

Oregon's Wildfire Cleanup Response

Senate Committee on Natural Resources & Wildfire Recovery

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OREGON
Debris Management
Task Force



BACKGROUND

Oregon's long road to recovery, cleanup work accomplished to date.

SEPTEMBER 2020

4,000 destroyed homes and thousands of fire-damaged, dead or dying trees left in the wake of 2020 wildfires near state highways and destroyed homes.

OCTOBER 2020

With hazard trees scattered, towering, and falling on roadways and communities, crews quickly go to work to clear and re-open 240 miles of highways, removing the most immediate threats.

OCT/NOV 2020

FEMA reimbursement guidelines require urgent action. Wildfire Economic Recovery Council and Governor's Office directs ODOT/Debris Management Task Force—through a state-led, locally coordinated approach—to remove all dead and dying hazard trees posing threats. ODOT/Task Force work accounts for less than 1% of the total one million acre burn area.

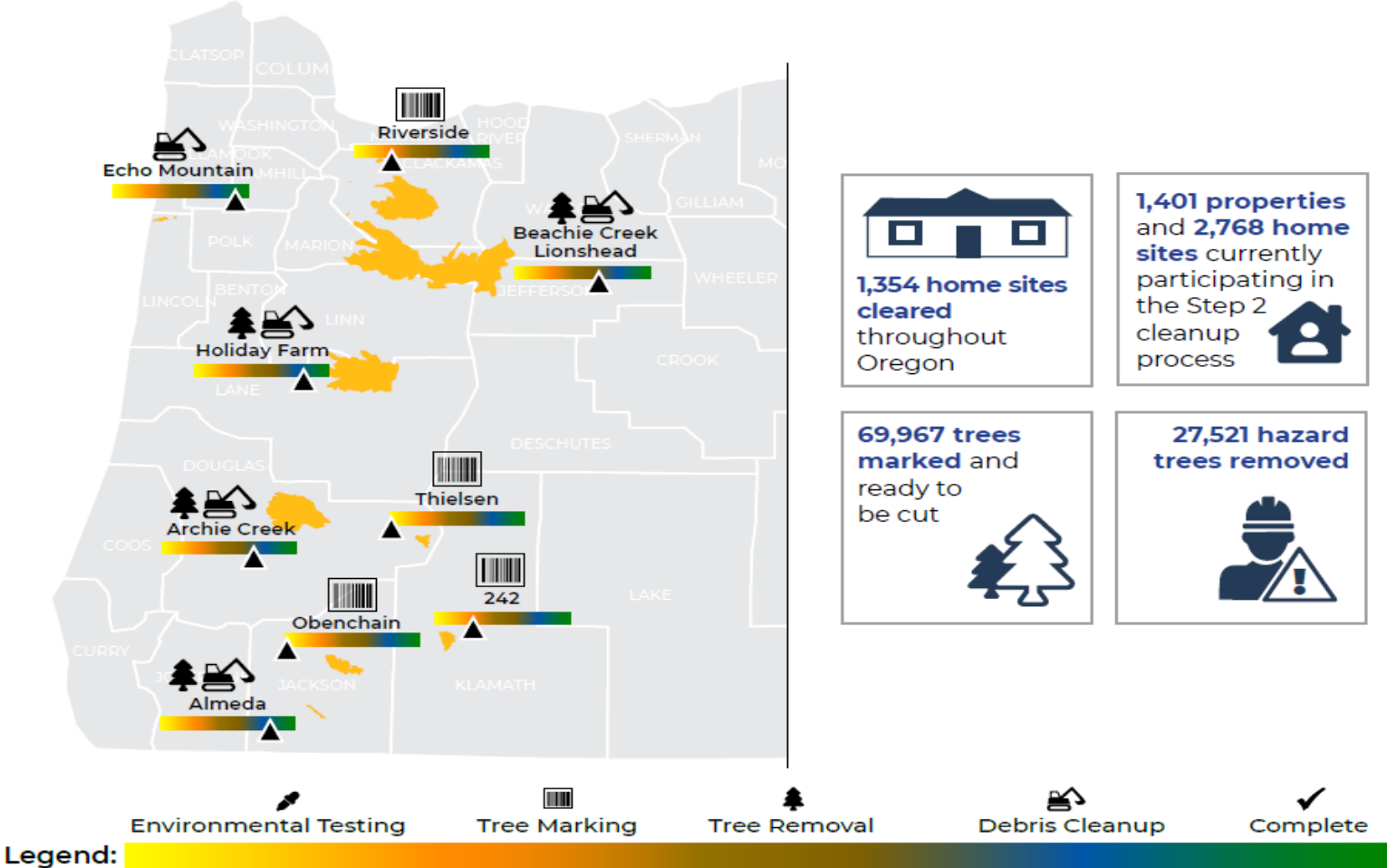
NOV/DEC 2020-PRESENT

As part of the ongoing emergency response operation, ODOT/Task Force finalizes contract team, begins hazard tree evaluation, marking and removal operation. Debris removal 50% complete.



SCOPE & SCALE: 8 counties + 9 fires

Debris and hazard tree removal work is underway in 8 fire-impacted Oregon counties. Total ODOT/Task Force tree removal work, however, accounts for less than 1% of burned fire area.



ALL HANDS ON DECK

Many are working in fire-damaged corridors. ODOT/Task Force work accounts for less than 1% of fire burn area only along state highways and near destroyed home sites.

Local jurisdictions working on local and county roadways and public areas

This includes many local road networks and parks.

Utility companies working to maintain current and future electricity access

This includes work along utility easements and near power lines.

Private property and forestland owners

Removing hazard trees near roadways and other public areas and other private logging practices to prepare for replanting and reforestation.

Public land managers

Ongoing hazard tree removal and restoration work along forest roads and other recreation centers.

Fire-resilience efforts and other secondary benefits of removing hazard trees

Including creating defensible space for home sites as families and communities rebuild and fire breaks to suppress future megafires near population centers.





GOALS & CHARGE

Key priorities and themes guiding all aspects of this critical work.

Ensure no more lives are lost to the 2020 wildfires.

Hundreds of Oregonians are killed each year by preventable accidents. As Oregonians begin to rebuild homes, we're working to ensure they can without fear or threats.

Save Oregon taxpayers money.

Maximize 75/25 FEMA reimbursement for Oregon.

Informed by stewardship, regulatory requirements, and expertise.

Including FEMA criteria guidelines, best available science, operation Environmental Protection Plan, disaster recovery best practices, and environmental values.





GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Key priorities and themes guiding all aspects of this critical work.

We will not cut any more dead or dying trees than absolutely necessary.

Only trees surgically determined a hazard to homes and highways are marked, cut, and removed.

We're all in this together.

Collaboration and weekly coordination provides the best outcomes for Oregon.

Oregonians helping Oregonians, providing economic opportunities.

More than 90% of subcontractors and 60% of the total workforce working on this operation are local Oregon residents and businesses.

THE LONG ROAD TO RECOVERY

Removing hazard trees is just one part of the significant recovery progress underway.



OVERSIGHT STRUCTURE

ODOT/DMTF: lead contracting agency

CDR: independent monitoring firm

MBG

Environmental lead
Arborists/Foresters
Tree evaluations

PRIME CONTRACTORS

Ash and debris removal
K&E
AshBritt
ECC

Hazard tree removal
Suulutaaq
Ceres
ECC

SUBCONTRACTORS

Tree service companies

Steps of Hazard Tree Identification and Removal



2020 LABOR DAY FIRES

Thousands of trees are critically damaged or killed by wildfire, impacting major roadways and creating safety threats for Oregon communities and travelers



EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT

Professional and certified arborists and foresters thoroughly [classify trees individually based on established criteria](#) rooted in science and safety



TREE MARKING

Crews evaluate and mark dead/dying trees posing a threat to travelers, work crews and community



DOUBLE-CHECK, TRIPLE CHECK, FINAL SIGN-OFF

A second set of arborists and foresters review and confirm trees marked for removal; A monitoring firm provides third review; A field incident commander often provides fourth review to ensure accuracy/quality



TREE CUTTING/REMOVAL

An independent contractor not connected to the arborists cuts and removes only marked trees



WORK MONITORING

A separate team of contractors monitors work for accuracy and safety



TREES SAFELY REMOVED

Following strict environmental guidelines, cleared roads and home sites keep Oregon communities and travelers safe



CUT TREES

- Donated for restoration and conservation projects
- Chipped and used for erosion control, forest floor
- Left as wildlife habitat on the forest floor
- Transported to biomass facilities to be converted into energy
- Stacked in staging areas for future use



CRITERIA SNAPSHOT

FEMA reimbursement requirements define hazard trees as fire-damaged, dead or dying trees presenting an eminent threat within a **five-year timeframe**.



- ✓ Crown more than 50% damaged. Many will be monitored over time

- ✓ Evaluating how the tree is leaning

- ✓ Exposed hardwood. Damaged cambium layer. Many broken or fallen branches

- ✓ Tree has a diameter of 6+ inches, 4.5 feet above the ground

- ✓ Tree has a split, hollowed, or critically damaged trunk

- ✓ Dead or dying 1.5x – 2x the height from roadways and home sites

- ✓ Assessment of the structural integrity, root system, and survivability of each tree







LESSONS LEARNED

- This work is about **helping people** and impacted Oregonians.
- Dramatically altered and changing post-fire landscapes are highly **traumatic experiences**.
- Because this work is so new, **education** about what this work is, looks like, and who's doing it must happen in real-time.
- With any workforce, some have different or **more experience than others**.
- **We're always adapting**. To be successful, this work must be flexible and evolving. There is no playbook for wildfire cleanup.
- **Urgency and immediate action**, while difficult, has proven to provide the best long-term outcomes nationally.
- **Unprecedented, quality work is happening** to get Oregon fire-impacted communities rebuild-ready.

STAY CONNECTED

A photograph showing the aftermath of a wildfire. In the center, a large, dark, abstract sculpture stands amidst a pile of debris and charred wood. To the left, a concrete structure with two small windows is partially visible. The background shows a blue sky with light clouds and some trees. A utility pole is visible on the right side of the frame.

wildfire.oregon.gov/cleanup
www.DebrisCleanupNews.com

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