

File Code: 1950
Date: February 25, 2021

Dear Interested Party,

The Clackamas River Ranger District of the Mt. Hood National Forest is considering a proposal to remove damaged trees along roads, at developed recreation areas, and administrative sites that were affected by the Riverside and Lionshead fires that burned in September 2020. The portions of the District affected by the fires are currently closed to public access due to the dangerous conditions and the abundance of burned trees that are falling and likely to continue to fall from decay and storm events. In order to open National Forest System roads, developed recreation areas, and administrative sites that are currently closed, the District needs to mitigate the safety concerns associated with the fire-damaged trees. If safe access on roads and at developed recreation and administrative sites is not addressed in a timely manner, then portions of the District are likely to remain closed for the long term.

You are being contacted because you have expressed an interest in projects on the District. Please see the “How to Comment” section of this letter below for information on how and when to provide input on this project.

Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of this project is to remedy fire-caused safety issues so that roads, recreation areas, and administrative sites can be opened to the public and for administrative access.

Proposed Action

In order to meet the purpose and need, the District is proposing to cut fire-killed and fire-damaged trees that are within striking distance that pose a risk to the public and employees along roads, recreation areas, and administrative sites. Because there are so many fire-damaged trees, the District will use timber sale contracts where feasible to cut the designated trees and remove them where appropriate based on the standards and guidelines outlined in the Mt. Hood Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). It is our intent to do this work efficiently and quickly through timber sale contracts before the timber is lost to decay because we have very limited ability to fund this work if the value of the timber is lost.

Some trees may be cut and left on site where down wood is needed, or to meet other management objectives. Service contracts or agency staff would be used where timber sale contracts are not feasible. Residual slash may be treated in some areas.



Management Direction

The Forest Plan, as amended, includes the following goals (Page Four-3):

- Manage Forest recreational access to protect natural resources, provide for public safety, and minimize conflicts among various users of the Forest. Goal #16.
- Provide safe efficient access for movement of people and materials involved in the use and management of the Forest. Provide for construction and maintenance of roads at a level that will minimize environmental damage. Goal #17.
- Produce wood fiber at sustainable levels consistent with other resource values and economic efficiency. Goal #19.
- The project would be designed to be consistent with the Forest Plan, as amended.

Anticipated Analysis

Based on preliminary discussions with my interdisciplinary team, I have determined this project will likely fall within categories of actions that are excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement. Specifically, this project may be included in categorical exclusions (36 CFR 220.6(d)(4)), “repair and maintenance of roads, trails, and landline boundaries,” and (36 CFR 220.6(d)(5)), “repair and maintenance of recreation sites and facilities.”

How to Comment and Timeframe

The purpose of this letter is to invite your participation during this public engagement period. Any comments you may have are welcome. In particular, if you have information you feel that I may not be aware of, or have concerns regarding this proposed action, please participate in this process.

Please send comments to: **comments-pacificnorthwest-mthood-clackamasriver@usda.gov**. Electronic comments including attachments may be submitted electronically in word (.doc), rich text format (.rtf), text (.txt), hypertext markup language (.html), or portable document format (.pdf). Due to current concerns regarding the Covid-19 pandemic, I would like to strongly encourage you to submit comments electronically. However, if this is not possible, then specific written comments may also be submitted via mail to Clackamas River Ranger District, **ATTN: Clackamas Fires Roadside Tree Abatement Project**; 16400 Champion Way, Sandy, OR 97055-7248. Because of Covid-19, comments should not be hand-delivered at this time. **Comments are due on March 15, 2021.**

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will become part of the public record for this proposed action and may be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, anonymous comments will not provide the agency with the ability to provide the respondent with subsequent information.

Additional Information

Please note that this is an opportunity to provide comments. If you have clarifying questions you need answered before you can make an informed comment, it would be best to ask them via email. Additional information and maps can be found on the [project website](#)¹. For questions, please contact Jim Roden, Team Leader, at 541-604-1230 or james.roden@usda.gov; or Michelle Lombardo, Environmental Coordinator, at 971-303-2083 or michelle.lombardo@usda.gov. Thank you for your interest and participation in this project.

Sincerely,

X Jackie Groce

Signed by: JACQUELINE GROCE
JACKIE GROCE
District Ranger

¹ <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=59454>