

# House Committee

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## Climate, Energy and Environment

Informational Meeting – Utilities' Wildfire Planning Update  
May 8, 2023

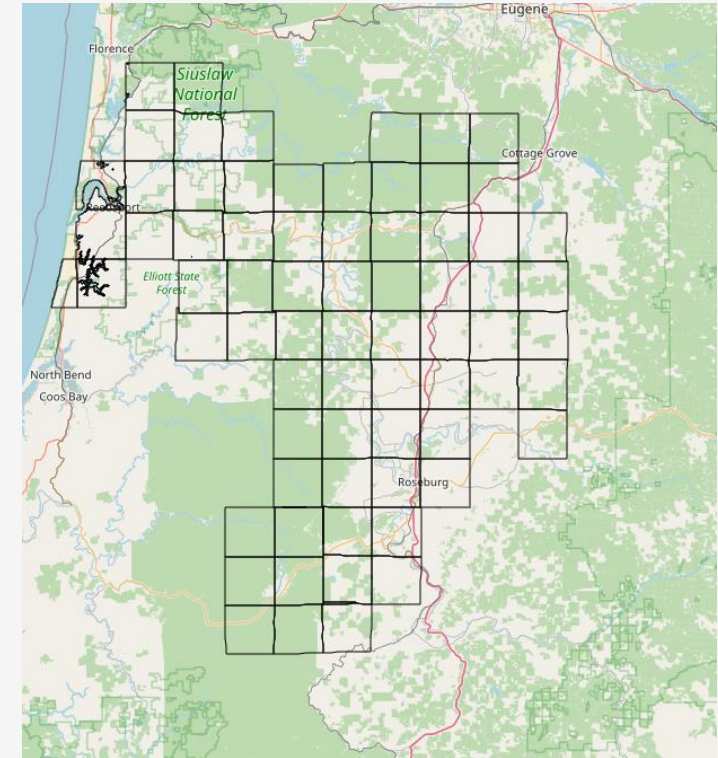
Keith Brooks, General Manager  
Douglas Electric Cooperative



# Douglas Electric (DEC) – At a Glance

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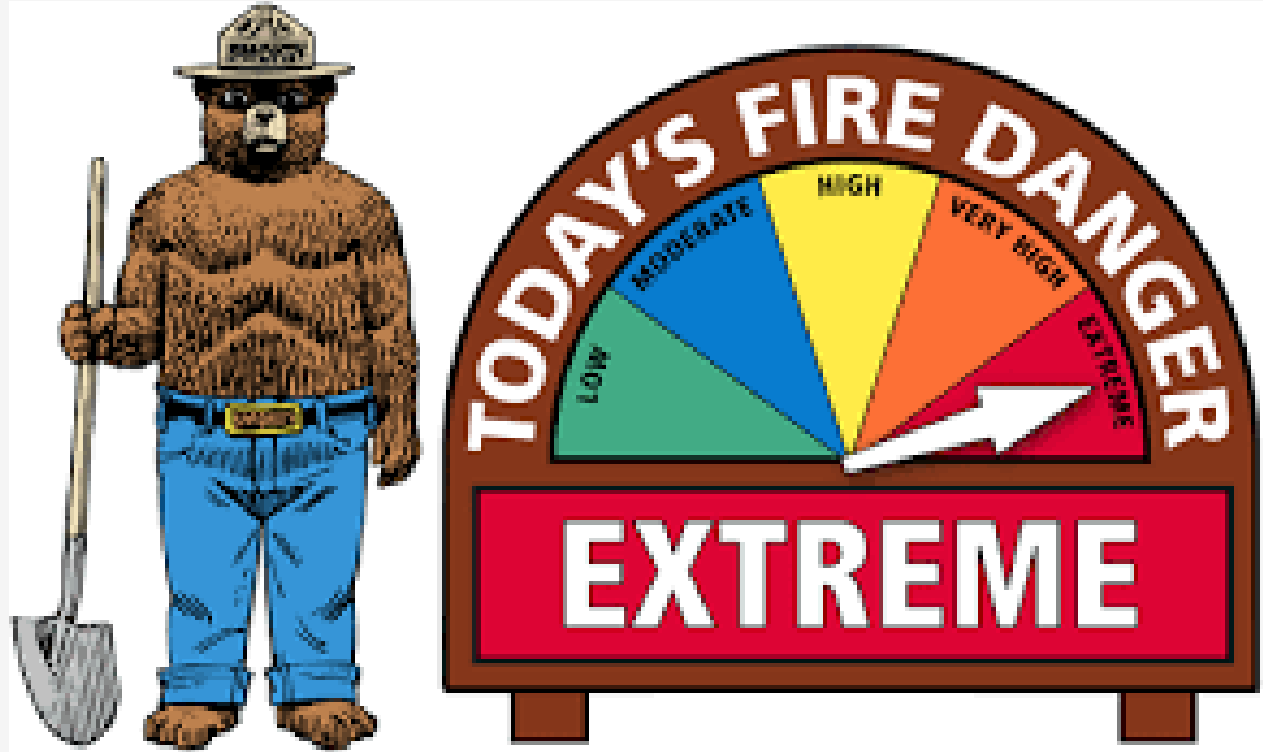
- Counties Served: Coos, Douglas, Lane
- Number of Meters: 11,032
- Service Territory: 2,500 square miles
- Douglas Electric is governed by a 7-member Board of Directors, who are elected by the membership.
- To help bridge the urban-rural divide, Douglas Electric launched Douglas Fast Net, a fiber-optic carrier that provides internet service to rural Oregonians in three counties, covering nearly 20 cities.



# Douglas Electric Wildfire Mitigation Plan

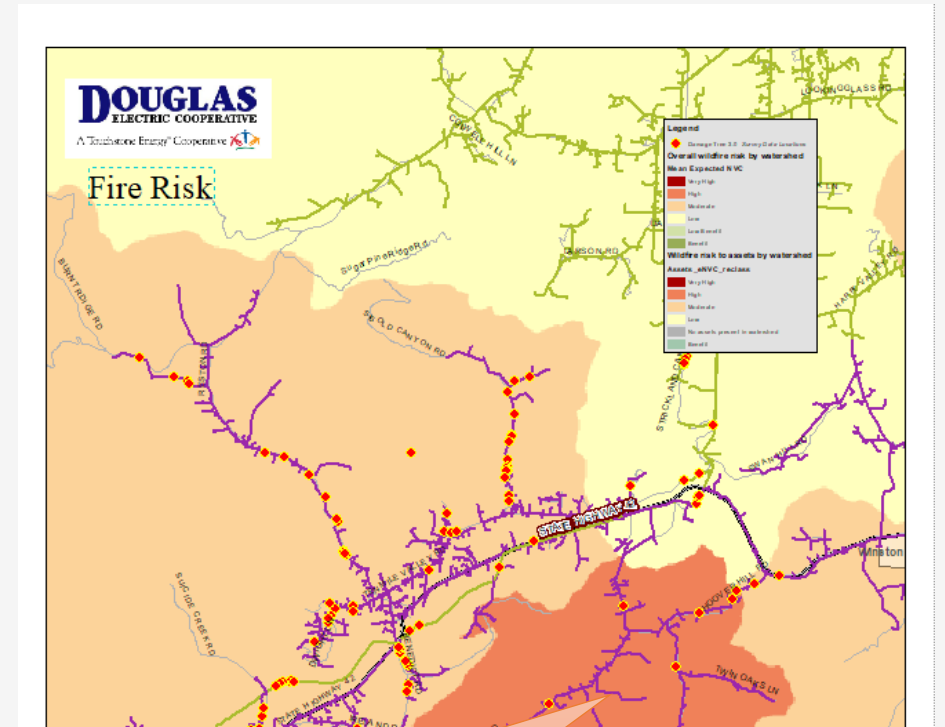
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1. Assess
2. Plan
3. Act



# Assess

- Working with consultants, we did an independent evaluation of our vegetation management program specific to wildfire threat. We were graded on our plan and received feedback on areas for improvement.
- We began tracking our tree related outages in finer detail. Example: was the tree that caused the outage inside the right-of-way (ROW)? Was the tree dead?
- We performed a feeder-by-feeder analysis for risk using state fire data, geography, and outage history.
- We assessed our system protection and the location of our combustion fuses.
- Reviewed our maintenance practices through the lens of wildfire mitigation AND reliability.
- Analyzed our installation practices to understand what the value of underground vs overhead lines under this new fire mitigation paradigm.



## High Fire Risk Area

# Assessment Results

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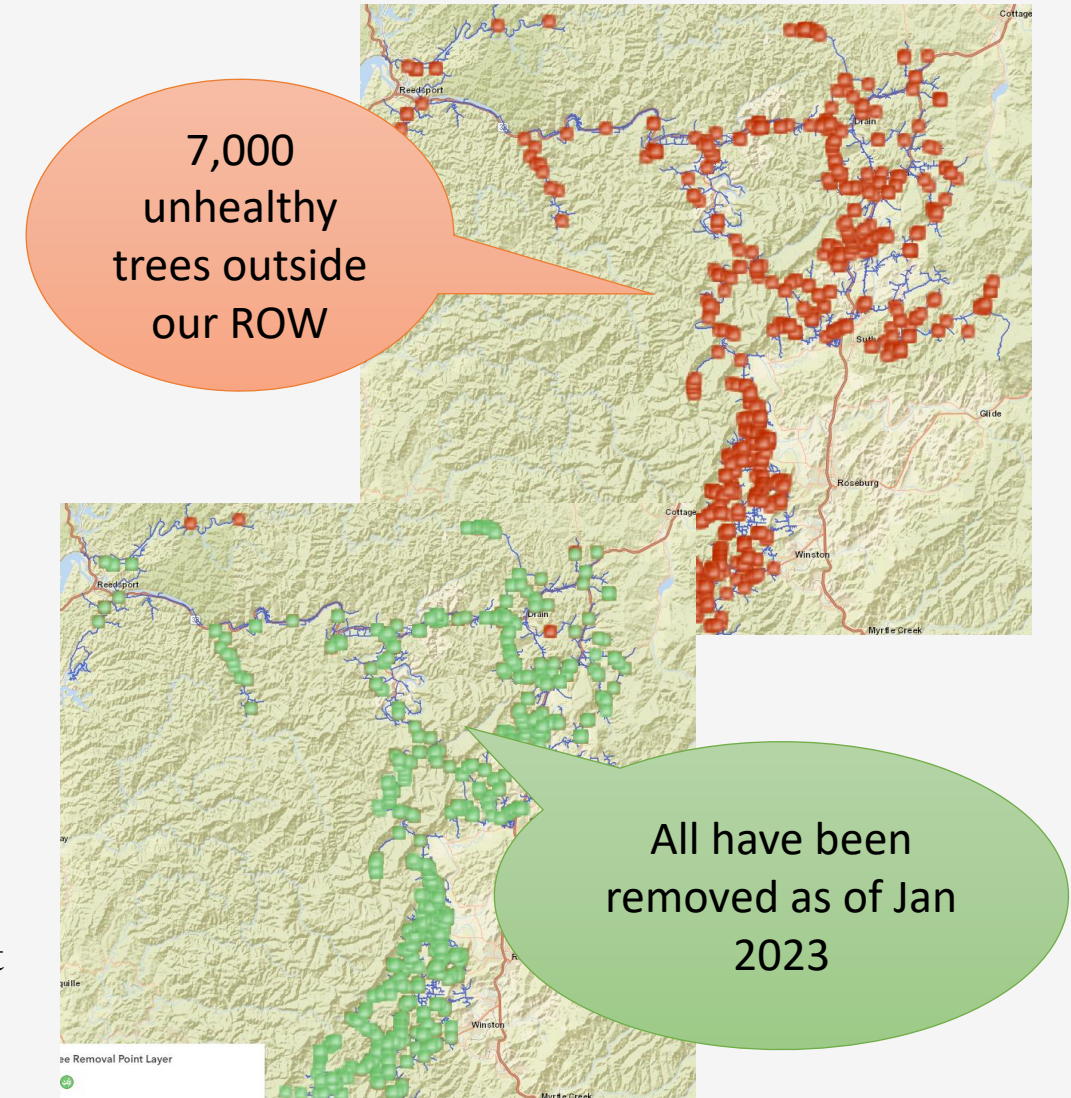
- 96% of our tree related outages are caused by trees outside our ROW.
  - 45% were green trees that were alive but unhealthy.
- Due to increased tree mortality, we recognized the need for more vegetation management crews. In addition, we determined a need to hire a certified forester to patrol the system and identify dangerous trees outside our ROW.
- To more efficiently identify problems, we have added drones and other technologies to help identify danger trees that have developed in off cycle inspections.
- Underground installations made much more sense in most new service installations.
- We recognized the need to make changes now – before senior employees retired with institutional knowledge. We must imbed their knowledge in our GIS and other systems.
- We needed a work plan with fire mitigation and reliability as a focus. We would need some outside help developing the plan.





# Plan & Act

- We hired contractors to help with a 5-year work plan, fire mitigation, and reliability at its core.
- We created & filled a position titled “Fire Mitigation Manager”.
- We hired a forester to patrol our system and identify dangerous trees outside our ROW – green or dead. We created an application to track dead trees, recording when they were removed, their GPS location, and taking before and after pictures.
- We doubled our budget for vegetation management to remove the trees identified in the audit. We have tested the limits of our non-profit status.
- Part of our goal is to increase the speed and frequency we inspect our hard-to-reach locations. The six linemen we sent to drone school have inspected hundreds of miles of our off-road ROWs in the last couple of years.
- Our installation policy has been changed. All new services will be underground, unless conditions exist that make it not practical. Over the last 2 years, 100% of our new services have been underground installations.



# Plan & Act (continued)

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- Partnering with local fire agencies, Douglas Electric has applied for 10 million dollars in grants for wildfire mitigation. We just received notice that we were successful in our application.
- We work closely with community partners, Douglas Forest Protection Association and County Emergency Management who help assess our system annually.
- DEC has purchased additional firefighting wagons and equipment.
- Converted our Vegetation Management program to GIS.
- Made changes to our stand-by policy for fire season to provide faster notification and response when there are issues.



Each tree was  
photographed before  
and after



# Questions?

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