



# FACT SHEET

**US Army Corps of Engineers**  
**BUILDING STRONG®**



## TREES AT LAKE LANIER SIDNEY

**T**rees are an important component to the ecosystem surrounding Lake Lanier. They help stabilize stream banks and shorelines, which reduces erosion and sedimentation into the lake. They provide food and cover for many species of wildlife. To many people they have an aesthetic value and provide a scenic appeal to a lake that has become more and more urban. The list of benefits from trees could go on and on. As the managing agency for Lake Lanier and the Government land that surrounds it, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers seeks to preserve and protect these trees as part of a broader to conserve natural resources and environmental quality for future generations.

However, we acknowledge that these same trees can cause concern if they become diseased, infested with pests, or die. People who live or own property around Lake Lanier likely know this concern firsthand, especially after going through a big storm. If you are one of the many homeowners around Lake Lanier with these concerns, we understand that it may be difficult to know exactly what to do or who to call about a tree on Government property, and we hope this fact sheet helps.

Below are some common scenarios homeowners around Lake Lanier face concerning trees on Government property. Along with each scenario are some tips that homeowners can do to either address the concern themselves or help the Corps to respond more quickly to these concerns.

**Scenario 1: There is a dead tree on Government property near my house (or dock). I'm nervous that it may fall and hit my house (or dock). What can I do?**

Specified Act Permits may be granted to homeowners to perform certain one-time only acts of a minor nature such as cutting down hazardous trees. Park Rangers are available to assist homeowners to determine if a tree is hazardous and eligible for a Specified Act Permit.

### **How do I obtain a Specified Act Permit?**

If you are a homeowner with a dock permit, you already have a Park Ranger assigned in your area of the lake who can inspect hazardous tree concerns. You will get the quickest response by contacting that ranger directly; either by phone or email. If you do not already have the name, phone number, and email address for the Park Ranger in your area, contact the Shoreline Management Help Desk at 770-904-3262 to obtain this information.

If you are a homeowner, but do not have a dock permit, these same Park Rangers can assist you too. Contact the Shoreline Management Help Desk at 770-904-3262 to obtain the name, phone number, and email address for the Park Ranger assigned in your area.

\*\*\*Keep in mind that our office can get hundreds of phone calls about hazardous trees in the week following a large storm. Having the right contact information ahead of time reduces the number of calls we get after storms and helps us respond to your request more quickly.

Before a Park Ranger can issue a Specified Act Permit, they must determine that the tree you are concerned about is in fact a hazardous tree. To help them make this determination you can do the following:

- Take two pictures of the tree you are concerned about; one close-up picture that shows the structural defect of the tree and one picture further away that shows the tree in relation to the house (or dock).
- Email these pictures to the Park Ranger along with your request for a Specified Act Permit. This prevents multiple emails back and forth asking for more information.
- If you call or email, include the following in your initial contact with the Park Ranger. Including all of this prevents multiple calls and emails back and forth asking for more information.
  - Your name
  - The address where the tree is located
  - Your mailing address (if it is different from where the tree is located)
  - Your dock permit number (if you have one)
    - Remember all dock permit numbers on Lake Lanier start with a letter, followed by five numbers. For example: A12345 or B00101
  - Your email address
  - A description of the tree you are concerned about. For example: a medium sized pine tree or a large white oak.
  - A description of where the tree is located on the property and how you have marked it. For example: near the back, left corner of my house marked with pink flagging or near my dock on the right side of my path marked with a blue ribbon.
- Mark the tree you are concerned about with some flagging tape or ribbon. Sometimes Park Rangers cannot make a determination from the pictures and need to go look at the tree in person. Marking the tree will help the Park Ranger quickly find the tree you are concerned about. This also helps you; so that you do not have to be present at the property to show the tree to the Park Ranger.

Once the Park Ranger determines that the tree is hazardous, a Specified Act Permit can be issued.

- The permit can be mailed or emailed to the homeowner
- There is no fee for the permit
- The permit is valid for 90 days from the issue date

- The permit allows the homeowner to cut down the hazardous tree or tree portion, but usually does
- not allow the tree to be removed from Government property
- The permit does not allow the use of equipment on Government property

If the Park Ranger determines that the tree the homeowner is concerned about is considered low risk it should not be removed. Low risk trees are trees or tree portions that do not have an observable structural or other defect and do not pose a risk of falling. Clearing to obtain scenic vistas or to establish lawns is not permitted.

**Scenario 2: A tree on Government property fell across the path to my dock. What can I do?**

As a dock permit holder, a 6-foot-wide, meandering pedestrian pathway may be created for access to the permitted facilities. (Please note; there are different definitions, licensing requirements, and fees for unimproved and improved pathways. Please contact the Park Ranger for your area before creating or changing your pathway.) Pathways must remain free of stumps, snags and other tripping hazards.

- Take a picture of the situation for your records
- A Specified Act Permit is not needed to maintain the authorized pathway
- You may cut a 6-foot-wide section out of the tree to clear the pathway
- Scatter the cut portions on Government property near the fallen tree, but out of the way of the path
- Leave the rest of the tree (the portions not in the path) laying where it fell

**Scenario 3: A tree on Government property already fell. It is still on Government property, but it is not in my path or on any permitted facility. Can I clean this up?**

No. This is considered a low risk tree because it has already fallen. According to *36 CFR Part 327 – Rules and Regulations Governing Public Use of Water Resource Development Projects Administered by the Chief of Engineers* part 14(b) “Cutting or gathering of trees or parts of trees and/or the removal of wood from project lands is prohibited without written permission of the District Commander.”

**Scenario 4: A tree from Government property already fell. It is still on Government property, but it is in my grass mowing area. Can I clean this up?**

Yes, provided that a Shoreline Use Permit has been issued to authorize the maintenance of this grass areas. Only the authorized grass mowing area can be maintained.

- Take a picture of the situation for your records
- A Specified Act Permit is not needed to maintain the authorized grass area
- You may cut and scatter the tree in an unmaintained area of Government property near the grass area

- If there is not an unmaintained area nearby and you wish to remove the tree from Government property, a Specified Act Permit must be issued following procedures identified above.

**Scenario 5: A tree from Government property already fell. Part of it is on Government property, and part of it is on my private property. What can I do?**

You do not need a Specified Act Permit to cut up and remove the portion of the tree that is on your private property.

- Take a picture of the situation for your records
- Cut the tree at the property line
- Clean up the portion on private property, if desired
- Leave the portion of the tree on Government property laying where it fell

**Will the Corps of Engineers come out and remove the tree from my private property?**

Not in this scenario; unfortunately, we are unable to utilize Government resources to address issues on private property.

**Scenario 6: A tree from Government property already fell and caused damage to my property (house, fence, dock, etc.). What can I do?**

You do not need a Specified Act Permit to cut up and remove the portion of the tree that is on your private property. However, in this situation the Corps of Engineers needs to complete an incident report.

- Take several pictures of the situation for your records and to provide to the Corps of Engineers
- Document the items that were damaged (be specific and thorough)
- Contact a Park Ranger following the process outline above
- If you call or email, include the following in your initial contact with the Park Ranger. Including all of this prevents multiple calls and emails back and forth asking for more information.
  - Your name
  - The address where the tree is located
  - Your mailing address (if it is different from where the tree is located)
  - Your dock permit number (if you have one)
    - Remember all dock permit numbers on Lake Lanier start with a letter, followed by five numbers. For example: A12345 or B00101
  - Your email address
  - A description of the tree you are concerned about. For example: a medium sized pine tree or a large white oak.
  - A description of where the tree is located on the property. For example: on the back, left corner of my house or on my dock walkway.

- If you need to cut the tree to prevent further damage to your property, whether on Government or private property, you can cut the tree. You do not need to wait for the Park Ranger to come and complete the incident report. In the situation of a tree on a fence or a house:
  - Cut the tree at the property line
  - Clean up the portion on private property, if desired
  - Leave the portion of the tree on Government property laying where it fell

In the situation of a tree on a dock:

- Cut the tree where necessary to get it off the dock and out of the way of dock anchor cables
- Scatter the cut portions on Government property near the fallen tree
- Leave the rest of the tree (the portions not affecting the dock) laying where it fell

### **Will the Corps of Engineers come out and remove the tree from my private property?**

Not in this scenario; unfortunately, we are unable to utilize Government resources to address issues on private property.

### **Scenario 7: A tree from Government property already fell into the lake near my dock. What can I do?**

This situation is difficult because a portion of the tree, or maybe the whole tree, is in the water. If the tree is not negatively affecting your dock, dock cables, or boat access to the dock, because it is most likely considered low risk it should not be removed. If it is negatively affecting your dock, dock cables, or boat access to the dock, or because of the height of the bank it may be considered for removal, a Specified Act Permit may be requested following the procedures outlined above.

These are some of the common scenarios that we receive calls about for homeowners around Lake Lanier. There are probably many scenarios involving trees that are not addressed here. If your scenario was not addressed, or you require clarification, please contact a Park Ranger and we will be happy to help.

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*With an area of operation across Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, and northern Florida, and a vast military region that includes operations across Central and South America, the Mobile District's award-winning teams of engineering, construction, regulatory and emergency management professionals are nationally recognized for their leadership in delivery of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' civil works and military programs missions to the Nation.*

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