

DOF Daily WildFire Update

June 24, 2021

2021 Alaska Wildland Fire Numbers

As of Thursday, June 24



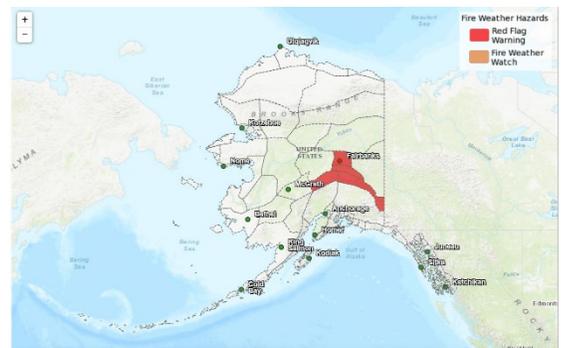
- **Number of wildfires to date: 256**
- **Estimated acres burned statewide to date: 42,542**
- **New fires yesterday: 5**
- **Current active fires: 71**
- **Current number of staffed fires: 8**
- **Personnel assigned to fires: 472**
- **Human-caused fires to date: 165**
- **Lightning-caused fires to date: 77**
- **Natural-caused fires to date: 5**
- **Undetermined fire causes to date: 9**



The Munson Creek Fire south of Chena Hot Springs as seen from a helicopter on Wednesday, June 23, 2021. Photo by Ryan Lehman/Alaska DNR-Division of Forestry.

Quick Hits

- Red Flag Warnings in effect today until 9 p.m. for the Middle Tanana Valley (Fairbanks), Deltana and Tanana Flats (Delta Junction), Denali and the eastern Alaska Range (Tok) due to hot, dry, windy conditions. Wind gust up to 60 mph are forecast in the eastern Alaska Interior with sustained winds of 35-40 mph. Winds won't be as strong in the Middle Tanana Valley but the hot, dry, windy conditions are enough to warrant a Red Flag Warning. Temperatures will be in the mid 70s to lower 80s and humidities below 25 percent.
- Rain and cooler weather has moderated fire danger in Southcentral and rain expected in the northwest and western Interior that will do the same in those regions. Main concern right now is central and eastern Interior with hot, dry, windy conditions.
- Given the hot, dry and windy conditions north of the Alaska Range, DOF is moving resources north. The Gannett Glacier Crew from Palmer is being pre-positioned at a DOF station in Clear; two engines from the Mat-Su Area and one engine from Kenai/Kodiak Area are heading to Fairbanks; and a US Forest Service engine from Moose Pass is traveling to Tok today for support.



- Almost 800 lightning strikes detected across Alaska on Wednesday, nearly all of which were in the Brooks Range and Northwest Alaska.
- Temperatures climbed to 84 degrees at the Fairbanks International Airport, the fourth day this month the temperature has hit 80 or higher in Fairbanks. That beats all of last summer when only three days with 80-degree or higher temperatures were recorded in Fairbanks. One Remote Automated Weather Station in Fairbanks recorded a temperature of 90 degrees. The hot temperatures in the Interior are expected to remain through the weekend until a low pressure system from the north swings down on Monday. It remains to be seen whether the low-pressure system coming down from the north will be strong enough to push out the high pressure ridge that has been in place over the Interior this week.
- Burn suspensions in effect for Delta Junction, Fairbanks and Tok today due to the hot, dry and windy conditions, and limited firefighting resource availability.
- There are currently 231 Lower 48 firefighting personnel working in Alaska. That number includes five Type 1 and Type 2 initial attack crews brought up on 30-day assignments to support fires throughout Alaska. Due to national fire activity NICC (National Interagency Coordination Center), is reviewing the length of that commitment and may recall the assigned crews to high priority incidents.
- A group of four Fire Boss water scoopers and a Bird Dog (lead plane) from Alberta ordered through the Northwest Compact for Alaska fire support is based in Fairbanks due to high fire danger north of the Alaska Range. The scooper group is available for use by DOF or the BLM Alaska Fire Service. state and federal fires sometime today. There are currently 10 water-scooping aircraft available for fires in Alaska.
- The Alaska Fire Service has a Lower 48 Type 3 incident management team prepositioned in Fairbanks that is available if needed.
- Nationally we are in a Preparedness Level 4 (out of 5), the second earliest we have hit PL4 nationally since 1990. Shortages of critical resources and widespread fire danger are the primary drivers for the PL.
- The McGrath tanker base which supports western Alaska remains closed due to runway construction. DOF is working with DOT on a lease agreement to set up a portable tanker base at the Aniak airport.
- All agency and contract crews are either assigned, prepositioned or on mandatory days off, including all available EFF crews.
- DOF Areas north of the Alaska Range are keeping an eye out for lightning holdovers from lightning strikes during the past week. A holdover fire or sleeper fire can smolder below the surface of the ground for a substantial amount of time until temperatures warm, vegetation dries, and winds breathe life into the dormant fire.
- DOF is running short on tanker base managers and may have to shut down select tanker bases if personnel brought up from the L48 time out and cannot be replaced.

Haystack Fire (#196)

Acres: Estimated 924

Containment: 71%

Personnel assigned: 301

Resources assigned: 3 Type 1 hotshot crews; 4 Type 2 initial attack crews; 2 Type 2 crews; 2 medium helicopters; 4 Type 6 engines; 4 bulldozers; 1 water tender; 108 overhead personnel.

Location: 18 miles N of Fairbanks

Weather: Red Flag Warning in effect today for hot, dry and breezy with high temperatures in the high 70s or lower 80s.

- No new fire growth and 5% increase in containment. No new fire growth expected even with the hot, dry, windy conditions
- Estimated suppression costs of Wednesday were just over \$2.5 million.
- Firefighters discovered a smoldering ¼-acre spot fire across the control line on the southeast corner of the fire on Wednesday but were able to quickly extinguish it.
- North side of fire is mopped up 200-300' feet in from the perimeter; West side is in monitor status; East side is mopped up 100' in from perimeter; still building hand line on the south end of the fire.
- Hot, dry, windy conditions will test containment lines again today.
- A portion of an old fuel break constructed during the 2004 Boundary Fire by DOF was instrumental in stopping the northeast progression of the Haystack Fire.
- Strategic planning meeting today to determine complexity level and turn back standards.

Munson Creek Fire (#235)

Acres: Estimated 120

Containment: 0%

Personnel assigned: 0

Resources assigned: Fire is burning in a Limited protection area and is being monitored by air.

Location: 50 miles NE of Fairbanks and 5 miles south of Chena Hot Springs in Chena River State Recreation Area.

Weather: Red Flag Warning today with hot, dry and breezy conditions. High temperatures in the upper 70s to low 80s.

- Fire was reported as a smoldering 2-acre on June 18 and plotted in Limited protection inside the Chena River State Recreation Area so no suppression action was taken.
- Fire became active Wednesday with hotter, drier weather and put up a smoke column visible from Chena Hot Springs and Chena Hot Springs Road, generating multiple calls to Fairbanks Area Forestry.
- A helicopter from Fairbanks Area Forestry checked on the fire Wednesday and it is currently estimated at 120 acres and is burning in black spruce. The helo did water bucket work and four firefighters cut trees and brush around a State Parks trail shelter cabin on the Angel Rocks to Chena Hot Springs Trail.
- There is an alpine ridge and a creek between the fire and Chena Hot Springs.
- Fairbanks Area Forestry is coordinating with Alaska State Parks to set up two message boards to provide information to the public, one at the Angel Rocks trail head and one at Chena Hot Springs.
- Forestry engines are assessing structures and doing triage work for homes and cabins at the end of Chena Hot Springs Road.
- Fire will continue to be monitored by air.



Photo of smoke column from Chena Hot Springs Resort on Wednesday, June 23

Straight Creek Fire (#244)

Acres: 24

Containment: 90%

Personnel assigned: 37

Resources assigned: 2 Type 2 crews (Yukon and Fairbanks #1); 3 helicopter crew members and a staging manager.

Location: 26 miles SW of Fairbanks, 2 miles north of Parks Highway near Mile 325 behind Skinny Dick's bar.

Weather: Red Flag Warning today with hot, dry and breezy conditions. High temperatures in the upper 70s to low 80s.

- No new growth; containment increased from 50 to 90%.
- Crews mopped up and gridded the entire fire on Wednesday and no smoke or open flames were observed.
- Estimated cost to date is just over \$138,000.

About Mountain Fire #193

Acres: 2,135

Containment: 90%

Personnel assigned: 73 (will be down to 33 by end of shift)

Location: 6 miles south of McGrath along the east bank of Kuskokwim River.

Resources assigned: Pioneer Peak Hotshot Crew, 8 smokejumpers filling critical overhead positions, 2 Type 2 contract crews, 3 boat operators, 1 helibase manager, 1 fire medic, 1 type 3 finance section chief, 1 type 3 plans section chief, 1 type 2 logistics second chief.

Weather: Chinook winds 20-25 mph with temps in the mid 70s.

- No new fire growth; containment increased from 84 to 90%.
- Pioneer Peak Hotshot Crew worked cutting open thick and complex areas of white spruce along the heel of the fire and will continue exposing areas of heat and mopping up today.
- Two smokejumpers utilized packrafts as necessary to access heat in sloughs and beaver ponds while also serving as lookouts for the strong winds yesterday, which sustained at 20-30 mph.
- A reconnaissance flight at 5:00pm confirmed that the 300-foot mop up around the fire perimeter was smoke free while areas of interior heat produced smoke where exposed to the wind.
- Two Type 2 hand crews will be released from the fire at the end of shift today and will be transported by boat back to McGrath.
- A drone and operator has been ordered and will arrive to provide key aerial mapping for hot spots and areas of concern. These areas will be addressed by remaining resources over the weekend and into the early week. The use of the drone reduces risk and exposure to fire crews.



George Lake Fire #225

Acres: 6

Containment: 100% - fire declared out at 12:32 p.m. Wednesday.

Personnel assigned: 0

Resources Assigned: None

Location: 40 miles SE of Delta Jct

Weather: Red Flag Warning today with hot, dry and breezy conditions. High temperatures in the upper 70s to low 80s.

- No smoke or heat observed during 24-hour monitor period and fire was declared out at 12:32 p.m. on Wednesday.
- The Baker River Hotshot Crew was demobilized and will be pre-positioned at the Delta Area officer for the next two days for initial attack on any new starts.

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.