

DOF Daily WildFire Update

July 7, 2021

2021 Alaska Wildland Fire Numbers

As of Wednesday, July 7



- **Number of wildfires to date: 295**
- **Acres burned statewide to date: 142,748**
- **New fires yesterday: 0**
- **Current active fires: 49**
- **Current number of staffed fires: 5**
- **Personnel assigned to fires: 224**
- **Human-caused fires to date: 193**
- **Lightning-caused fires to date: 86**
- **Natural-caused fires to date: 5**
- **Undetermined fire causes to date: 11**



A member of the White Mountain Fire Crew uses a drip torch to ignite vegetation during a backfiring operation on the Munson Creek Fire on July 5. Mike McMillan/Alaska DNR-DOF

Conversion date

Alaska Interagency Coordination Center Predictive Services meteorologist Heidi Strader and fire behavior analyst Chris Moore put together a presentation for Alaska wildland fire managers on Tuesday to provide them with information regarding conversion date in Alaska. Conversion date is typically July 10. That's the date certain lands in Modified protection levels are converted to Limited protection areas. It basically means the peak of Alaska's fire season has passed and fire conditions are beginning to moderate. Depending on fire activity, current and forecasted weather and available resources, the conversion date can be moved up or back.

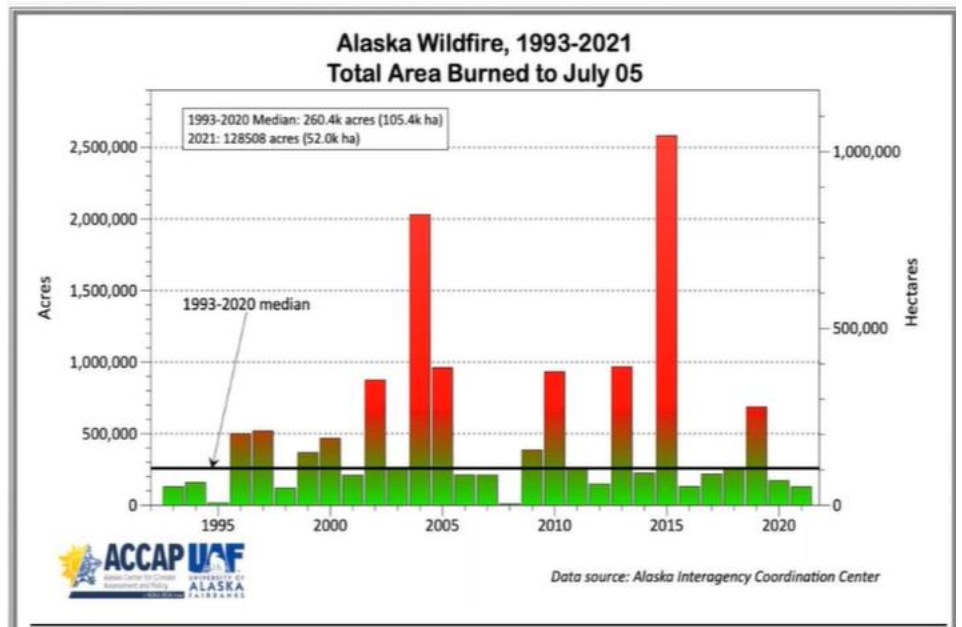
Based on current fire activity, fire weather indices and the long-range weather forecast, it appears this year's fire season is shaping up to be below normal, Strader said. As of Wednesday, wildfires have burned 142, 748 acres this season. That's more than 100,000 acres below the median for acreage burned by that date.

"Right now we're on schedule to stay less than 500,000 acres and have another fairly low season," Strader said.

With only a few large fires actively burning around the state, Strader said the potential for large, late-season fire growth decreases each day.

“June is when we put most our fire on the ground and then as we get into July we’re riding out the acreage on those fires,” she said. “That’s not to say we can’t still get some new lightning starts and even have some big ignition days but a lot of times this is when we’ve already got some of our bigger fires out there on the landscape.”

Alaska’s weather pattern typically shifts in mid-July to a wetter pattern with more southwest flow and “there’s nothing that indicates that we won’t see that kind of pattern as we move forward,” Strader said.



Alaska is coming to the end of the duff-driven portion of the fire season, which is usually from mid-June to mid-July. The next month will be the drought-driven part of the season but the deeper layers of fuels are not especially dry at this point.

At this point in the season, with less solar radiation, cooler temperatures and more precipitation, drying indices for the deeper layers tend to start declining, Moore, the fire behavior analyst, said.

“We still have potential for that sub-surface drying to continue but we’re not looking at something like 2019 unless those August rains don’t materialize,” Moore said.

The full presentation can be viewed at

<https://fire.ak.blm.gov/content/Fire%20Weather%20Folder/Conversion/2021%20Conversion.mp4>

Weather

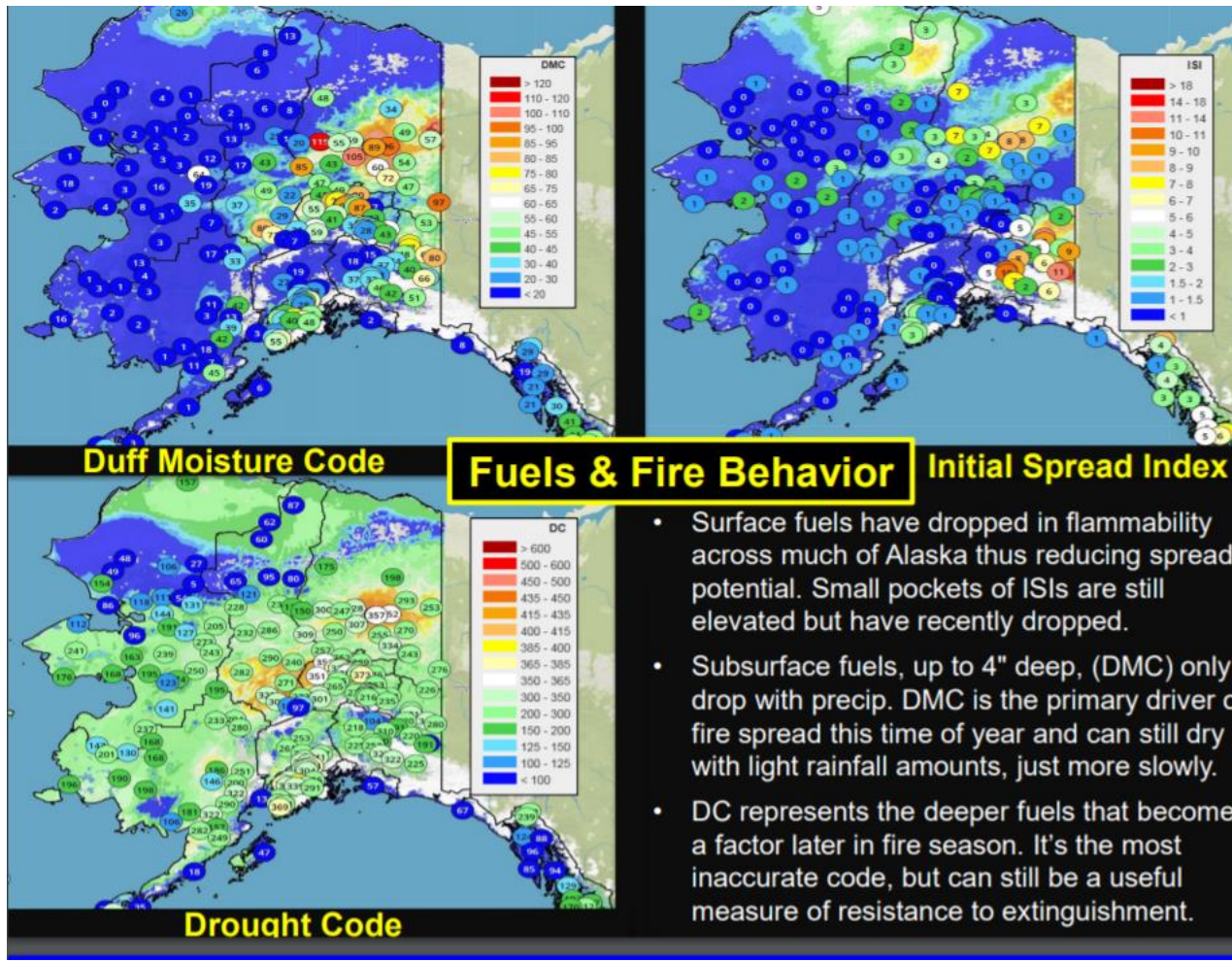
● SHORT-TERM FORECAST

- Cool and damp with breezy southwest flow for most of the state through Friday.
- Isolated wet thunderstorms in northern and eastern Alaska for next few days.
- Driest in the far southeastern Interior and Yukon Flats.
- Southern Panhandle moving back into a damper pattern.

● LONG-RANGE FORECAST

- Eastern Interior likely to stay the driest part of Alaska, at least into the weekend.
- Ridging builds in over the weekend to begin to dry out western and northern Alaska while low in the Gulf of Alaska may bring a shot of wetting rains to the eastern Interior.
- Model confidence is low beyond Sunday.

Fire danger/potential



Wildfire Activity

The **Munson Creek Fire** 50 miles northeast of Fairbanks remains the #1 priority fire in the state. Here's an update as of 6 p.m. Wednesday:

- It was another cool, damp day on the fire today that provided firefighters an opportunity to "go direct" on the burning edge of the fire, mopping up burned areas and cutting saw line on the hillside directly behind Chena Hot Springs Resort to keep the fire from advancing closer to the resort.
- Crews are now clearing brush and installing sprinkler systems on cabins between mileposts 42 and 48. As of yesterday evening, point protection had been



Members of the UAF Nanooks Crew and the U.S. Forest Service R10 Crew cut a fire break along the fire's edge on the hillside behind Chena Hot Springs.

completed on 72 cabins on the south side of Chena Hot Springs Road closest to the fire, between miles 48 and 56.

- Nearly 200 firefighters and overhead personnel are assigned to the Munson Creek Fire.
- Chena Hot Springs Road and Chena Hot Springs Resort remain open.
- While cooler, wetter weather the past two days have allowed firefighters to go on the offensive rather defensive, temperatures are forecast to return to the high 70s early next week which will likely prompt a return to more active burning conditions.
- Fire managers want to see how the fire responds to warmer, drier weather before getting too comfortable.
- A “Go” evacuation notice issued by Fairbanks North Star Borough Emergency Operations is still in effect for cabin owners from mileposts 45 to 56, as well as guests and staff at Chena Hot Springs.
- The western edge of the fire remains about 1 mile south of Chena Hot Springs Road.
- All Alaska State Parks facilities east of milepost 45 Chena Hot Springs Road are closed, including the Angel Rocks Trail and trailhead and Chena Dome Trail and trailhead.
- A Temporary Flight Restriction is in effect surrounding the fire including drones.



Members of the UAF Nanooks Crew mops up a burned area on the Munson Creek Fire on Wednesday, July 7.

Fire Information Resources

- www.akfireinfo.com – Word Press blog with daily fire updates and other information
- <https://fire.ak.blm.gov/content/aicc/sitreport/AICC%20Situation%20Report.pdf> – Daily Alaska wildfire situation report from Alaska Interagency Coordination Center with daily rundown of fire activity in Alaska.
- <https://blm-egis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/index.html#/a23a625f4d18412ea13cffeefcbe7f5e> - Alaska Interagency Coordination Center dashboard with all sorts of nifty fire information.
- <https://fire.ak.blm.gov/> - Alaska Interagency Coordination Center
- <https://www.facebook.com/AK.Forestry> - Division of Forestry Facebook page. All info that is posted to akfireinfo is posted here as well, along with other fire information. Info from both DOF and AFS is posted here.
- <https://www.facebook.com/BLMAFS> -BLM Alaska Fire Service Facebook page. All info that is posted to akfireinfo is posted here as well, along with other fire information. Info from both DOF and AFS is posted here.
- <https://www.nifc.gov/nicc/sitreprt.pdf> - Daily national situation report from the National Interagency Coordination Center with a rundown of fire activity in all regions of the United States and Canada.