



April 1, 2025

The Honorable Brooke Rollins  
Secretary, United States Department of Agriculture  
1301 Independence Avenue, S.W.,  
Washington, DC

Madam Secretary,

Charles and Heather Maude of Maude Hog and Cattle out of Caputa, South Dakota were individually indicted on charges of “theft of government property.” The property in question is an U.S. Forest Service Allotment (USFS), which has been owned by the Maude family since the inception of the USFS and managed by the Maudes, without any sort of infraction or rule violation, for over 100 years. Additionally, the Maude family currently maintains their allotment in “good standing.”

The Maude’s are accused of willfully stealing and modifying their family-owned Buffalo Gap National Grasslands Allotment, a total of approximately 25 acres, to their use and management. However, it is my understanding that no boundary modification has ever taken place and the issue at hand is the original fence-line boundary that was not perfectly presented on the survey line well over 100 years ago. Imperfect surveys and boundary lines are not uncommon in the west due to the primitive technology and harsh conditions that existed during the times of original survey.

In May, 2024 the USFS raised issues of interest concerning the survey boundaries. This was met with communicable cooperation from Charles and Heather who immediately sought common-sense and balanced solutions to timely resolve the issue in question. This included a “special use” permit for a period of time, an updated survey or a land trade. Instead, the USFS ceased all communication and indicted Charlie and Heather separately.

I have several concerns with these indictments. First, individual indictments are a cause of great concern and show a lack of transparency of the true charges levied against Charels and Heather. Second, the sheer lack of common-sense knowledge by USFS that dated and primitive survey boundaries are often imperfect. Additionally, the lack of communication by USFS employees after Mrs. Maude politely request to be informed, personally, when USFS employees cross onto private property when navigating to the Maude-owned allotment. Third, the manner in which each individual received personal indictments, unannounced by armed USFS Special Agent Travis Lunders, seems incredibly nefarious and retaliatory. And finally, the sheer disrespect conveyed to the allotment-owners after a century of pristine stewardship of the land whose boundaries are in question.

Madam Secretary, the Maude family are generational community members and upstanding citizens focused on land stewardship and food production. I encourage the USDA, USFS and the DOJ to effectively communicate with the Maude family to find a common-sense solution to a nation-wide issue. I urge your agencies to restrain overreach and abusive power in their duties and drop all charges immediately.

We look forward to working with you as the Secretary of Agriculture for the United States of America.

Sincerely,

Shad Sullivan,  
Property Rights Chair, RCALF-USA