREAS, national forest lands are integral to Montana's way of life, supporting industries such as timber, mining, grazing, and outdoor recreation, all of which rely on effective and adequately staffed forest management; and

WHEREAS, the Hamilton City Council on April 4, 2025 sent letters to both the Bitterroot National Forest and NIH expressing concern for safety and economic consequences of workforce reductions and the lack of transparency in undertaking those reductions and have received no communications in response, all while it appears that further workforce reductions are taking place.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that Hamilton City Council hereby:

1. Expresses strong opposition to the recent federal agency staff, program and facility reductions and the ongoing freeze on federal grants and contracts affecting federal facilities and non-profit organizations as well as our economic sectors;
2. Continues to call on the federal government to consult with the Hamilton City Council over federal workforce reductions, including but not limited to the safety and economic effects of such reductions on our community;
3. Calls on the Montana Congressional Delegation and Governor to advocate for the reversal of workforce reductions, a transparent and inclusive workforce-related process going forward and to ensure adequate funding for the U.S. Forest Service and RML to continue to operate into the future in a safe, secure and effective manner that recognizes the close relationship between these entities and the safety and economic well-being of the people of Ravalli County.

DATED this 15th day of April, 2025, after a motion and second at a regular meeting of the Hamilton City Council.

(SEAL)

APPROVED:

Robin Pruitt, Council President

Rosie Ramer, City Clerk