**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 land 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 Mt. Hood National 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 ranger district. Its total size was 192,631 acres.

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 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 now or how it looked right after the fire?**
   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 opened 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.

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 pose 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, and installed replacement signage. Road work, including asphalt repair, will continue along Hwy 224 through Summer 2022 after the highway 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 Hwy 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 analysis 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 required work for the benefit and safety of our visitors, staff, and forest resources.

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

   Part of FR 46 will probably open sometime later this summer. 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.* Work to open up FR 46 between FR 57 and FR 63 is underway.

   Portions of FR 46 and other southern district roads also have remaining fire suppression work in progress, as part of the 2021 Bull Complex Fire. We have the specific fire suppression funding already in place for the Bull Complex to create safe passage for our employees and contractors for fire clean-up activities and burned area emergency response (BAER) work. This type of suppression work does not require additional National Environmental Protection Act analysis (NEPA), as it is a continuation of the work initiated last fall/early winter.

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 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. [https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=61043](https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=61043)

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

Not yet. Once the Forest has completed the required Environmental Analysis (EA) later this year we will have a better timeline for reducing fire closure areas.

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 most of the 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.**

8. **When will the entire road to Detroit (Forest Road 46) reopen?**

Forest Road 46 travels about 58 miles from Ripplebrook to Detroit. 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.

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. This section of FR 46 has specific fire suppression funding from the Bull Complex to create safe passage for our employees and contractors for fire clean-up activities and burned area emergency response (BAER) work. This type of suppression work does not require NEPA, as it is a continuation of the work initiated last fall/early winter.
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](http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/mthood/2020fires)
   
   **Forest recreation sites open:** Moore Creek and Hole in the Wall boat access sites, Big Eddy day use, and Carter Falls overlook.

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 impaired access roads.

3. **Where can I access the Clackamas River to boat or fish along Hwy 224?**
   
   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. **When will the trails within the fire areas reopen?**

   It depends. While many sections of trail were lightly impacted, many trails lost bridges, have scorched and damaged soils, suffered rockslides, or are covered with down trees. The Clackamas River Trail and the Riverside Trail in particular are extremely dangerous in many parts (the Riverside Trail lost 6 bridges) and may take several years to reopen.

7. **Will there be toilets open?**

   There will be a few toilets, but not nearly as many as before since most toilets were lost or are in campgrounds that are still closed due to hazard trees and hazmat. Toilet locations: Moore Creek and Hole in the Wall boat access sites, Big Eddy day use, and the site of where Sunstrip Campground was. Remember to recreate responsibly and dispose of all litter and waste properly!

8. **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.

9. **When will Bagby Hot Springs reopen?**

   Probably in 2023. Bagby was unharmed by the wildfires, but it is accessed by 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.

10. **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.

11. **Will the Bull of the Woods Wilderness open this year?**
Probably at least 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 danger tree and 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](https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=61043).

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 hazard and danger tree webpage. It has info, videos, links, and infographics: [https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/mthood/fire/?cid=fseprd937474](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 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 will be ample firewood opportunities over the next 5 years within our 2020 burn areas. Once roads start opening, foresters will identify specific areas with good firewood opportunities and help our front desk staff issue free use firewood permits to interested people. More info about firewood and how to get a firewood permit is here: [https://fs.usda.gov/goto/mthood/firewood](https://fs.usda.gov/goto/mthood/firewood)

6. **Are you replanting the trees killed in the wildfires?**

It depends on the rate of tree mortality, terrain, and what kind of management designations the land is under. Learn more about post-fire reforestation: [www.fs.usda.gov/goto/mthood/reforestation](http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/mthood/reforestation)

- Areas that had a lower mortality rate will largely be left to reseed and replant themselves, since there will be enough tree seed already in the soil to germinate at a rate that will effectively reforest an area.
- In areas where nearly every tree was killed by the fire and/or the soil was damaged enough that natural regeneration is unlikely foresters will replant trees to get enough trees per acre for a healthy forest. The Mt. Hood National Forest regularly collects conifer seeds from cones and stores them. After the 2020 fires, the forest sent many thousands of these seeds to a Forest Service nursery in southern Oregon to grown out into little seedlings. Over the next three years forest crews will hand plant these tree seedlings across severely burned areas.
- Some areas are too steep, too rocky, or otherwise too inaccessible to reseed by hand. The forest recently used drones to aerially seed about 54 acres in the Fish Creek drainage that would normally have been unplantable by ground crews. Over the coming years, foresters will monitor these plots and reforestation rates compared with other methods to see how we can most effectively use another technological tool to encourage healthy forests.
- Some areas are legally mandated to recover naturally without humans. These areas include Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers. As the Mt. Hood National Forest is one-third wilderness, there are a lot of areas that will be left to reforest on their own, regardless of burn severity.