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December 8, 2023

Director Charles F. "Chuck" Sams III
National Park Service
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Director Sams:

I write to express my serious concerns about the unacceptable performance of Aramark, DBA Crater Lake Hospitality under its contract with the National Park Service to provide many of the services at Crater Lake National Park. I am alarmed by the serious failure of the concessionaire to fulfill its responsibility to provide these services and the resulting harm to public safety, visitor experience and the irreplaceable resources in and around the park. Given the severity of these failings and the important role of the agency in holding concessionaires accountable, I ask that the National Park Service take immediate action to prevent concessionaire mismanagement from continuing to threaten Crater Lake National Park, its visitors, or the employees who live and work there.

As an Oregonian, I know you are well aware of the unique importance of Crater Lake. It is a crown jewel of Oregon – a volcanic caldera that holds the deepest lake in the United States. This natural wonder is one of the most pristine lakes on Earth and attracts visitors from across the world. As a natural treasure, it was the fifth National Park in the country to be established and entrusted to the National Park Service for preservation. You have consistently demonstrated an awareness of this importance as Director of the National Park Service, and under your leadership significant investments have been made at Crater Lake National Park, including safety and quality improvements to the iconic East Rim Drive. I seek to prevent failures under the service contract by Aramark from jeopardizing the important progress you have made on deferred maintenance using historic funds recently provided by Congress.

The annual concessionaire assessments paint a troubling picture of the concessionaire's fulfillment of its important responsibilities at Crater Lake National Park over several years. The National Park Service records make it clear that the concessionaire has continually failed to fulfill the requirements of the contract. Despite repeated and documented attempts by the National Park Service to secure performance, it is clear that little progress has been achieved to meaningfully resolve most of these serious issues.

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After becoming aware of these issues, I directed my staff to conduct an in-person assessment of the conditions at facilities within Crater Lake National Park. The issues that staff observed during this visit have only served to solidify my understanding of the seriousness of the concessionaire's failure to plan for and perform important regular maintenance, adequately train staff and address issues that directly threaten safety.

It was apparent to my staff that the dedicated National Park Service staff were spending hours of their time trying to manage the situation, are deeply concerned with the safety issues for guests and employees, and share our values of protecting the park. I am grateful to the National Park Service staff for their dedication to our public lands. It is clear they have prevented the situation from becoming significantly worse through their efforts.

Under the management of Aramark, the condition of park facilities has significantly deteriorated due to a failure to perform contractually-required maintenance. During the in-person visit, my staff saw employee housing in a state of serious disrepair. The issues included staff rooms without working heaters, siding falling off the building, and a notable lack of security measures to protect employee safety. The latter of these is especially troubling given reports that serious assaults and other criminal activity has occurred in the dorms and no acceptable security measures have been implemented to increase security and privacy in dorms, bathrooms and showers. These substandard living conditions continue to threaten the safety of the workers and the reputation of the park, and must be addressed by the concessionaire immediately to ensure the health and wellbeing of the staff.

There have been at least three diesel spills in 2023 at contractor-managed facilities. The troubling response to these spills was a failure to follow proper spill procedures, lack of timely response, all highlighting the lack of staff training, which threaten park resources. For example, the diesel spill from tank failure at the Lodge was not handled in a timely manner. Additionally, the concessionaire's staff did not report the spill to the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, as was required. The failure to follow proper spill procedures made the size of the spill difficult to determine, requiring testing and soil sampling to prove no release. The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality has also recommended sealing caps to keep water out and my staff have verified that this had not been done yet at the time of their visit.

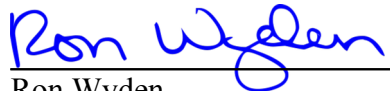
There are additional concerning examples of the concessionaire's lack of following proper procedures. For example, reports show ongoing safety issues with the concessionaire's staff failure to properly maintain fire alarm systems, including manually silencing fire alarms, without notifying the park fire department, which is a fire code violation and puts guests at risk by rendering the alarms not fully functional. Guests have their health and safety threatened by the Crater Lake Lodge Restaurant's disturbing record of repeated unsatisfactory public health inspections. This has included failure to store food at the proper temperatures, failing to meet basic standards of cleanliness, and the presence of flies in the kitchen from staff opening windows without screens. Further, I am told the concessionaire has failed to provide

documentation to the National Park Service that the kitchen staff have received the required food safety certifications.

Finally, the lack of investment and deferred maintenance by the concessionaire is concerning and has prevented progress on a number of maintenance and improvement projects that the National Park Service has approved. The 2022 annual report states that none of the Personal Property Improvement Program (PPIP) or Concession Facility Improvement Program (CFIP) projects have been fully executed, as is required by contract.

As a result of this lack of investment and a continued failure to protect their workers and act as proper stewards of our public lands, I strongly urge the National Parks Service to take immediate action to make sure the contract is upheld or consider if a new contract might be more appropriate. I know you understand firsthand the severity of these issues and I am committed to working with you to resolve them as swiftly as possible.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator