



BURNS INTERAGENCY FIRE ZONE

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<http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/burns/fire/index.php>

NEWS

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LOCAL AGENCIES DEVELOP PLANS TO RE-OPEN PORTIONS OF EGLEY WILDFIRE AREA; REHABILITATION EFFORTS UNDERWAY

HINES, Oregon – With the Egley wildfire complex 100% contained and nearly 100% controlled, local Federal and State agencies are developing plans to re-open large portions of the closed area to recreationists, hunters and other public land users. Although no changes to the access restrictions will be in place by the July 28 weekend, officials are planning for a significant reduction in the amount of closed area by August 4.

The closure of Federal lands west of Highway 395, north of Highway 20, south of the Izee-Paulina Highway along the Malheur National Forest boundary, and west of the Silver Creek Road near Riley has been in place since July 9, just three days after the Egley wildfire complex started. At the time, the closure was necessary for public safety due to multiple wildfires in the vicinity, active fire close to roads and access points, and heavy firefighting traffic on the forest roadways. The closure continues to be necessary as heavy traffic remains on the forest roadways, but also because of hundreds of snags and hazard trees, stump holes, uncontrolled fire areas or large unburned islands of fuel within the perimeter, and firefighter base camps at Egypt Wells and Delintment Lake.

As early as next weekend, agency officials hope to open access east from Forest Road 47 to Highway 395 and south from the Izee-Paulina Highway to just north of the Egley Complex perimeter. All areas within the perimeter will remain closed to *all* public access until further notice.

Aside from working to re-open access in the fire area, agency officials and firefighters are repairing damages done by the fire itself and by the suppression activities taken to control the fire. The most immediate rehabilitation efforts include refurbishing dozer lines and cutting down hazard trees near roadways and recreation sites. Stabilizing burned areas is also at the top of the rehab list, with efforts such as reducing the potential of erosion with log barriers, water bars on roads, mulching hillsides with hay, and seeding desirable species; seeding to prevent establishment of weeds; constructing fences to protect seed; and applying herbicide treatments to treat noxious weeds.

The last set of rehab efforts will be taken to repair or improve fire-damaged lands that are unlikely to recover naturally without help and will be implemented over the next three years, but mostly within the next few months. Work will include chemical treatment and mechanical removal of invasive weed species, seeding, planting of tree and shrub seedlings, and repairing or replacing damage to minor facilities such as interpretive signs, livestock fences and wildlife guzzlers.

Although the Egley Complex is much less active now, potential for *new* incidents remains high across Harney and Grant Counties. Nearly twenty wildfires have sparked up since the July 23 storm, but most have been contained at less than 10 acres. Firefighters are expecting continued activity over the next 3-4 weeks, when wildfire season is typically at its peak. To help limit *new* fires to those caused by lightning or other natural occurrences, the public is reminded of the extremely hot and dry conditions and the



regulated fire closure currently in place within the Burns Interagency Fire Zone. The closure allows campfires only in designated campgrounds and prohibits all off-road vehicle travel, smoking out of doors, and parking a vehicle or operating an internal combustion motor in areas not free of vegetation.

The Industrial Fire Precaution Level in the Burns Interagency Fire Zone is a Level 4 and fire danger is extreme.

More information on access and recreation opportunities within the Egley Complex will be available throughout the coming weeks. With questions, please call the Malheur National Forest office at (541) 575-3000 or the Emigrant Creek Ranger District office at (541) 573-4300.

