



Chugach National Forest
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News Release

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Russian River Campground Area Tree Thinning

Anchorage, AK Nov. 4, 2020 — Visitors to the popular Chugach National Forest Russian River Campground will see a change in its appearance. This fall, crews have been busy removing hazard trees and thinning out tree stands within the campground and along the surrounding access trails to improve visitor safety and the health of the forest.

The campground, 110 miles south of Anchorage on the Kenai Peninsula, has been impacted by a spruce beetle outbreak over the last few years, leading to widespread tree mortality. Dead or infested spruce trees within the campground and nearby hiking trails pose a fire hazard and are more susceptible to falling limbs and blow-down in wind and rain events.

Work began this fall in King Salmon and Grayling loops of the Russian River Campground. The cooler weather and departure of seasonal staff will halt the work in the campground this week. Tree removal will resume in the spring in preparation of campground opening. Accommodations are being made to limit campground closures and disruption, although temporary closures may be required during the summer 2021 season.

The removal of dead spruce trees will improve safety, prevent potential damage to buildings and campsite structures, stimulate understory vegetation for wildlife, and improve overall vegetation health. Visitors to the campground may notice a change in site appearance as tree removal will allow for new vegetation growth.

“I am committed to the health and safety of the public and Forest Service employees and maintaining safe recreational opportunities on the district,” said Seward District Ranger Francisco Sanchez.

In recent years large fire activity has increased across the Kenai Peninsula and the west side of the Chugach National Forest due in part to a change in fuel conditions. The work being done in the Russian River Area will help reduce overall fire hazards on the forest.

The process of hazard tree removal consists of identifying and marking the trees, felling with chainsaws, and removing material either by chipping or transport, and finally, restoring the area. Trees taken down this fall are being stacked for the winter and will be handled to reduce spruce beetle spread to other areas. The total combined work area covers 100 acres throughout the entire campground and the Russian Lakes and Angler trails.

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