

DOF Daily WildFire Update

July 3, 2021

2021 Alaska Wildland Fire Numbers

As of Saturday, July 3



- **Number of wildfires to date: 283**
- **Acres burned statewide to date: 105,409**
- **New fires yesterday: 5**
- **Current active fires: 60**
- **Current number of staffed fires: 4**
- **Personnel assigned to fires: 226**
- **Human-caused fires to date: 183**
- **Lightning-caused fires to date: 85**
- **Natural-caused fires to date: 5**
- **Undetermined fire causes to date: 10**



Members of the Yukon Crew work on prepping structure at Chena Hot Springs Resort on Friday, July 2, 2021. Cathie Harms/Alaska DNR-Division of Forestry

Munson Creek Fire

Size: 11,200 acres

Containment: 0% (Not a full suppression fire; point protection only)

Start date: June 18

Cause: Lightning

Location: 50 miles east of Fairbanks and 1 mile south of Chena Hot Springs.

Personnel: 109

Resources assigned: 3 Type 2IA crews; 8 smokejumpers; 3 helicopters; 5 Type 6 engines; 1 Type 7 engine; 2 dozers.



The Munson Creek Fire on July 2.

- Cooler, cloudier and moister weather tempered fire behavior on Saturday morning as firefighters continue work to prep cabins, homes and other structures along Chena Hot Springs Road in the event the fire reaches them.

- The fire was reported to be about 1 mile south of Chena Hot Springs and 1-2 miles south of Chena Hot Springs Road between mileposts 46 and 48. Flames and smoke are visible from the road.
- Chena Hot Springs Road remains open but smoke in the area could limit visibility. Fire managers have ordered a pilot car and flaggers in the event the road needs to be shut down to one lane with a pilot car.
- Fire managers described fire behavior on Friday as “two notches above extreme.”
- Firefighters have finished installing plumbing (pumps, hoses, sprinklers) around structures at the resort and are now focusing their attention on cabins and homes along a 10-mile stretch of the road from Mile 45 to Mile 55.
- Light rain fell on the fire Saturday morning. While the precipitation was light and is not expected to be a wetting rain, the increased moisture in the air is helping to calm fire behavior.
- The latest size estimate following a helicopter reconnaissance flight Friday night was 11,200 acres but smoky conditions have made it difficult to get a defined perimeter of the fire.
- A public meeting is scheduled for 4 p.m. today in the activities center at Chena Hot Springs Resort. The meeting will be live streamed on the DOF Facebook page if connectivity allows.
- As of Saturday morning, firefighters had plumbed approximately 20 cabins and homes from the hot springs to Mile 55 and will be working their way west down the road today to milepost 45 to create defensible space and install hose, pumps and sprinklers around those structures.
- The fire crossed a ridgeline Friday that firefighters were using as a natural barrier to hold the fire. Once the fire breached the ridge, firefighters fell back to focus on structure protection because it was unsafe to remain on the ridge and engage the fire directly.
- The fire reached two aurora viewing yurts set up near the ridgeline about 2 miles southeast of Chena Hot Springs and a shelter cabin on the Angel Rocks to Chena Hot Springs Trail about 2 miles south of the hot springs. The status of the yurts and shelter cabin was unclear Saturday due to heavy smoke but sprinklers had been set up around the yurts.
- Eight smokejumpers were dropped at a cabin along the Middle Fork Chena River to set up structure protection and they are searching for another cabin in the area to do the same.
- A “Set” evacuation notice issued by Fairbanks North Star Borough Emergency Operations remains in effect for cabin and home owners between mileposts 45 to 55, as well as guests and staff at Chena Hot Springs. A “Set” evacuation notice means people should be prepared to leave their homes at a moment’s notice.
- 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.
- Estimated cost to date is \$216,140.

Other wildfire activity

- The BLM Alaska Fire Service responded to a fire near the community of Central on the Steese Highway Saturday afternoon. Sixteen smokejumpers, six water-dropping Fire Boss airplanes and an Alaska Division of Forestry air tanker quickly mobilized after the **Deadwood Fire** (in photo at right) was reported by local residents at 4 p.m. The tanker dropped three loads of retardant around the fire and water scoopers made multiple water drops to knock down the fire. Smokejumpers are tracking down any spot fires or hot spots that sprung up outside the main fire's perimeter. The BLM Alaska Fire Service Midnight Sun Hotshots will join the 16 smokejumpers on the ground today.
- Sixty-five firefighters continue point protection operations on Native allotments threatened by the **Dry Creek Fire** 6 miles south of Manley Hot Springs. The fire is now estimated at 45,644 acres, nearly half of the acreage total for all of Alaska this season. The fire was active again on Friday but did not spread as much as Thursday. The main area of activity was on the west flank. The fire is running into a large 2018 burn scar in that area which should moderate fire behavior. There are multiple allotments within 6 miles of the fire. Estimated cost to date is \$802,283.
- Two crews continue mopping up the 18-acre **Brock Road Fire** near North Pole. The fire is 100% contained and crews will spend the day doing a final grid for hot spots. The two crews will be demobilized from the fire on Sunday. Estimated cost to date is \$213,663.



Weather

- **Short Term Forecast:** Cooler today across the Interior with isolated showers. Thunderstorms in the northeast. Showers tapering off for Southcentral by tonight with warmer and drier conditions tomorrow. Southwest remains cool/damp. Panhandle is beginning a warming and drying trend. Tomorrow will be warmer and drier for eastern two-thirds of Alaska.
- **Long Range Forecast:** Low pressure moves in early next week, bringing cooler temps and increased chances for showers in the Interior. Strong winds on Monday are likely to bring another round of Red Flag Warnings in Alaska Range passes north of the range.

Fire Restrictions

- A burn suspension is currently in effect through the weekend for the Delta Junction, Fairbanks and Tok Areas prohibiting brush burning and the use of burn barrels. Small campfires are still allowed but DOF stresses vigilance and proper extinguishment for anyone using a campfire.
- The City of North Pole banned the sale of fireworks within the city on Friday due to high fire danger.

Fire danger/potential

- The main area of wildfire concern in Alaska remains the central and eastern Interior and Upper Yukon Flats. Those areas have experienced a long stretch of hot, dry and windy weather that continues to dry out the deeper fuels that make wildfires more resistant to control.
- The Alaska Wildland Fire Coordinating Group will meet on July 7 to consider converting some lands that are in Modified protection status to Limited protection. Conversion date in Alaska is typically July 10 – though it can be pushed back depending on fire activity and potential - and is a sign that the Alaska fire season has reached its peak and the potential for large wildfires is declining. In preparation for the AWFCG meeting on July 7 to discuss conversion date in Alaska, DOF Area fire management officers will be reaching out to their respective jurisdictional representatives to discuss any concerns they may have with conversion. As part of the conversion date discussion/decision, Alaska Interagency Coordination Center Fire Behavior Analyst Chris Moore and AICC fire weather staff will be presenting a seasonal briefing on July 6 to discuss current and projected fire indices and the long-range fire weather forecast to provide fire managers with the most current science and weather information regarding the potential for future fire activity and large fire growth (see graph below).

Lower 48

- As of Saturday morning, a total of 31,334 fires have burned 1,525,572 acres nationally. The number of fires is about 4,000 higher than the 10-year average for this date but the acreage burned is about 800,000 acres less than the 10-year average.
- The National Preparedness Level remains at PL 4 with more than 7,200 firefighting personnel assigned to incidents across the western U.S. There are three Type 1 incident management teams assigned to fires in Arizona and Colorado and 7 Type 2 incident management teams assigned to fires in Arizona, Wyoming, Colorado, California, Montana. Northern California has moved to a PL4. All other Geographic Areas are at PL3 or lower.

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.