

**Private Lands Access Closures
Intended to Reduce Risk
-2009 Update-**

In recent years landowners have sought to reduce natural resource damage from accidental or careless activities caused in part by the general public. These resources include: growing forests, clean air, clean water, fish populations, wildlife and wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities very important assets to all Oregonians.

Normally the season having the greatest potential for fire damage is, obviously, summer and early fall although climate change effects are showing fire danger periods extending farther each year into early spring and late fall. During fire season, some landowners have experienced unacceptable levels of damage, not only from fire but also from other risks as listed below. Many landowners have chosen to reduce the damage by controlling public access to their lands. Some eliminate public access on a year round basis while others restrict access only during *EXTREME* fire conditions. These closures are individual landowner decisions based on their unique geographic locations and company situations, as well as the levels of risk they are willing to accept as part of their active Fire Prevention Plan.

Besides the risks associated with fire, reductions in the following illegal activities are also achieved by access closures/restrictions:

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|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Trespassing | Methamphetamine Labs |
| Marijuana growing | Poaching |
| Vandalism/Metal Theft | Illegal Dumping |
| Stolen Vehicle Dumping | Party Fires |
| Minor Forest Product theft | Timber theft |
| Road damage | Stream/Soil damage from off-road vehicles |

Another consideration for implementing access closures to reduce new fire starts is the evaluation of fire crew availability within the region. This can occur from base budget funding for local readiness or fire responses throughout the region. The numbers of available crews depend on other fire activity in our area, regionally or nationally. The rising cost of suppression resources and wildfires warrant greater attention and commitment to the “Prevention” aspects of an effective Fire Program.

Once the fire danger has been reduced by fall rains, many landowners restore public access in time for traditional fall activities. The public’s access and participation in ODF&W general hunting seasons is a critical component of an integrated timber damage program. Reducing seedling damage caused by high levels of deer and elk browse in managed forests helps in meeting long term sustainability goals for landowners and meeting public expectations.

It is recognized that landowner access closures do affect many diverse public activities but are not intended to single out any one specific interest or activity group. Restricted use or closures of private lands is part of the landowner’s prevention planning process to protect Oregon’s resources. Thank you for your efforts to prevent fires and keeping our forests healthy and habitats safe. We trust that with this better understanding of the considerations associated with the benefits from “public access closures” there will be a greater appreciation, understanding and acceptance of access restrictions as a “Prevention” tool.

“Keep Oregon Green”[©] – Help Prevent Wildfires