

DOF Daily WildFire Update

June 28, 2021

2021 Alaska Wildland Fire Numbers

As of Monday, June 28



- **Number of wildfires to date: 269**
- **Estimated acres burned statewide to date: 71,156**
- **New fires yesterday: 3**
- **Current active fires: 70**
- **Current number of staffed fires: 5**
- **Personnel assigned to fires: 362**
- **Human-caused fires to date: 174**
- **Lightning-caused fires to date: 81**
- **Natural-caused fires to date: 5**
- **Undetermined fire causes to date: 9**



The Brock Road Fire outside Fairbanks at 3:45 p.m. before aircraft were able to knock it down. Photo by Tim Whitesell/Division of Forestry

Quick Hits

- Division of Forestry fire program managers are reviewing the DOF workforce to determine what positions are essential to continue operations in the event of a temporary government shutdown on July 1 due to not having a budget in place for FY22. Division leadership is formulating a continuity of operations plan in the event of a shutdown.
- Biggest news of the weekend was the Brock Road Fire in a residential area about 8 ½ miles southeast of Fairbanks. The fire grew from one-half acre to an estimated 50 acres in 2 hours. An aggressive aerial assault ensued with multiple aircraft – 2 air tankers, 4 water scoopers and 2 helicopters – dropping retardant and water around and on the fire. The heavy aerial attack knocked the fire down and more than 70 firefighters were mobilized on the ground to contain the fire. The fire was 95% contained as of Monday morning. See below for more details.
- The intensity with which the Brock Road fire burned and spread was a bit of a surprise to fire managers, especially considering the lack of wind to push the fire. The fire's tenacity is indicative of how things are drying out in the Interior following several days of hot, dry weather. Fire indices are

ramping up and deeper fuels are beginning to dry out, making fires more resistant to control. This trend will likely continue until weather moderates.

- The Brock Road Fire was reported by a private drone operator flying a drone in the area. The drone pilot reported the fire and then grounded his drone to allow firefighting aircraft to work safely in the area. The DOF information office is trying to track down the drone operator to use him as a model example of what drone operators should do in the event of a wildfire. Stay tuned.
- The lack of lightning in recent days has reduced the number of new wildfires being reported. There have been only 108 lightning strikes recorded across Alaska in the last three days and only about 2,700 since June 23. Very little lightning is expected across the Interior in the next few days, leaving humans as the primary ignition source for any new fires.
- The area of biggest concern for new starts is in the upper Yukon Flats and central and eastern Interior. Those areas have the highest current indices and warm, dry weather is expected to continue in those areas through this week before cooler, wetter weather potentially moves in this weekend.
- Alaska surpassed the 70,000-acre mark for number of acres burned this fire season on Sunday, still a very low number for this late in the season but it is climbing. Sunday's increase of more than 11,000 acres was the largest one-day increase so far this season.
- The 29,818-acre Dry Creek Fire south of Manley Hot Springs is a large reason for the increase in acreage. The fire has been much more active with the recent warm, dry weather. Winds pushed smoke from the Dry Creek Fire into Fairbanks over the weekend and on Monday, prompting calls to the DOF information office. The Dry Creek Fire is in the BLM Alaska Fire Service protection area and is being staffed by 52 personnel as of Monday morning. The main management emphasis is point protection of Native allotments and any cabins in the fire area.
- Heavy rain in northwest Alaska has tempered fire danger and active fires burning in that part of Alaska. Likewise, cooler, cloudier conditions and occasional precipitation has reduced fire danger in much of Southcentral Alaska.
- 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.
- Once again, DOF did a good job of sharing resources between Areas and incidents to support initial attack efforts on the Brock Road Fire outside Fairbanks. The White Mountain Crew that was working on the Haystack Fire north of Fairbanks was peeled off that fire and sent to the Brock Road Fire. The Baker River Hotshots, who were pre-positioned in Delta Junction, were also sent to the new incident. Tanker-540 from Palmer was also brought in to assist with retardant drops.
- There are currently 262 firefighting personnel from the Lower 48 working in Alaska. That number will drop by about 100 today as the five Lower 48 Type 1 and Type 2 initial attack crews that were brought up on June 17 return home. The five crews are scheduled to fly back to the Lower 48 on Tuesday due to increasing demand for crews in the Lower 48 and decreasing fire activity in Alaska. The crews had originally been scheduled for a 30-day assignment in Alaska but increasing activity in the western U.S. and decreasing activity in Alaska prompted the decision to reel them back to the Lower 48.

- The Alberta (Canada) scooper group consisting of four water-scooping aircraft and a lead plane that came to Alaska a week ago to assist with wildfire activity here were released and headed back to Canada on Saturday due to increasing fire potential in their home region. 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.
- As of this morning, the Division of Forestry is at a Preparedness Level of PL3 (out of 5), the BLM Alaska Fire Service is at PL3, the U.S. Forest Service is at a PL2 and the Alaska Interagency Coordination Center is at PL3.
- The National Preparedness Level remains at PL 4 with more than 7,800 firefighting personnel assigned to incidents across the western U.S. The Pacific Northwest is in the throes of a record-breaking heat wave with triple digit temperatures recorded in northern California, Washington, Oregon and Idaho. The hot, dry weather could lead to new fire starts that could increase competition for resources nationwide.

Brock Road Fire (#294)

Acres: 21

Containment: 95%

Personnel assigned: 39 (will increase by 20 today with Fairbanks #1 crew mobilizing).

Resources assigned: 3 crews – 1 Type 21A; 2 Type 2.

Location: 8.5 miles SE of Fairbanks

Weather: Continued dry. Cloudy and slightly cooler with highs in the high 60s to low 70s.

- Fire reported by private drone operator flying a drone in the area.
- Fire was 95% contained as of Monday morning.
- Crews have a saw/dozer line and hose line around the entire fire and are working to mop it up. Crews conducted a grid 200 feet out from the perimeter in the unburned area to check for hot spots and found one hot spot outside the line that had previously been identified.
- Fire grew rapidly even without much wind on it, a sign that things are drying out. Fire reportedly grew from one-half acre to 50 acres in two hours, prompting the heavy air attack. Acreage was later reduced to 21 acres.
- Quick, aerial response with multiple aircraft dropping retardant and water helped keep fire from growing more than it did. Two air tankers, four water



Top photo taken during initial attack around 3:45 p.m. and bottom photo taken at around 6:30 p.m. following the aerial assault. Photos by Tim

scoopers and two helicopters were dropping retardant and water.

- Alaska State Troopers responded and closed off roads in the area for public and firefighter safety within 1 ½ hours of fire being reported.
- Fire was human-caused and is under investigation.
- Will be trying to track down drone pilot who reported fire to illustrate how he called in the fire and then got his drone out of the way so firefighting aircraft could operate safely. He was a model drone operator and this is a good way to illustrate to the public how drones can be a benefit if used wisely.

Haystack Fire (#196)

Acres: 924

Containment: 100%

Personnel assigned: 227 (will be dropping dramatically in next 2 days)

Resources assigned:

Location: 18 miles N of Fairbanks

Weather: Continued dry. Cloudy and slightly cooler with highs in the high 60s to low 70s.

- Fire was declared 100% contained on Friday night but several days of mop up remain to ensure it doesn't flare up and threaten to cross containment lines.
- A drone equipped with infrared technology is being used to fly over the fire area to search for hot spots so crews can focus their attention on extinguishing those sources of heat. Use of the drone helps reduce expensive helicopter time and reduces risk to firefighters on the ground and in the air.
- Alaska Type 2 incident management team will turn fire back over to Fairbanks Area Forestry on Thursday morning and fire will be placed in Monitor status.
- Alaska IMT is having a strategic planning meeting today with agency administrators about the end state of the fire and recommendations to the Fairbanks Area for monitoring the fire.
- Between June 18 and 26, an estimated 155,000 pounds of cargo and 451 passengers have been transported in 40.5 hours of flight time to support Haystack Fire suppression efforts.
- Estimated cost to date is \$3,916,433.

Munson Creek Fire (#235)

Acres: Estimated 329

Containment: 0%

Personnel assigned: 20

Resources assigned: Type 3 incident commander, Yukon Crew (18 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: Continued dry. Cloudy and slightly cooler with highs in the high 60s to low 70s.

- Warmer temperatures and sunshine perked up fire activity this weekend as unburned pockets of spruce trees within the perimeter burned. More smoke was produced, but the perimeter of the fire did not expand significantly. Cool temperatures and higher humidity reduced fire activity overnight.
- Firefighters continue to monitor fire activity from a hill behind Chena Hot Springs and from the Angel Rocks to Chena Hot Springs Trail.
- As the fire creeps northward it will likely reach an adjoining Full Management zone that encompasses cabins, homes and the Chena Hot Springs Resort. At that time firefighters will actively employ fire management measures to minimize the spread of fire further into the Full Protection zone. Fire managers don't anticipate the fire threatening the hot springs or cabins at the end of Chena Hot Springs Road.
- Public information officer was assigned on Friday to help with messaging to the public. PIO reported talking to XXX people at Angel Rocks trailhead and Chena Hot Springs over the weekend to provide them information about the fire. Information boards have been set up at the Angel Rocks trailhead and Chena Hot Springs to provide info for the public.
- Estimated cost of the fire to date is \$46,245.

About Mountain Fire #193

Acres: 2,179

Containment: 100%

Personnel assigned: 35.

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

Resources assigned: Pioneer Peak Hotshot Crew, local boat operators, 1 finance section chief, 2 plans section chief.

Weather:

- Fire was declared 100% contained at end of shift on Friday, June 25.
- A drone with infrared technology was used Saturday and Sunday to fly over the fire to identify and map any remaining hot spots.
- Fire will transition from Type 3 team to Type 4 team today with Pioneer Peak Hotshots remaining in place to seek out and destroy any hot spots found by the drone flights where it is safe to do so.
- Eight smokejumpers demobilized at the end of shift Sunday.
- Estimated cost to date is approximately \$1,500,000.

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.