

Public Invited to Meeting On Forest Health at Kopachuck State Park

Local News

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OLYMPIA, Wash. - The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission invites the public to attend an informational meeting about the first phase of the diseased tree removal process implemented at Kopachuck State Park in Pierce County.

The public meeting will be held 6 p.m. Thursday, March 8, at Kopachuck Middle School, 10414 56th St. N.W., Gig Harbor. Information will be provided about the first phase of the project initiated in January 2012, as well as future plans for forest health at the park.

In 2011, significant forest health issues were identified at Kopachuck State Park. Native tree pathogens, primarily laminated root rot, are aggressively attacking trees in select developed landscapes and surrounding natural forests, elevating the risk of tree failure and potential injury to persons and property in and adjacent to these areas. Laminated root rot is attacking Douglas-fir throughout the park, however, it is particularly noticeable in and around the campground, office, ranger residence, day-use parking, group camp and along the county road.

The disease, which impacts the roots and lower stems of certain tree species, has the potential to cause healthy-looking trees to fail without warning. Due to safety concerns for park visitors, the campground at Kopachuck State Park has been closed since April 2011.

As a result of the disease infestation, the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission has been faced with a significant long-term choice: 1) Remove the risk by cutting down the trees, or 2) Reduce the risk of public injury by removing developed facilities in these forest settings. After consultations with forest pathologists with the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and input from the public through a series of meetings, State Parks chose to move forward with the first option. In November 2011, the Director approved the implementation of prescriptions to reduce the risk of tree failure associated with laminated root rot in developed and associated areas at Kopachuck. Trees were to be treated and sold. Since the disease affects tree roots, most of the wood in an infected tree is still sound.

The first phase of tree removal involves removing Douglas-fir (laminated root rot host) within a tree length and a half of the ranger residence and office/shop complex. The forest in Phase I was dominated by Douglas-fir, which has necessitated the removal of most of the trees in that area. Although the Phase I work has dramatically changed the current appearance of the area around the park office, the contractor has been carefully monitored and the cut is in compliance with the contract provisions. Phase I work is expected to be completed by March 10, 2012. Proceeds from the timber sale will be used for restoring the affected area.

The Commission manages a diverse system of more than 100 state parks and recreation programs, including long-distance trails, boating safety and winter recreation. The 98-year-old park system will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2013.

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