



# HAZARD TREES

Bear Creek, the most urbanized watershed in southern Oregon, is lined by dense colonies of invasive plants with sparse areas of native vegetation; it experiences chronic water quality issues such as low summer flows, high summer water temperatures, and high nutrient and bacteria loads. These conditions negatively impact native fish and wildlife, and create safety issues for users of the 25-mile long Bear Creek Greenway, and increase the risk of fire. In the face of these conditions, Rogue Valley organizations, municipalities, and advocacy groups remain committed to increasing the ecological and recreational value of Bear Creek and its riparian corridor.

In September 2020, the Bear Creek Corridor was heavily impacted by the Almeda Fire that originated near the Greenway in Ashland and burned all the way to south Medford. After a fire many trees are weakened from burning around the base of the trunk. The trees can fall over or blow down in windy conditions without warning. It is important to remove those dead and damaged trees caused by wildfire that pose hazards to people, animals, personal property, utilities, and other structures that might be damaged from falling trees and branches.

One of the first actions taken after the Almeda Fire was to assess tree mortality and damage. Trees that posed a threat to life or property (“hazard trees”) were generally located next to homes, outbuildings, access roads, and other structures. These trees were removed. However, most trees within the fire footprint did not present such a threat and, therefore, are not deemed a hazard.

The BCRI recognizes that scorched, damaged, and fire-killed trees provide valuable habitat and food resources for various species of wildlife. Their decomposition also adds important nutrients to the soil. Furthermore, snags and large downed wood do not pose a high fire hazard. As such, BCRI advocates for the removal of trees only when they present a risk to life, property, and infrastructure, as determined by professional arborists. It is difficult to accurately assess the degree of fire damage based on the stability of trees in the immediate aftermath of a fire. Many of the trees will need to be reassessed on a yearly basis for several growing seasons.

**Keep current on Bear Creek Restoration Initiative's work and collaborative efforts in the Rogue Valley. Visit us to learn more!**

## BEAR CREEK RESTORATION INITIATIVE (BCRI)

In 2018, in response to a large number of fires along Bear Creek, several organizations started a partnership to improve conditions in and along the creek. These groups developed the Bear Creek Restoration Initiative (BCRI) to assess current conditions and envision a desired future outcome by considering ecological, recreational, social, and public safety (including fire) goals. In 2020, the BCRI released their ten priority sites for restoration and started to develop and implement several of those efforts.

The devastating Almeda and Table Rock fires of September 2020 created additional pressure to address community, social, and natural landscape concerns along Bear Creek. The BCRI is intent on working with the public sector, social service organizations, and restoration practitioners to increase public and community safety, combat invasive species, increase water quality, improve fish and wildlife habitat, and encourage the establishment of native plants along Bear Creek.

**[RVCOG.ORG/BEAR-CREEK-RESTORATION-INITIATIVE](https://RVCOG.ORG/BEAR-CREEK-RESTORATION-INITIATIVE)**