

Oregon 224 Wildfire Recovery

Why is it taking so long to re-open OR 224?

Many threats remain along the 19 miles of closed road. These include slides and trees still in danger of falling. Variables like rock scaling work to be done (removing boulders, rocks, dirt and other materials), the availability of contractors and construction materials, the impact of COVID-19 on workers, and unexpected encounters with owl and peregrine falcon nests also cause delays.

How long has the road been closed?

OR 224 has been closed since September 2020 from milepost 31 to 50, the longest closure of any state road from the wildfires.

Who is responsible for the work?

The Debris Management Task Force completed its cleanup work in December and ODOT is now managing the work to complete the road maintenance, which we are responsible for.

When will the road re-open?

The road will re-open when it's safe, and it's not yet safe. ODOT and the U.S. Forest Service are still working on the road and the properties we're responsible for and developing a timeline for re-opening.

Why is it taking so much longer to reopen OR 224 when all the other state roads closed by the wildfires have re-opened?

The Labor Day 2020 fire tore through the area with severity, burning extremely hot throughout this wild and scenic area of the Clackamas River. It destroyed tens of thousands of trees in its path. The hazard trees, most of them perched high above the roadway on steep cliffs, along with falling boulders and rocks, make the corridor unsafe for everyone to access and a very difficult recovery.

Why not open OR 224 one section of the road at a time?

We're considering many re-opening strategies, including segmental openings. When it is safe to do so, we will pick the strategy that works best.

What has to happen for the road to re-open?

Completing the guardrails is critical. We are still installing more than 42,000 feet of guardrail – about eight miles -- at 11 sites along the road. These include locations

where guardrails were destroyed by wildfire and places stripped of protective roadside trees. Replacement highway safety signs are also being installed.

Will there be a recreation season on the Clackamas River?

We expect there will be a recreation season on the Clackamas River in 2022.

Are rockslides still a threat?

Yes. Crews are still rock scaling, bringing down large, dangerous boulders and rocks that could fall onto the road. In those areas, guardrail installation has to wait until the rock scaling work is done.

What's being done to address the rockslide threat?

We're installing protective mesh fencing on slopes in numerous areas.

What's the status of the U.S. Forest Service sites?

The fire damaged virtually all of the Forest Service sites along OR 224, including all of the campgrounds. Two Forest Service boat access sites, the Moore Creek and Hole-in-the-Wall Day Use sites, will open when the highway reopens. Reopening of other sites in 2022 remains uncertain, based on funding for required hazard and repair work.

Has erosion and the threat of slides worsened with the loss of so many trees?

Slides remain a threat. We've seen no major landslides but see rockslides and rock falls almost every day. A variety of erosion mitigation measures have been put into place, including hydro-mulching and using downed hazard trees for chipping. Here are two posts from the Debris Management Task Force on what's been done in the past: ["Erosion control helps keep highways safe"](#) and ["Get the facts: soil erosion"](#)

What is the plan for replanting?

Replanting is led by the USFS, local land managers, and other [local conservation](#), watershed, and environmental organizations. This work continues in key fire corridors.