

# **Hazard Tree Protocol For Government Mineral Springs Summer Home Tract**

This protocol was prepared for Special Use Permit holders at Government Mineral Springs (GMS) Summer Home Tract to follow for timely identification, removal and disposal of hazards (typically trees) at GMS. It identifies responsibilities for the permit holder; coordination needs with the administrator and approvals from the authorizing official; and Forest policy on wood disposal, including firewood permits.

## Identification of Hazard Trees

A dangerous or hazardous tree is one that has a recognized moderate to high potential for failure AND can cause personal injury or damage to moderate to high value personal property, should the tree or portions of it fail. Your improvements include your cabin or any other buildings that may be on your lot. It is your responsibility, as the permit holder, to inspect the area around your cabin, including trees outside of your lot boundary and those on a neighboring lot, and determine if there are trees that you feel pose a hazard to your improvements. Your Special Use Permit states:

### IV. RESPONSIBILITIES OF HOLDER

*G. The holder has the responsibility of inspecting the site, authorized right-of-way, and adjoining areas for dangerous trees, hanging limbs, and other evidence of hazardous conditions which could effect the improvements and or pose a risk of injury to individuals. After securing permission from the authorized officer, the holder shall remove such hazards.*

When you identify a hazard, you need to flag the tree for subsequent Forest Service field review, then fill out and return the enclosed form, noting the location, description, tree status and the improvement threatened by the tree(s) you identified. On the back of the form, draw a map showing the location of the tree(s) in relation to your cabin, driveway, etc. Once received, we will review your request to confirm if the trees do indeed pose a hazard to your improvements. The special use administrator, or designate, will visit the site to inspect and photograph all of the trees you have flagged and noted on the form.

## Assessment and Approval

When the special-use administrator determines that a tree is a hazard but does not pose an immediate threat, the Forest Service will complete a cultural and environmental evaluation prior to authorizing removal. Once the analysis is complete, the authorizing official will give you written approval to eliminate the hazard—typically to cut down a tree—and identify any restrictions that may apply. These restrictions are needed to mitigate the impacts and loss of habitat caused by the removal of the hazard trees.

Examples of restrictions that may be imposed include leaving a portion of the tree on the ground; having a tree next to a stream directionally felled into the stream, if feasible; removing just a dead top or limbs, rather than the entire tree; or slash disposal requirements.

In rare circumstances, when the special-use administrator determines there's an *immediate urgency* to remove identified hazards, the authorizing official will give you written permission to eliminate the hazard (most likely to cut down a tree) without waiting for an assessment. At this point, the holder must leave the tree in place on the ground until the assessment is complete.

If, during our inspection, we see that any trees you have identified *do not* pose a hazard to your improvements, we will notify you and explain in writing the basis of our determination.

### Disposal

Since the trees are the property of the government, the preference of disposal is up to the Forest Service, not the permit holder.

If the government has no need to retain the felled tree either on-site (i.e. fish or wildlife habitat, erosion control, etc) or off-site, we will determine whether or not it has commercial value. If the tree is not considered merchantable timber, you have the option to purchase the tree for firewood through the purchase of a firewood permit. Currently a permit costs \$20 for 5 cords of wood and is valid for one year. If the tree has commercial value, the tree will be appraised and offered for sale (through a competitive bid process).