FOREST RESOURCES

Domestic and export markets recovered from last year’s volatile demands and prices by mid-year. Significant activity occurred on the 15 million board foot (MMBF) Bayview Timber Sale on Prince of Wales Island that Viking Lumber purchased from the state in 2021. The timber will be domestically processed. Alcan Timber of Ketchikan operated on old growth timber in the 16 MMBF mixed age Vallenar Good Neighbor Authority Sale. Vallenar timber was shipped to round log markets in the Lower 48, Japan, and China.

DOF sold the 23 MMBF Baby Brown Glacier Side Sale in Haines to NWFP but logistical constraints precluded operations in 2021. Local small mill use of timber from the Haines State Forest remained strong. DOF repaired damage on the Sunshine and Kelsall forest roads caused by fall flooding in 2020 to maintain access for commercial operators and the public.

A shut-down of timber production on the Tongass National Forest and Sealaska lands shifted focus for regional timber to state sources such as DOF-managed lands and newly acquired federal exchange parcels managed by the Alaska Mental Health Trust.


DOF and the US Forest Service partnered to complete the sixth year of the Interior Forest Inventory & Analysis Program. Crews completed the southwest unit and will move to more remote units in 2022. DOF revived the UAF Cooperative Alaska Forest Inventory, and Levels of Growing Stock projects, some of the longest running inventories in interior Alaska.

The mission of the Division of Forestry is to proudly serve Alaskans through forest management and wildland fire protection.
In Division of Forestry protection areas, 248 fires burned 95,805 acres. Most of the acres, 50,964, burned in the Munson Creek Fire near Fairbanks. Approximately 90% of these acres burned in a Limited Fire Management Area containing few high-value resources and monitoring was the preferred management action.

DOF supported the Lower 48 in their second extreme fire season in as many years, sending 350 firefighting personnel to 15 states. Alaska Incident Management Teams were deployed four times – once in Alaska, once in Oregon, and twice in California. Two five-engine strike teams were sent to Washington and Oregon for more than two months. Firefighting resources are exchanged among states and the federal government using reciprocal agreements, allowing the state to request Lower 48 resources when needed.

Alaska is experiencing more intense, longer fire seasons, while our forests are vulnerable to insect attack and disease. Currently, about 80% of Alaska’s population resides in communities at risk from wildland fire, and more Alaskans are moving into fire prone areas. DOF is adapting to these changes with an aggressive hazardous fuels reduction program. Firebreaks around communities reduce risk and are a cost-effective and efficient way to moderate wildland fire.

In 2021, DOF implemented 16 hazardous fuels projects, protecting 17 communities across Alaska. DOF is building capacity to engage the private sector in fuels reduction work, as well as involving local governments, helping them execute community-driven fuel breaks and wildland fire protection plans. DOF’s fuels program will continue to expand, with five additional projects planned for 2022, and 15 more projects proposed for 2023 – 2025.

In addition to building new fuels projects, maintenance was undertaken on existing firebreaks. Fairbanks Area staff and a local contractor are working on the Old Murphy Dome fuel break to protect homes and property north of Fairbanks with an estimated economic value of $30 million. Previous successes in protecting communities with fuels breaks include those on the 2014 Funny River Fire, which protected values estimated at $1.7 billion, and on the 2019 Shovel Creek Fire, which saved $51 million of homes and property.

2021 was a moderate fire season, but a total of 389 fires burned an estimated 254,500 acres statewide. Many of these fires were located near population centers that required aggressive initial attack. 252 human-caused fires burned 9,893 acres, and 126 lightning-caused fires burned 244,593 acres. The cause was undetermined for 11 fires that burned 14 acres.

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