



DOF Daily WildFire Update

July 12, 2021



2021 Alaska Wildland Fire Numbers

As of Monday, July 12



- **Number of wildfires: 302**
- **Acres burned statewide: 173,319**
- **New fires yesterday: 2**
- **Current active fires: 42**
- **Current number of staffed fires: 4**
- **Personnel assigned to fires: 228**
- **Human-caused fires: 200**
- **Lightning-caused fires: 86**
- **Natural-caused fires: 6**
- **Undetermined fire causes: 10**



Tanker 52 makes a retardant drop on the Munson Creek Fire east of Fairbanks on Sunday, July 11. Ira Hardy/Alaska DNR-Division of Forestry

Current Alaska situation

- With very little lightning activity the past week, there have been very few new fires reported. There have been only 10 new fires since July 4, only of which has required a significant response – the 2.5-acre Lichen Fire north of Willow on July 4. There have been no new lightning fires reported in the past week.
- With the Alaska Wildland Fire Coordinating Group (AWFCG) approving a conversion date of July 10 to convert some lands that are in Modified protection to Limited protection, DOF fire managers are working with interagency partners at the BLM Alaska Fire Service, U.S. Forest Service and other federal agencies to develop a draw down plan for Alaska resources. The goal is to provide some resources for assignment in the Lower 48 to assist with wildfires in the western U.S. while also ensuring we have adequate resources for initial and extended attack responses in Alaska.
- In response to last week's rollover accident involving Fairbanks Area firefighter Owen Solomon, a Critical Incident Stress Management Team from the Alaska Police and Fire Chaplains were

brought in to talk to DOF staff who responded to the accident and for friends and co-workers who were impacted by the accident. It was the first time a CISM team from the Alaska Police and Fire Chaplains have responded to a DOF incident but the team was well received and several DOF staff reached out for support. We hope this will help foster a relationship between DOF and the Alaska Police and Fire Chaplains in the event of future incidents. The team also brought support canines with them that were popular among staff.

- The Division of Forestry Wildland Fire and Aviation Program has received \$200,000 in grant funding from the USFS for Non-Federal Hazard Fuels Reduction. This is annual grant that DOF applies for and uses for various methods of statewide hazardous fuel disposal. Areas will use the money for the burning of slash piles or pass-through money to support local boroughs in fuel disposals. Fairbanks North Star Borough, Denali Borough, Mat-Su Borough, and the Kenai Peninsula Borough will all benefit from this for their fuel disposal operations. The communities of Tok and Delta will utilize funds for disposing of hazard fuel in community collection areas.
- DOF has received approval to go ahead with the purchase of a replacement aircraft for 909AK, which was wrecked in a crash last summer near Aniak, as well as a new Type 6 replacement engine. CIP funding of \$650,000 was included in the FY22 budget for a replacement aircraft and \$250,000 was included for a replacement engine. In addition to the \$650,00 for aircraft replacement, DOF has an additional \$300,000 in insurance funds and and \$147,000 of CIP rollover funds for a total of almost \$1.1 million. DOF Aviation Manager Steve Elwell said he hopes to purchase a replacement aircraft by October.
- The Alaska Type 1 Incident Management Team commanded by DOF Fire Program Manager Norm McDonald is tentatively scheduled to become available for national assignments on July 19. Judging from current activity in the Lower 48, it probably won't take long for the Alaska IMT to be deployed.

Current Lower 48 Situation

- Fire season continues to ramp up in the western U.S., with large fires popping up in Idaho and Oregon during the past week. As of today, there are nine Type 1 teams assigned to fires in California, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington and 14 Type 2 IMTs assigned to fires in Arizona, Idaho, Minnesota, Montana, Oregon and Washington.
- As of today, there are more than 12,000 firefighting personnel assigned to incidents in nine different states, including Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Minnesota, Montana, New Mexico, Oregon and Washington. That's the highest number of personnel assigned to fires so far this summer and it is expected to continue climbing.

Weather

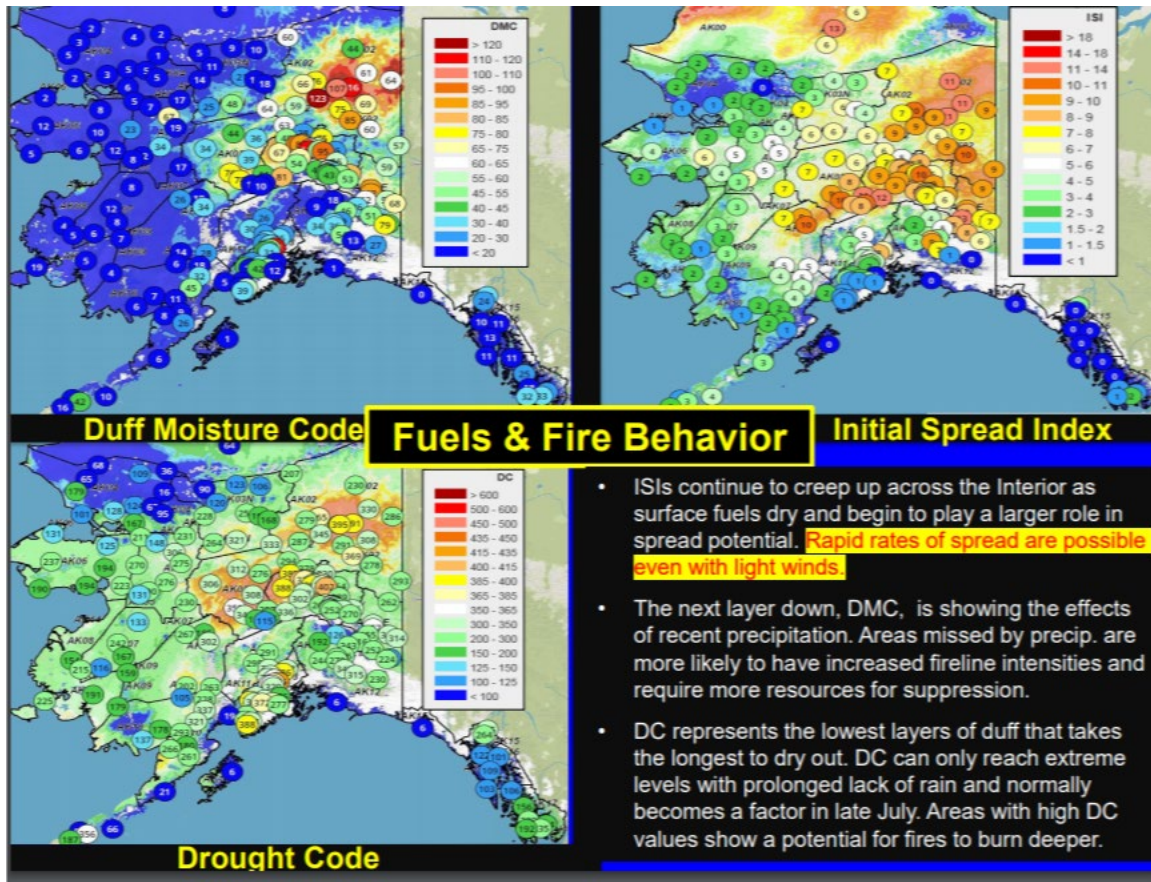
- **SHORT-TERM FORECAST**

- Warm in the Interior, but no records.
- Humidity in the 20s in the Interior.
- No thunder today.
- Local, terrain-driven winds will develop in sunny areas in the afternoon, then reverse overnight.
- Yet more rain from Southcentral across to the Panhandle

- **LONG-RANGE FORECAST**

- Isolated wet thunder returns to the northeast Interior Tuesday, then spreading south on Wednesday.
- West winds 10 to 20 mph for the Interior Tuesday, watch the Initial Spread Indexes.
- Another warm day for the Interior Tuesday before cooling and chance for precipitation moves in on Wednesday/
- The big question: Southwest flow for the weekend?

Fire danger/potential



Staffed Fires

Munson Creek Fire 36,609 acres, 50 miles northeast of Fairbanks, Limited protection area, 180 personnel.

- Firefighters have been successful in steering the fire away from Chena Hot Springs Resort and cabins and homes along Chena Hot Springs Road while allowing it to play its natural role on the landscape.
- Firefighters are basically waiting for the fire to back down to Chena Hot Springs Road and the Chena River between mileposts 44 and 56.5. The fire is currently 1 to 3 miles south and east of the Chena Hot Springs Road.
- Once the fire reaches the road and river, firefighters will ensure it doesn't pose a threat to cabins or homes on the south side of the road before putting it in monitor status and patrolling it from the road and air.
- Fire managers are starting to develop a glide path to reduce the number of resources assigned to the fire in anticipation of turning it over to a Type 4 organization later this week.
- Firefighters have set up protection measures (i.e. clearing brush and installing pumps, hose and sprinklers) around 94 homes on the south side of Chena Hot Springs Road between mileposts 42 and 56.5.
- Current fire behavior consists primarily of smoldering and creeping, though there was some active torching and burning on parts of the northeast corner a mile or so east of the resort and on the northwest corner behind Angel Rocks.
- The fire continues to be active on the south end along the Middle Fork Chena River but that area is in Limited protection with very few values at risk. Identified values (i.e. cabins and gold mining camps) have had structure protection set up around them.
- Helicopter water drops are being used cool hot spots and active portions of the fire.
- There is one pocket of unburned fuel east of the Chena Hot Springs Resort airstrip on the south side of Monument Creek that fire managers would like to see burned off to ensure that it doesn't cross Monument Creek. A test burn was conducted by the Pioneer Peak Hotshots on Monday afternoon but was put on hold because consumption rates were not as good as



Division Supervisor Aaron Schumacher, left, points out a location to use retardant on the Munson Creek Fire while discussing tactics with Task Force Leader Erik Jansen, second from left, Incident Commander Zane Brown, second from right, and Operations Chief Jerry Horton on Sunday, July 11, 2021. The load of retardant was used to keep the fire from spreading towards cabins and homes along Chena Hot Springs Road between mileposts 52 - 54. Sam Harrel/Alaska DNR-Division of Forestry

expected. It appears the fire will clean up the unburned pocket without any help from firefighters.

- Fire managers did get two “free” air tanker drops on Sunday – one of retardant and one of water. An air tanker based at Fairbanks International Airport was planning to jettison a load of retardant that had been pumped into the tanker a few days ago but had not been used. Fire managers utilized the retardant to paint an east-west line just south and west of Bearpaw Butte south of the road to help keep the fire from advancing closer to the road. The fire is currently about 2 ½ miles east of the road in that area, hung up in a riparian area



Air tanker 52 drops a load of fire retardant to slow the progress of the Munson Creek Fire on Sunday, July 11, 2021. Ira Hardy/Alaska DNR-Division of Forestry

where fire managers hope it remains. The tanker then dropped a 2,000-gallon load of water on an active portion of the fire just south of Bearpaw Butte to flush out the old retardant.

- The “Go” level evacuation order from Mile 48 to Chena Hot Springs at Mile 56.5 still in effect is being re-evaluated daily to determine when it can be safely lifted. Chena Hot Springs Road and the resort remain open and cabin owners are allowed to access their properties.
- 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.
- A Temporary Flight Restriction for aircraft and drones is in effect surrounding the fire.

Dry Creek Fire, 51,931 acres, 6 miles S Manley Hot Springs, Full protection area, 33 personnel

- Fire behavior on Sunday was creeping and smoldering with interior pockets of smoke. Weather was a little bit cooler and cloudier than Saturday, which helped moderate fire behavior. North Star Crew secured the NE corner along the Zitziana River. Firefighters continued point protection operations in allotments near the fire perimeter.

Cultas Creek, 33,043 acres, 135 miles east of Fairbanks in Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve, Limited protection area, 5 personnel.

- Firefighters continue to prepare allotments and two historic cabins in the area for anticipated warmer and drier conditions.

Bearman, 6 acres, 30 miles northwest of Fort Yukon in Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge, Limited protection area, 10 personnel.

- Minimal fire activity was observed Sunday. Firefighters continue to secure the fire's perimeter.. A UAS module arrived on the fire on today to help identify hotspots. Tentative demobilization scheduled for today.

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.