

**File Code:** 1950  
**Date:** March 8, 2021

Dear Friends and Neighbors of the Willamette National Forest,

On the Willamette National Forest (Forest) in 2020, three large wildfires burned more than 176,000 acres of Forest System lands within the Holiday Farm, Beachie Creek, and Lionshead Fires. As a result of this unprecedented fire season, standing dead and injured trees remain along about 411 miles of open roads across three Ranger Districts of the Forest, as well as about 139 miles of closed roads which may be needed for future management and recreation activities on the Forest. These fire-killed or injured trees pose a danger to public and employee use and enjoyment of the Forest; these areas remain closed until safety concerns are addressed and the danger trees are abated.

To reduce the risk posed by standing dead and injured trees within striking distance of fire-affected roads, the Forest is proposing a project to reduce roadside danger trees along hundreds of Forest System roads and request your input and comments.

The purpose and need of this proposal is to provide improved safety along roads within the fire burned areas of the Forest and reopen these roads as quickly as possible for public and administrative use. To achieve this purpose, the project would fell dead and injured trees which pose a danger to roads and those traveling along them. Reducing roadside danger trees within these fire-burned areas would also provide employees safer access during both fire recovery and future fire suppression efforts.

## Management Direction and Project Location

Resource conditions within the project area will be reviewed to determine if there are extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action that warrant further analysis. The project will also be reviewed to ensure consistency with the 1990 Willamette National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) as amended by the Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for management of Habitat for Late Successional and Old-Growth Related Species within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (Northwest Forest Plan) and for compliance with other laws, regulations, and policies.

The project area includes the Detroit, McKenzie River, and Sweet Home Ranger Districts of the Willamette National Forest in Marion, Linn, and Lane Counties, Oregon. Roads which are proposed for treatment cross General Forest (14A), Administrative Use Sites (13B), Special Use Permit Areas (13A), Developed Recreation Special Use Sites (12B), Developed Recreation Sites (12A), Scenic Retention Foreground (11F), Scenic Partial Retention Foreground (11D), Scenic Partial Retention Middleground (11C), Scenic Modification Middleground (11A), Special Habitat Areas (9D), Lakeside Area (10F), Marten Habitat Area (9C), Pileated Woodpecker Habitat Areas (9B), Bald Eagle (8), Old Growth Groves (7), Special Interest Areas (5A), and Opal Creek Scenic Recreation Area (2C) managements areas of the 1990 Willamette National



Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended), and the Matrix, Adaptive Management Area, Administratively Withdrawn, Late Successional Reserve, and Riparian Reserve land allocations of the Northwest Forest Plan. Some proposed roads are along the boundary of Wilderness areas and the project will be designed to ensure protection of wilderness character.

The legal description of the roads proposed for treatment in this project is: Township 8 South, Range 4 East, sections 11 to 16, 20 to 29, and 32 to 36; T8S, R5E, sections 7, 8, 16 to 23, and 26 to 35; T8S, R7E, section 31; T9S, R4E, sections 1 to 5, 7 to 17, and 36; T9S, R5E, sections 1 to 36; T9S, R7E, sections 3 to 36; T9S, R8E, sections 7, 8, 16 to 22, and 25 to 36; T10S, R4E, sections 1, 12, 13, 16, and 21; T10S, R5E, sections 1 to 18, 20, and 24; T10S, R6E, sections 1 to 36; T10S, R7E, sections 1 to 35; T10S, R8E, sections 1 to 12, 14 to 23, and 28 to 30; T11S, R6E, sections 1 to 5; T11S, R7E, sections 4 to 6; T15S, R3E, section 13; T15S, R4E, sections 18 to 20, and 28 to 36; T15S, R5E, sections 31 and 32; T16S, R2E, sections 24 and 25; T16S, R3E, sections 1, 9 to 27, 29, 30, and 34 to 36; T16S, R4E, sections 1 to 30, and 32 to 36; T16S, R5E, sections 5 to 8, 17 to 20, 30, and 31; T16S, R4E, sections 24, 25, and 36; T17S, R2E, section 33; T17S, R3E, sections 1, 2, 11 to 13, 22 to 27, and 36; T17S, R4E, sections 1 to 18, 23, 24, 30, and 31; T17S, R5E, sections 6 and 7; T18S, R2E, section 4; T18S, R3E, section 1; and T18S, R4E, section 6.

## Proposed Action

Of the 550 miles of System roads within the perimeters of the fires, about 390 miles (approximately 70%) are proposed for treatment. Roads were selected that need to be reopened for public and employee access. This includes access to recreation areas, communication sites, and private land inholdings and for future fire and forest management activities.

While about 390 miles of road are included in this proposal, not every mile would require treatment. These roads have varying levels of fire-killed or injured trees depending on how severely the fire burned in the area. There are road sections where there are no danger trees, others with scattered individuals or small groups of danger trees, and more where all trees within striking distance of the road were killed by the wildfire. Danger trees which may strike the road would be felled where they are found and trees which do not threaten the roads would be left standing.

A danger tree is any tree, or portion of a tree, that could cause injury or death to people or property because of damage or defect. To determine which trees need to be removed, Forest Service specialists will consult the Region 6 Danger Tree Policy Guidelines. Danger trees, regardless of their size, which are within one-tree height of the road would be felled. Trees which lean away from and would not strike the road when they fall would be left standing. Additional trees within 1.5 tree heights from the road may be felled in areas of high use or where people stop, such as intersections, dispersed camping areas, viewpoints, parking areas, and pull outs.

Felled trees would be used for a variety of purposes. Some would stay on-site to reduce the risk of sedimentation run off and provide wildlife habitat, some may be used for restoration projects as fish and wildlife habitat logs, while others would be sold to the local mills to become wood products, be offered through permits for firewood to the local community, or be given to Tribes

for cultural use. Some road maintenance may be required to facilitate access to and hauling from treatment areas. Project generated fuels would be reduced as necessary to meet Forest Plan standards by being piled and burned, lopped and scattered, or chipped and spread across the cutting area.

Where danger trees are removed through a timber sale, harvest operations would include the use of ground-based and skyline logging systems. Some of the funds generated by these timber sales would be used for watershed restoration and reforestation projects. The primary intention of these efforts is to abate dangers and improve safe access to the forest; timber sales are simply a tool used to make implementation of this project economically feasible.

In many places, danger trees would be felled and left in place on site. This would occur where appropriate to provide erosion control and to meet the standards of the Forest Plan (as amended) such as those for coarse woody debris. Generally, danger trees within Riparian Reserves, Late Successional Reserves, known large concentrations of noxious weeds, known culture resource sites, and those felled beyond one tree height of the road would be felled and left in place on site. Danger trees may still be removed from these areas if the danger tree cannot be safely felled away from the road, the fallen tree would still be a danger to the road or disrupt flow through a drainage structure, or the quantity of fuels left on the ground would be inconsistent with Forest Plan standards. Additionally, across all areas treated, fallen trees will be left on site to meet coarse woody debris standards of the Forest Plan and snag trees that do not pose a threat to the roadway will remain standing.

## Public Involvement

We invite you to provide comments on the proposed action. Comments received by March 22, 2021 would be most helpful in considering the final design of this project. Please let us know if you have any specific concerns or suggestions regarding the proposed action. For referenced material to be considered, commenters should supply referenced literature and discuss its relevancy to the project as part of their comments.

Comments may be submitted through the project website or by email, mail, or facsimile. Comments received, including the names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this project and will be available for public review (40 CFR 1501.7 and 1508.22; Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Section 21).

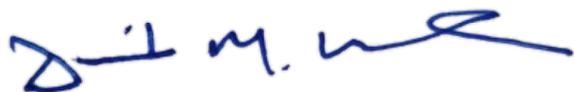
- Project webpage: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=59519>. Select the “Comment on Project” link in the “Get Connected” group at the right-hand side of the webpage. Attachments may be in the following formats: portable document format (.pdf), Word (.doc, .docx), plain text (.txt), or rich text format (.rtf).
- Email with 2020 Fires Roadside Danger Tree Reduction Project in the subject to the project lead at [elspeth.gustavson@usda.gov](mailto:elspeth.gustavson@usda.gov).
- Mailed or faxed to Willamette National Forest Supervisors Office, Attn: 2020 Fires Roadside Danger Tree Project, 3106 Pierce Parkway Suite D, Springfield, OR 97477; Fax 541-825-3110.

This letter describing the proposed action, maps and a list of proposed roads, and any other supporting information regarding this project are available for your review on the project website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=59519>. For more information please contact Elsa Gustavson, Willamette Forest Environmental Coordinator and project lead at [elspeth.gustavson@usda.gov](mailto:elspeth.gustavson@usda.gov).

We will notify you when a Decision Memo is signed. It is expected to be completed in May 2021 and will be posted to the project website. Work to reduce dangers trees on these roads would begin this summer and be completed sometime next year. Forest Service specialists would periodically assess the situation over the next several years to see if more work is needed to continue providing safe access to the Forest.

Thank you for your continued interest in the management of the Willamette National Forest. The fires of 2020 created unprecedented challenges and changes in accessibility to forest users. This project is an important step to address hazardous conditions and allow for the safe re-opening of many roads and recreational areas.

Sincerely,



DAVID WARNACK  
Forest Supervisor