



COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA

Burned Area Emergency Response Update – Eagle Creek Fire

Preparing Emergency Mitigation Proposals

October 3, 2017

Hood River, Oregon – Yesterday the Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) Team spent much of the day reviewing the Values at Risk (VARs) for the Eagle Creek Fire. They discussed which hazards threatened the VARs, including floods, rockfall, debris flows, falling trees, erosion, and invasive weeds.

BAER Team members also discussed the level of threat, ranging from posing minimal danger to life-threatening. Possible emergency mitigation measures were considered for many of the hazards. Now the team members are preparing proposals for how to do this mitigation, and cost estimates for the work and supplies. Not all of the proposals are likely to be funded, but several items have been listed as high priority. Some areas with heavy public use and historic properties are high on the list of VARs needing emergency work.

Multnomah Falls area sustained less fire damage than some other areas, but has very high public use and cultural significance. Rockfall has been an ongoing problem in that area, including before the fire. The Eagle Creek Fire burned the moss that has served as the “glue”, holding rocks together on steep slopes, increasing the hazards of rockfall. BAER Team members are looking at emergency options to keep more of the rock from reaching the historic Lodge and trails. This may include installing more fencing to catch falling rock and restricting public access at the most hazardous areas.



While the historic structures at Eagle Creek appear to be unharmed, a cable on the newer suspension bridge near the main parking lot failed from the heat of the fire. The bridge is now hanging much closer to the water. If large debris like logs and stumps wash down Eagle Creek, they could form a jam at the damaged bridge. This could cause local flooding, or the bridge could wash out and cause damage to the hatchery, recreation areas, and roads downstream. BAER Team members are looking at options including emergency removal of the bridge.



for the greatest good

The BAER Team expects to have preliminary proposals for emergency work summarized by Thursday for discussion with agency representatives.

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