

## Update on Tree Removal on OSH Campus

By Roy J. Orr

One of Oregon State Hospital's most distinctive features is its picturesque, park-like setting. Preserving this landscape is very important to us and we have assured our neighbors and the greater Salem community that we will not take away their park.

So with that said, why have dozens of trees been removed during the past few months? These are trees that were identified and inventoried by an arborist in spring 2008. In all, 570 individual trees were included in the inventory, representing more than 55 different tree species. According to the adjusted Walker Macy plan, there will be 98 trees removed this year. Next year, 169 trees will be removed. To date, about 88 trees have been removed.

Many of these trees were identified as having conditions such as decay, termites, root and trunk damage, and dead and broken branches. While we have a wide variety of trees ranging from smaller flowering crabapples to medium-sized maples to large black walnuts, cedars, firs, and pines, many of our trees are not native to this area and some have not aged well in our wet winters and soil. Several of these trees are in severe decline because of old age or sitting in saturated soil for months at a time for many winters.

Other trees marked for removal would either impede construction of the new facility or would be located within what will be the secure perimeter of the new hospital and present a safety risk. For example, a tree with low-hanging branches is a potential safety and security issue for patients and hospital staff.

When the demolition of the trees was first bid, the price included the re-sale or re-use of the trees at the contractor's discretion in order to offset demolition costs. Since that time, however, the cost to fell and remove the trees has increased and the contractor would have to hire a company to take them away. But the commitment to re-use the wood has not changed and the following actions are being taken:

- All fir trees are being given to the Marion County Juvenile Department. Youth participating in a community service program

chop the logs into firewood and provide free to seniors and people with disabilities.

- A certain number of the black walnut trees were sold to a furniture manufacturer. The vendor, who took the black walnut trees to the mill for furniture use, has donated a sizeable burl slab to OSH that is worth about \$3,500. This could be incorporated into some form of art or furniture for one of the yards or entryways in the new hospital.
- Ten cords of wood are designated for the OSH sweat lodge.

I understand this removal concerns many of you. It concerns me, too, because trees are an important part of our campus. I want to assure you that our goal is to keep as many healthy trees as possible, plant more trees when and where it is safe to do so, and with the help of landscape architects, incorporate existing trees into the new hospital design.

If you have questions about the tree removal plan, please contact me. As always, I welcome and appreciate your feedback.