



United States Department of Agriculture
Office of Inspector General
Washington, D.C. 20250



FEB 19 2020

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Raúl M. Grijalva
Chairman
U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources
1511 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Ranking Member Stabenow and Chairman Grijalva:

Thank you for your letter dated November 18, 2019, requesting that the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Inspector General (OIG) investigate the potential misuse of a recent U. S. Forest Service (USFS) grant to the State of Alaska. In your letter, you expressed concerns regarding a September 2019 press report alleging that the State of Alaska used a federal assistance fire grant for non-fire purposes including a related subgrant to a timber industry stakeholder to support a rulemaking regarding a roadless area management on the Tongass National Forest. We met with your staff to discuss these concerns and our planned approach to conduct a review of these matters.

In response to your concerns, OIG plans to initiate an inspection to address the questions raised in your request. Our objectives will be to:

1. Determine if the USFS had the proper authority and followed Federal regulations when awarding a \$2 million grant to the State of Alaska;
2. Determine if the funds were used for allowable purposes;
3. Determine if other stakeholders were aware that Federal funding was available for the purpose of the grant; and
4. Determine what considerations, factors, or decisions led USFS to award the \$2 million grant.



United States Department of Agriculture
Office of Inspector General
Washington, D.C. 20250



The Honorable Debbie Stabenow and The Honorable Raúl M. Grijalva
Page 2

If you or a member of your staff have any questions, please contact Deltrick Johnson, Deputy Counsel to the Inspector General, at (202) 720-6901.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Phyllis K. Fong". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Phyllis K. Fong
Inspector General