

# Restoration After Catastrophic Fire

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The Douglas Complex fires have burned over 48,000 acres since a large lightning storm ignited over 30 fires in an area north of Glendale in Douglas County on July 26, 2013. As time progressed, the fires burned together into two large catastrophic events that have now been controlled. The forests that burned were a mix of natural stands and managed stands in a checkerboard ownership pattern. Primary landowners were two large private timber companies and the alternate sections were O&C timberlands managed by the BLM. As is usual with large fire events, some areas burned extremely hot and all of the vegetation including large trees, small trees and understory were killed. In other areas, the fires burned more lightly, stayed on the ground and most of the vegetation, though singed, will recover.

A big job lies ahead for the respective landowners to return this landscape to a productive forest. Initially, loggers will remove, where necessary, hazardous dead standing trees that endanger those working on the ground to recover dead merchantable wood and reforest the site. Not only do we need to begin the reforestation process quickly, but we must also promptly remove excess dead wood that would leave a high potential for a reburn while it can be done safely and economically.

Time is not on our side in the recovery effort. The deterioration process of the burned trees begins immediately. Already invasive brush is sprouting, even in the areas that burned the hottest.

Our goals are:

- Promptly remove the hazard trees, assuring worker safety and access for the general public.
- Provide cover for soil exposed by fireline construction.
- Recover valuable dead timber before it deteriorates from insects and weathering. The small timber deteriorates very rapidly.
- Promptly begin growing nursery seedlings to replant the new forest in the burned area.
- Plan for herbicide application or other control of invasive brush before seedlings are planted.
- Survey streams to determine rehabilitation needed to protect water quality and restore fish habitat.

Rail line safety is critical. Coordinate with rail line safety and maintenance personnel to identify and remove or mitigate snag and slide issues before the onset of winter storms.