

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks News Release

For Immediate Release

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Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks invite public to comment on plan to remove hazardous trees damaged by the KNP Complex wildfire

The 30-day public comment period begins Feb. 3

SEQUOIA AND KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARKS, Calif. February 3, 2023 – Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks invite the public to submit feedback on a plan that explores alternative actions to minimize risk to human safety and infrastructure from fallen tree hazards in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks resulting from the KNP Complex wildfire in 2021. The KNP Complex Wildfire Tree Hazard Mitigation Environmental Assessment (EA) 30-day public comment period begins on Feb. 3, 2023 and ends on March 4, 2023. This review period follows the receipt of initial feedback from the public during the summer of 2022.

The latest comments will inform the National Park Service's (NPS) decisions on how best to address the safety issues stemming from the massive wildfire that burned more than 88,000 acres of national park land, and adjacent lands, in the fall of 2021.

Although the NPS was able to restore access to major roads within the parks by removing some of the most imminent hazards, some roads remain closed following the KNP fire due to the density of tree hazards. Additionally, thousands of dead trees remain along roads open to public travel, which will become more dangerous over time if they are not removed.

The EA, written in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), evaluates three possible approaches to reducing public safety hazards. The assessment analyzes options for treating fallen debris like pile burning, chipping and spreading on site, chipping and hauling from the parks, or hauling from the parks. Some wood may also be made available for public use via permit. This work would protect road corridors that serve as fire breaks, evacuation routes, and access for firefighters and other emergency personnel. Compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act and other applicable laws is also being conducted.

The preferred alternative within the EA includes removing tree hazards along roadways and developed areas within the burn perimeter. In addition, the NPS proposes to treat fallen debris within and up to 80 feet from the road's edge.

Additional information on the EA is available on the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment website.

Public comments on this planning effort will be accepted from now until March 4, 2023. During this time, any individual or group can submit comments electronically through the project website, which is the preferred method, or by mail to:

Superintendent
Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks
Attn: KNP Complex Wildfire Tree Hazard Mitigation Project
47050 Generals Highway
Three Rivers, CA 93271

Following the public comment period, the NPS will consider all feedback to inform the next steps, which could be either selecting one of the proposed alternatives – or a variation of an alternative – for implementation or determining that additional analysis is necessary before making a decision.

If a proposed alternative is selected for implementation following this public review period, the NPS will document the decision through a Finding of No Significant Impact, which will be reviewed by the superintendent of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks and, if appropriate, approved by the NPS Pacific West regional director. The NPS anticipates announcing a decision by spring 2023.

-NPS-

About Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks

These two parks, which lie-side-by-side in the southern Sierra Nevada in Central California, serve as a prime example of nature's size, beauty, and diversity. Over 2 million visitors from across the U.S. and the world visit these parks for the world's largest trees (by volume), grand mountains, rugged foothills, deep canyons, vast caverns, the highest point in the lower 48 states, and more. Learn more at <http://www.nps.gov/seki> or 559-565-3341.