



Clackamas River Ranger District: Fire Recovery Frequently Asked Questions

ROAD ACCESS & CLOSURES

1. *What roads are open?*

Forest Roads 63, 70, 42, and most of their spurs are some of the popular routes that are open following the 2020 and 2021 wildfires. Virtually all Forest roads outside of the Riverside, Lionshead, and Bull Complex fire perimeters are open. Additionally, most of our minor, low traffic roads within the fire areas have opened. Many of these roads require high clearance vehicles.

Forest Road 46 is open on the Mt. Hood National Forest side but will be gated at the boundary with the Willamette National Forest over the winter until spring 2024 for road construction work. [See question #7 below for more information.](#)

Additionally, Forest Road 45 from the Hillockburn side is now open. The lower few miles of Forest Road 45 connecting to Hwy 224 remain closed due to frequent slides and damage caused by the 36 Pit Fire.

2. *What roads remain closed?*

Several roads with high historic traffic volumes still have danger tree work that will be completed before we can open them to vehicles.

Roads that will remain closed to motor vehicles until danger trees are removed include:

- Forest Road 4620 at Hwy 224 junction
- Forest Road 4631 at Hwy 224 junction
- Forest Road 54 (Fish Creek Road) at Hwy 224 junction
- Forest Road 57 between Hwy 224 and Lake Harriet
- Forest Road 4630 between Hwy 224 & Forest Road 4635

[Read the Forest Order](#) describing the road closures or [view the map](#).

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

In late 2022 the Forest completed the [Clackamas River Roadside Danger Tree Environmental Assessment decision](#), which allows us to clear these roads. Surveys, assessments, and contracts have been prepared. The Forest received an updated Biological Opinion from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in early summer 2023, which was required to approve any work within areas that might be used by northern spotted owls as post-fire foraging areas. Work resumed quickly afterwards. The Forest advertised two roads contracts in 2023 for hazard tree removal within the Clackamas River Ranger District. The Oak Grove Integrated Resource Service Contract (IRSC) was awarded in August 2023, which includes the removal of hazard trees along Forest Road 57 as well as repairs of the road itself, such as culvert replacement. Work has already begun and will continue through 2024. Another contract, which includes work on Forest Road 54, will be advertised in spring 2024.



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4. *Why can't you open all the roads?*

In some places the risk to the public and our employees is greatly elevated and the potential for a tragic outcome is just too high to accept. Before we reopen high traffic volume roads with hundreds or thousands of trees, we need to mitigate hazard trees that could fall and cause harm. While unpredictable accidents can happen, we don't want anyone to get hurt or killed and keeping road segments we have identified as a high probability for tragic outcome closed until we can clear them is our responsibility and commitment to our public, our employees, and our partners and stakeholders.

5. *Can I walk on closed roads and across the land in burned areas?*

Yes. Although motorized vehicular traffic is prohibited on fire-closed roads, pedestrian use is allowed since walkers and runners, hikers, or bicyclists can have better situational awareness of potential falling hazards than drivers. We want to provide the public as much access as possible and this compromise balances access with safety.

Please be aware of your surroundings for hanging limbs, loose rocks and soil, stumps, and other burned area hazards. In addition to looking around you, listen. Even a light breeze may cause burned trees to sway or fall, and your ears may be the first indication to stay out of an area or get out of the way. Read more burned area safety tips: www.fs.usda.gov/goto/mthood/burnsafety

6. *What roads will receive danger tree work first?*

Roads that are heavily used or access key sites will be prioritized. This includes Forest Road 57, Forest Road 54, and a few others. The Forest completed its [Environmental Assessment](#) in fall 2022, which allows the Forest to begin clearing these fire-killed trees that are likely to fall on roads and other infrastructure. Roads contracts advertised this year will remove these hazards and repair damaged culverts. Work can begin as soon as bids are selected and contracts signed, barring fire restrictions.

7. *Is Forest Road 46 open to Detroit yet?*

Forest Road 46 is open to the Mt. Hood-Willamette National Forest boundary, where the road is closed for the winter to all public traffic (including vehicle, foot, and bicycle) to allow for ongoing disaster recovery work. Visitors cannot use this route to travel from Estacada to Detroit until the road reopens in 2024. (Forest Road 46 usually becomes impassable near the junction with Forest Road 63 due to snow during winter and early spring months.)

Learn more: www.fs.usda.gov/alerts/willamette/alerts-notice



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8. *Can I get from Hwy 224 to Lake Harriet/Timothy Lake?*

Not yet. Until danger tree work along Forest Roads 4630 and 57 is completed, access to Lake Harriet and Timothy Lake is via US Hwy 26.

However, work to remove hazard trees along Forest Road 57 is currently underway as long as the weather cooperates. While the Forest does not have a final reopening date from the contractor, we are hopeful the road may reopen sometime in 2024.

RECREATION IMPACTS & ACCESS

1. *What recreation sites are now open on Clackamas River Ranger District?*

Forest recreation sites along Hwy 224 open: Moore Creek and Hole in the Wall boat access sites, Big Eddy day use, LaDee Flats OHV area, and Carter Falls overlook.

Timothy Lake, Harriet Lake, and Clackamas Lake are all accessible via Highway 26.

Olallie Lake is now accessible by two routes: via Highway 26 to Forest Road 42 to Forest Road 4220, or by traveling on Forest Road 46 to Forest Road 4690. Find the current closure map at:

www.fs.usda.gov/goto/mthood/firerecovery

2. *When will campgrounds reopen?*

Campgrounds along the Clackamas River corridor from Lazy Bend upriver to Riverside Campground 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. While some of these sites may open in 2024, others may remain closed for several years, depending on the level of damage. Additionally, the concessionaire who operated most of the Clackamas River Ranger District's campgrounds opted out of the last year of their permit in 2023, leaving the District with no staff to operate campgrounds.

Dispersed camping along Hwy 224 is prohibited. However, dispersed camping is allowed after Hwy 224 turns into Forest Road 46, as well as off other roads on the District. Dispersed camping means there are no toilets, potable water, or trash service provided. Pack out everything you pack in- leave no trace of your visit! Learn more about the 7 principles of Leave No Trace at lnt.org.

3. *Are trails within the fire areas open?*

Most trails are open. 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. Keep in mind the Forest Service will not clear standing dead and dying trees along entire trails, so hikers should use extreme caution and [be aware of hazards](#).

Trails that remain closed include [Clackamas River Trail #715](#) and [Riverside Trail #723](#) as they were highly damaged, lost bridges, and are dangerous in many parts. [Double Peaks #735](#) is effectively gone as a trail and will need to be rebuilt. Partners, volunteers, and staff are working hard to get



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these trails back open again. Learn more about how volunteers are helping trails:

www.fs.usda.gov/goto/mthood/trailstewards

4. *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 are open as they largely escaped damage. Both are operated by [Portland General Electric](#). Sandstone launch is also accessible.

[Fish Creek](#) day use site lost its access stairs and suffered a lot of damage; river access needs to be completely rebuilt before reopening.

5. *Will the Ripplebrook Store reopen?*

The [Ripplebrook Camp Store](#), which is now managed by the new concessionaire for Bagby Hot Springs, underwent renovations and reopened in 2023. The store closes during the winter but will resume operations in 2024.

6. *Are there toilets open?*

There are a few toilets, but most toilets were lost or are in campgrounds that are still closed. Toilet locations: Moore Creek and Hole in the Wall boat access sites, Big Eddy day use site, and Ripplebrook Camp Store. Please note that many toilets are closed seasonally in the winter. Prepare accordingly and pack out all trash when you leave!

7. *What is the status of the Olallie area?*

Olallie Lake Resort & Day Use Area, Triangle Lake Horse Camp, Olallie Meadow Campground, and Paul Dennis Campground operated within their normal season in 2022 and 2023. Olallie Lake is accessible by two routes: via Highway 26 to Forest Road 42 to Forest Road 4220, or by traveling on Forest Road 46 to Forest Road 4690.

Campgrounds near Olallie Lake including Lower Lake, Peninsula, and Horseshoe Lake Campgrounds are still closed. Hazard trees were removed over the summer and are decked for the next step of the removal process. However, there is a lot of damage to the campgrounds and further repair is needed before reopening. There isn't a reopening timeline yet. Visit Olallie Lake Resort's website for more information: www.olallielakeresort.com

8. *When will Bagby Hot Springs reopen?*

In 2024 at the latest, as required in the operator's permit. [Bagby Hot Springs](#) requires an operator on site for safety and damage concerns. Bagby Preservation, Inc. began their term in January 2023 and have made repairs to the soaking facilities and structures throughout 2023.



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9. *Is the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) open?*

The PCT is open but did burn during the Lionshead Fire. The Forest Service will not clear standing dead and dying trees along the entire trail, so hikers should be extremely careful and aware of hazards.

The Olallie Pacific Crest Trailhead, south of the resort, has received hazard tree mitigation. The trailhead is damaged but accessible. The PCT can also be accessed where it crosses Forest Road 4220 immediately north of Olallie Lake Resort. Access points also exist near Triangle Lake and Olallie Meadow Campgrounds. We recommend checking PCTA's website for closures and reroutes regularly throughout the season: www.pcta.org

10. *Is it safe to be in burned areas?*

Situational awareness is critically important for staying safe in burned areas. Practice the Four Steps for Safety to improve your awareness of natural hazards:

- **LOOK UP** for upland burned areas, snags, and exposed rocks that may fall.
- **LOOK DOWN** for debris from falling rocks, erosion – especially at road and trail edges, and ash pits (which may form from root pockets or stumps of burned trees)
- **LOOK AROUND.** Be situationally aware. Check the weather before you travel, including at higher elevations. Wind, rain, ice, and snow can increase the risk of tree fall, rock fall, slides, and other hazards. Flash floods and landslide risks are elevated below severely burned areas.
- **LOOK BELOW** the surface of standing water and moving water for floating logs, submerged trees, and other debris, which can damage infrastructure and strike or entangle swimmers and boaters.

More safety tips: www.fs.usda.gov/goto/mthood/burnsafety

FOREST HAZARD AND DANGER TREE MITIGATION WORK

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

Yes. Hazard tree work will only include those trees that could fall on recreation sites, roads, and buildings. About 95% of burned areas will have no fire-killed or weakened trees felled.

The Forest completed its [Environmental Assessment](#) last autumn, which allows the Forest to begin clearing these fire-killed trees that are likely to fall on roads and other infrastructure. Work will begin once weather allows. [Read the Decision Notice.](#)

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

Nearly all fire-killed or weakened trees will be left in place; only trees that could fall on a road, recreation site, or other infrastructure are being considered for removal. The Forest has a



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responsibility to mitigate known high probability hazards to employees, and public safety. While unpredictable accidents can happen, we do not want anyone to get hurt or killed where it was clear that could be an outcome of doing nothing. Removing hazards also helps to ensure that travelers in burn areas are less likely to find themselves trapped on a road with no exit. Additionally, 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. *What happens to the trees that are cut as part of hazard tree work?*

Some of the hazard trees that will be felled will be moved to aquatic habitat project sites to support non-Forest or partner restoration projects, offered for personal use firewood gathering, or left on site for habitat. Some wood still useable for lumber or other products may be removed under hazard tree contracts. Some of the leftover slash will be converted to biochar for on-forest restoration projects.

4. *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 the 2020 burn areas. As hazard tree work along forest roads starts, foresters will identify specific areas with good firewood opportunities and help our front desk staff issue free use firewood permits for harvest. There were firewood opportunities in fall 2023 and will be more in 2024.

Cutting firewood directly along state highways is **never** allowed on the Forest for safety reasons. More info about firewood and how to get a firewood permit can be found here:

www.fs.usda.gov/goto/mthood/firewood

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

It depends on the rate of tree mortality, terrain, and the kinds of management designations the land has. Learn more about post-fire reforestation: www.fs.usda.gov/goto/mthood/reforestation

- Areas that had a lower mortality rate will largely be left to reseed and regenerate 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 grow out into 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



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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 Wildernesses 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.

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?

In addition to the significant losses on state, county, tribal, and private lands, the 2020 and 2021 fire seasons impacted 26 campgrounds and day use sites, 24 trailheads, and 37 trails on Mt. Hood National Forest. 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.

Review a [site-by-site inventory](#) of recreation damage from the Riverside Fire.

3. 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/firerecovery