

Tree Management Within the Forest of the Southwest Shore Colony

(Revised June 2019)

Dead Tree Program: Under our current Southwest Shore Association-sponsored dead tree program, we annually (by around mid-July) collect from cabin owners a report of any newly-dead mature trees on their lots, or observed on common land, when the trunk size is 9" or larger measured at chest height. (See below regarding smaller dead trees.) We then request the Forest Service to inspect and mark those trees for removal as needed, and arrange for our contracted Tree Service provider to come out in late summer to cut down all of the marked trees as a group project. The Association pays for the basic price of felling the dead trees (cutting them down, chipping the slash and leaving the trunk on the ground in a location that will not block roads, parking or established pathways). This retention of the trunks of dead trees on the ground saves our Association the high cost of removal, helps stabilize hillsides against erosion, provides shelter for wildlife, and does not add to fire-prone fuel.

The federal funding for our Healthy Forest initiative (which also covered the cabins above the highway as well as those of the Southwest Shore Association) has now been fully expended. Therefore, the only remaining funding sources for the dead tree program is the past accumulated contributions from the cabins of the Southwest Shore Association, and future dues or assessments. The dead tree program and the annual brush clearance program will thus be limited to those cabins located below the highway and included within the Southwest Shore Colony Historic District.

If a marked dead tree requires special handling to fell (climbing and sectioning), due to its proximity and relationship to particular cabins or other safety concerns, then there will be an "upcharge" assessed to the affected cabin owner(s), to reflect actual additional crew time for the particular special handling. If a tree is located nearby a cabin, and is thus technically a hazard, but can nonetheless be felled cleanly in a non-hazardous direction without climbing, there is no upcharge. Thus, upcharge pricing is driven by the actual extra work time required, rather than whether the tree is considered a potential hazard.

For "upcharge" billing, rather than dealing with advance estimates, we rely upon an after-job billing report from the forester reflecting the actual additional crew time spent on such special handling. In our experience our forester's upcharge billing is always much cheaper than any cabin owner could arrange for felling of an individual tree in the one-off market, given the efficiencies of having the contractor's crew and equipment on site to handle all Southwest Shore work at once, plus the credit to the owner attributable to the cost of the "basic" felling and chipping work which remains covered by the Association.

Generally, our experience has been that unless a tree has been dead for several years (which rarely occurs since the dead tree removal program has now been in effect for almost a decade), the above annual process and schedule has proven quite adequate to take down dead trees well before they become a safety threat.

Smaller Dead Trees: Clearly dead trees with trunk smaller than 9” in diameter measured at chest height, are to be treated as brush – meaning that they can and should be cut by the cabin owner – or a nearby cabin owner if the tree is located on common land – with no Forest Service inspection required, and with debris to be disposed of roadside through the Association’s annual brush clearance chipping program.

Pruning of Live Trees: Pruning of the lowest branches of live trees is recommended to reduce fire-spread and encourage healthy top growth, subject to the following guidelines: for mature tall trees, pruning is recommended for at least the first twelve feet off the ground; for smaller trees, bottom pruning should not exceed the bottom one-third of the tree’s total crown growth. Pruning and culling debris may be disposed of roadside through the annual brush chipping program.

Culling of Small Live Trees: Smaller live trees that are sprouting or growing within the “drip line” area of a larger tree’s canopy should be routinely cut down, and treated as brush. This practice is a continuation of our federally-initiated “healthy forest” fire prevention initiative for the purpose of controlling forest density and reducing “fire ladder” hazards posed by competing small trees.

An eventual incidental benefit of such pruning and culling practices is that it also aids in the preservation of open views of hillsides and the lake, which were reopened as a side-effect of the “healthy forest” initiative.