

DOF Daily WildFire Update

June 25, 2021

2021 Alaska Wildland Fire Numbers

As of Friday, June 25



- **Number of wildfires to date: 261**
- **Estimated acres burned statewide to date: 48,815**
- **New fires yesterday: 4**
- **Current active fires: 71**
- **Current number of staffed fires: 4**
- **Personnel assigned to fires: 426**
- **Human-caused fires to date: 169**
- **Lightning-caused fires to date: 78**
- **Natural-caused fires to date: 5**
- **Undetermined fire causes to date: 9**



The Munson Creek Fire south of Chena Hot Springs burns on Thursday afternoon. Tony Peterson/Alaska DNR-Division of Forestry

Quick Hits

- Despite Red Flag Warnings the past two days for Delta Junction, Fairbanks and Tok due to hot, dry and windy conditions, new wildfire activity has been held to a minimum and there have been no significant new fires. Containment lines on current fires in those areas have also held and firefighters continue making good progress containing staffed fires.
- No Red Flag Warnings today due to cooler temperatures and higher relative humidities but there is still a wind advisory in effect for the eastern Alaska Range today through 1 p.m. Sustained south winds of 25 to 35 mph with gusts up to 65 mph are forecast for the area along the Richardson Highway north of Isabelle Pass to Delta Junction, according to the National Weather Service in Fairbanks.
- Burn suspensions remain in effect for Delta Junction, Fairbanks and Tok today due to the hot, dry and windy conditions, and limited firefighting resource availability.
- The high temperature in Fairbanks hit 81 degrees on Thursday, the fifth day this month the temperature has reached 80 degrees or higher at the Fairbanks International Airport. That surpasses 80-degrees for all of last summer, when the temperature reached 80 or higher only three times all summer.

- A slight cool down is expected in the Interior starting today and continuing through the weekend, with high temperatures in the upper 60s to lower 70s. Rain and cooler weather has moderated fire danger in Southcentral, Southwest and Northwest Alaska.
- A low pressure system from the Arctic will drop down into Alaska on Sunday, possibly bringing cooler temperatures, higher relative humidities and the chance of precipitation across northern Alaska but forecasters are still uncertain how this scenario will play out. It does not appear to be a season-ending event but it could provide some relief to the central and eastern Interior in terms of wildfire potential.
- DOF continues jockeying resources to meet the needs of Areas according to their fire danger. The Gannett Glacier Crew from Palmer has been pre-positioned at a DOF station near Clear Air Force Base; two engines from the Mat-Su Area and one engine from Kenai/Kodiak Area traveled to Fairbanks for fire support; and a US Forest Service engine from Moose Pass is assisting the Tok area.
- There are currently 252 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.
- The Alberta (Canada) scooper group consisting of four water-scooping aircraft and a lead plane are being recalled to Alberta due to increased fire activity and fire potential in that region. The scooper group will head back to Canada on Saturday. While the scooper group was in Alaska for less than a week, they did help provide support during the busiest and hottest part of the fire season to date. The scooper group was ordered through the NW Compact and we were able to work out some of the mobilization bugs so the process should run smoother next time. We sincerely appreciate the support and hope to be able to draw upon this resource in the future as the situation in Alberta allows.
- 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 primary drivers for the PL.
- Due to prolonged drought conditions and the increase of fire activity nationwide, available resources from the Lower 48 will dwindle as other fires also become priorities. Fire managers expect another year with unprecedented fire conditions, fire activity and the associated demands placed on the finite resources available. It is critical to manage scarce resources with an eye on not only the current fire, but the local area, and the national perspective. Fire managers need to prepare for a “marathon” rather than a “sprint.”
- 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.
- 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: 77%

Personnel assigned: 247

Resources assigned: 2 Type 1 hotshot crews; 3 Type 2 initial attack crews; 1 Type 2 crews; 2 medium helicopters; 4 Type 6 engines; 1 bulldozers; 1 water tender; 111 overhead personnel.

Location: 18 miles N of Fairbanks

Weather: Slightly cooler today with highs in the low 70s and still breezy.

- Despite another hot, dry, windy day on the fire, there was no new growth and fire activity was minimal with just creeping and smoldering.
- 6% percent increase in containment to bring containment to 77%.
- Estimated suppression costs of Wednesday were almost \$2.9 million.
- Strategic planning meeting was held with agency administrators on Thursday and decision was made to keep the Alaska Type 2 Incident Management Team in place for the full 14-day assignment, at which time the fire will be turned back over to Fairbanks Area Forestry and placed in Monitor status.
- Crews continue constructing direct hand line on the south flank of the fire and mopping up 300' inside the perimeter of the fire.
- Structure protection operations around the Haystack community are complete.

Munson Creek Fire (#235)

Acres: Estimated 300

Containment: 0%

Personnel assigned: 18

Resources assigned: Yukon Crew (16 persons) and one engine from Fairbanks Area Forestry.

Location: In a Limited protection area 50 miles NE of Fairbanks and 4 miles south of Chena Hot Springs in Chena River State Recreation Area.

Weather: Slightly cooler today with highs in the low 70s and still breezy.

- Fire doubled in size again on Thursday and is now estimated at 300 acres and 4 miles from Chena Hot Springs but fire managers don't expect it to reach that far given the fact there is a creek and rocky, alpine ridge between the hot springs and the fire.
- Yukon Crew was assigned to the fire Friday morning and will be monitoring fire activity and assessing structures in the area as part of a structure protection plan being developed for the fire.
- Fire activity was described as minimal on Friday morning and fire behavior was reported to be creeping and smoldering.



The Munson Creek Fire as seen from Chena Hot Springs at about 3 p.m. Thursday.

However, the fire has become more active during the afternoon the past two days when temperatures heat up and sun hits the south-facing fire, producing a large smoke column that is visible from Chena Hot Springs and Chena Hot Springs Road.

- A 9 p.m. reconnaissance flight Thursday reported most of the fire activity was on the western edge of the fire and the fire was backing down Munson Creek along the heel of the fire. There were multiple “fingers” to the fire with some isolated and group tree torching.
- Fairbanks Area Forestry has hired a public information officer to help post information on two message boards that have been set up at the Angel Rocks trailhead and at Chena Hot Springs.
- Fairbanks Area Forestry is coordinating with Alaska State Parks to set up a staging area at Mile 48 Chena Hot Springs Road.

Straight Creek Fire (#244)

Acres: 24

Containment: 97%

Personnel assigned: 24

Resources assigned: 1 Type 2 crew (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: Slightly cooler today with highs in the low 70s and still breezy.

- No new growth; containment increased from 90 to 97%.
- No smoke observed on fire on Thursday.
- Yukon Crew was reassigned to the Munson Creek Fire and all personnel will be demobilized at end of shift on Friday.
- Estimated cost to date is just over \$167,800.

About Mountain Fire #193

Acres: 2,135

Containment: 95%

Personnel assigned: 33.

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

Resources assigned: Pioneer Peak Hotshot Crew, 7 smokejumpers, 1 boat operator, 1 helibase manager.

Weather: Mostly cloudy with highs in mid 60s and southeast winds 5-10 mph.

- Full containment expected by end of shift Saturday.
- Pioneer Peak Hotshots are securing the last piece of open line.
- Two Type 2 contract crews were demobilized at end of shift on Thursday.
- An Unmanned Aerial System module will conducting drone flights on Saturday with infrared imagery to detect any remaining hot spots on the fire.
- Plan is to turn the fire over to the Pioneer Peak Hotshots at end of shift on Sunday as a Type 4 incident.
- Estimated cost to date is \$1,367,210.

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.