



Clackamas River Ranger District Frequently Asked Questions

GENERAL FIRE QUESTIONS

1. ***What fires currently impact the Clackamas River Ranger District?***

- The 2020 Riverside Fire burned 85,625 acres of Mt. Hood National Forest land and 138,126 acres total.
- The 2020 Lionshead Fire burned 17,231 acres of Mt. Hood National Forest around Olallie Lake and the southern end of the district. Its total size was 204,180 acres.
- The 2021 Bull Complex burned 24,894 acres of Forest land in and around the Bull of the Woods Wilderness.
- The 2020 Beachie Creek Fire burned 577 acres on the southern boundary of the district and 192,631 acres total.

2. ***What was damaged in the fires?***

Combined, the 2020 and 2021 fire seasons impacted 26 campgrounds and day use sites, 24 trailheads, and 37 trails. 100 miles of trails are within burn perimeters. The Forest lost picnic tables, toilets, water systems, signs and kiosks, dumpsters, administrative buildings, employee housing, vehicles and equipment, communications and utilities infrastructure, and many hundreds of thousands of trees. Fallen trees and rocks damaged miles of road infrastructure, including asphalt, culverts, guard rails, signs, and rock barriers.

3. ***How can I help?***

Once the highway reopens and we complete our required environmental analysis, we'll be able to identify which work can best use volunteers. It will take time to make areas safe enough for volunteer crews to come in and do needed work. In the meantime, get to know and sign up with one of our recreation partners, like Trailkeepers of Oregon, Pacific Crest Trail Association, 4X Nation (OHV), or Backcountry Horsemen of Oregon. These groups can always use help in other areas, and you'll be prepared to help on the Clackamas River RD when opportunities arise.

4. ***Can I see what the burned area looks like?***

Photos, videos, closure area maps and other info is on our website:
www.fs.usda.gov/goto/mthood/2020fires

ROAD ACCESS & CLOSURES

1. ***When will OR Hwy 224 reopen?***

Oregon Department of Transportation's will likely open State Highway 224 May 1. The state highway ends just past the Ripplebrook camp store, and key forest roads beyond that will remain closed until danger trees are removed.



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2. *Why has it taken so long to reopen the highway?*

This work was very complex and the damage to the highway corridor was quite extensive. Sections of the corridor lost around 90% of their trees in the Riverside Fire and posed serious safety risks to the public. Once danger tree and rockfall work was completed, crews installed netting along unstable hillsides, replaced miles and miles of damaged guard rail, installed replacement signage and will repair asphalt damage. Road work will continue through Summer 2022 after the road opens.

3. *Why hasn't the Forest been able to clear forest roads of danger trees already?*

While ODOT received money from FEMA in late 2020 to complete work on Highway 224, the Forest Service was just awarded \$76 million in disaster funding from Congress, and the funds they provided will become available for the forest to use in May 2022. Since the estimated costs of restoring, replacing, and rehabbing resources damaged in the four 2020 wildfires are over \$130 million, this disaster funding is essential. With funding in hand, we are working to complete the environmental review that is required when we propose an action with a potential impact on natural resources. Initial work has been completed on the review. We continue to coordinate with other forests across the region to complete this work in a way that makes sense for our visitors, staff, and the forest resources as well.

4. *Will Forest Road (FR) 46 open this summer?*

The short answer is probably not. While much of the middle of Forest Road 46 was outside the wildfire boundaries, the first several miles and the last miles that travel into the Willamette National Forest both have significant danger tree work that must be completed before the road opens. *This road, especially the section between FR 57 and FR 63, is one of our top priorities.*

Portions of FR 46 and other southern district roads also have remaining fire suppression work in progress, following the 2021 Bull Complex Fire.

5. *Why can't you just post it as enter-at-your-own-risk and open everything?*

Mt. Hood National Forest has an obligation to address safety hazards for both the public and its employees. While unpredictable accidents can happen in nature, we don't want anyone to get hurt or killed just because they pulled over to check their map or admire the view. Also, while visitors may decide to enter an area that is decidedly unsafe, we must consider that Forest employees would be required to enter these unsafe areas to respond to public requests for assistance, law enforcement and fire patrol, and responses to any human-caused fires.

The Forest is currently working through an Environmental Analysis, which includes two public comment periods. The completed NEPA will allow the Forest to begin addressing roadside hazard trees in earnest. We encourage you to provide comment at during the open window at:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=61043>



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6. *Can I walk into the closure area? (Either on the roads or into the woods.)*

When state highway 224 reopens in May, the Forest will have a reduced closure area. We are still working on determining the exact boundaries of the closure and whether the roads will be closed to just motorized vehicles or all traffic and pedestrians.

7. *When will roads inside the fire closure area open?*

Many forest roads are lined for long stretches with danger trees that create hazards for visitors and employees. Other roads, notably FR 57 and FR 46, burned intensely at or near key entry points. Once we are able to get trees removed to safely access past the areas that burned intensely on both the Ripplebrook and Detroit ends of FR 46 (from the Lionshead and Riverside fires), this will open up access to many areas that were not burned within the Clackamas River Ranger District, including areas like the Collawash River. While FR 46 is our top priority, the work required to safely reopen it likely will take all summer season.

The Forest is currently working through an Environmental Analysis, which includes roads across the Forest that were impacted by the Riverside, White River, Bull Complex, or Lionshead Fires. The completed NEPA will allow the Forest to begin addressing roadside hazard trees in earnest. **This work will prioritize roads that are well used or access key sites.** The Forest is currently working through an Environmental Analysis, which includes two public comment periods. The completed NEPA will allow the Forest to begin addressing roadside hazard trees in earnest. We encourage you to provide comment at during the open window at:

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8. *When Hwy 224 reopens, will the entire road to Detroit (Forest Road 46) also reopen?*

No. Forest Road 46 travels about 58 miles from Ripplebrook to Detroit. The first several miles of Forest Road 46 south of Ripplebrook burned intensely and still has danger trees that need mitigation before the road can be reopened. We hope to do that work over the summer so the Collawash River drainage can be accessed.

The southern end of Forest Road 46 traveling through the Willamette National Forest and Detroit also suffered fire damage from the Lionshead Fire and will not reopen this year.

9. *Will we be able to use FR 4690 off FR 46 to get to the Olallie Lake area?*

Not initially. As the northern portion of Forest Road 46 north of FR 63 is cleared we will begin moving to open some of these connecting roads.



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RECREATION IMPACTS & ACCESS

1. What will be open this summer in the Clackamas River Ranger District?

Olallie Lake, Timothy Lake, Harriet Lake, Clackamas Lake, and other areas to the east of Riverside Fire perimeter will all be accessible via Highway 26.

Highway 224 up to Ripplebrook will be open after May 1. La Dee Flats OHV is already open. Find the current closure area map and Forest Order with description of closed area at:

www.fs.usda.gov/goto/mthood/2020fires

2. Will campgrounds and trails reopen at the same time as the roads reopen? If not, when will they reopen?

Campgrounds along Hwy 224 and further up Forest Road 46 will not be open in 2022. Campgrounds and trails along the Clackamas River corridor from Lazy Bend upriver to Riverside suffered severe damage during the Riverside Fire, including lost and dead trees, burned down toilets and picnic tables, damaged water systems, and damaged access roads.

3. Where can I access the Clackamas River to boat or fish when Hwy 224 reopens?

Both Hole in the Wall and Moore Creek boat access sites will open when the highway reopens as they largely escaped damage. Both are operated by Portland General Electric (PGE). Sandstone Bridge suffered more damage and there are many downed and dead trees- it will not open at the same time as the other two boat access sites.

4. When will Timothy Lake & Lake Harriet reopen?

Timothy Lake and Lake Harriet will operate normally with access via Hwy 26. Forest Road 57 still has danger tree mitigation required and will likely not reopen in 2022.

5. Will the Ripplebrook store reopen?

The Ripplebrook camp store was not burned, but it did suffer fire-related damage and lost its internet infrastructure. It may reopen in 2023.

6. What is the status of the Olallie area? Will the roads be open, and will the resort reopen?

Olallie Resort and a few campgrounds will operate with their normal season. Access to Olallie Lake is from Highway 26 in 2022. Campgrounds south of Olallie Lake, as well as the adjacent Pacific Crest Trailhead have not had any danger trees removed yet and will remain closed in 2022.

7. When will Bagby Hot Springs reopen?



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Probably in 2023. Bagby was unharmed by the wildfires, but it is accessed by travelling on roads that are still lined with dead and dying hazard trees. Regardless of road access, Bagby Hot Springs requires an operator on site for safety and damage concerns. The concessionaire who operates the site has had difficulty hiring due to lasting impacts of the pandemic and may not be able to hire staff for a shortened operating season whenever Forest Road 46 is reopened.

8. *When will the Pacific Crest Trail open?*

We're not sure. The Lionshead Fire burned through the Mt. Jefferson Wilderness on the Willamette National Forest north into the Olallie Lake area. While the Forest Service will not clear and mitigate standing dead and dying trails along the entire trail, several trailheads and access roads do require work before they can be safely opened. Danger tree work along roads will follow after the Clackamas Fires Roadside Danger Tree Environmental Assessment.

For now, hikers should plan to access the PCT north of Triangle Lake. For thru-hikers: this closure through the Mt. Hood and Willamette National Forest is too long for a local detour. Check with the PCTA for closures and reroutes regularly through the season.

9. *Will the Bull of the Woods Wilderness open this year?*

Probably portions of it. There will still be some fire suppression repair activities going on (like dismantling constructed fire breaks) as well as some trailheads or access roads that may need further hazard tree mitigation before they can be opened. Right now, Forest staff are waiting until spring arrives before they can access these higher elevation areas to evaluate current conditions.

FOREST HAZARD AND DANGER TREE MITIGATION WORK

1. *Is Mt. Hood National Forest conducting hazard tree work on forest roads?*

Yes- The Forest is currently in the planning stages for hazard tree abatement projects on the Clackamas River Ranger District, which included a public comment period. Work would only include those trees that are likely to fall on recreation sites, roads, and buildings. About 95% of the burned area will have no fire-killed or weakened trees felled.

The environmental analysis for the Clackamas River Ranger District started in January 2022 and is currently underway. Once this process is complete, we will have the authorization necessary to proceed with the removal of dead and dying trees that pose a threat to public safety along forest roads. It will likely take many months to complete this work and reopen roads. More information can be found at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=61043>.



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2. Why can't you just leave all the dying trees in place?

The Forest has a responsibility to mitigate hazards to employees and public safety. While unpredictable accidents can happen in nature, we don't want anyone to get hurt or killed just because they pulled over to check their map or admire the view. Trees that will just fall harmlessly in the woods will not be cut, but rather left to decompose or fall naturally.

Additionally, while visitors may decide to enter an area that is decidedly unsafe, Forest employees would be required to enter these unsafe areas to respond to public requests for assistance, law enforcement and fire patrol, and responses to any human-caused fires.

3. Where can I learn more about danger tree work and evaluation on Forest lands?

The best place to start is on our hazards and danger tree webpage. It has info, videos, links, and infographics: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/mthood/fire/?cid=fseprd937474>

4. What happens to the tress that are cut as part of hazard tree work?

Many of the hazard trees that will be felled may be offered for personal use firewood gathering, removed to support on-forest or partner restoration projects, or felled and left on site for habitat. Some trees may also be sold commercially. This money funds the hazard tree work as well as reforestation projects in fire affected areas.

5. Can I collect firewood from dead or down trees in the Hwy 224 corridor?

There should be ample firewood opportunities over the next 5 years within our 2020 burn areas. Once roads start opening, our foresters will identify specific areas with good firewood opportunities and help our front desk staff issue free use firewood permits to interested people.