



DOF Daily WildFire Update

July 13, 2021



2021 Alaska Wildland Fire Numbers

As of Tuesday, July 13

- **Number of wildfires: 304**
- **Acres burned statewide: 173,771**
- **New fires yesterday: 2**
- **Current active fires: 41**
- **Current number of staffed fires: 3**
- **Personnel assigned to fires: 171**
- **Human-caused fires: 202**
- **Lightning-caused fires: 86**
- **Natural-caused fires: 6**
- **Undetermined fire causes: 10**



Munson Creek
Fire Incident
Commander
Zane Brown
checks a
burnout
operation on
the fire
Monday, July
12. Ira
Hardy/Alaska
DNR-Division of
Forestry

Current Alaska situation

- Thanks in large part to lack of lightning, wildfire activity in Alaska remains minimal despite extremely dry conditions across the eastern Interior where fire weather indices are moving into the very high and extreme levels. There have been only 12 human-caused fires and no lightning-caused fires since July 4. Only one of those fires – the 2.5-acre Lichen Fire north of Willow in the Ma-Su Area – required a significant response.
- If all goes according to plan, Alaska will have only two staffed fires after at the end of shift on Wednesday – the Munson Creek Fire 50 miles east of Fairbanks near Chena Hot Springs and the Cultas Fire 135 miles east of Fairbanks in the Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve. The 50,745-acre Dry Creek Fire, the largest fire in Alaska this season, is scheduled to demobilize the 32 personnel working on that fire on Wednesday.
- The big question at this point in the season is when southwest flow will hit the state and bring season-ending rains to Alaska. Southwest flow typically begins wetting the state down in mid-July. While meteorologists at the Alaska Interagency Coordination Center (AICC) were suggesting possible southwest flow this weekend, they backed off on that possibility somewhat on Tuesday. "We expect a brief shot of southwesterly flow for Friday and Saturday but just for the northern part of the Interior," meteorologist Eric Stevens said during the AICC daily weather

briefing on Tuesday. The current models suggest high-pressure ridging could build back in on Sunday, which could mean continued warm, dry conditions.

- 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 to determine when and how many resources will be released to assist with wildfire suppression in the Lower 48 in coming weeks and months. Fire managers consider the fire potential in Alaska based on weather and fire behavior forecasting models to determine how many resources to make available to assist with fires in the Lower 48 while at the same time ensuring there are adequate resources for initial and extended attack responses in Alaska. "We'll see if we get this southwest flow and if we'll let resources start trickling to the Lower 48," DOF Operations Chief Ed Sanford said. "If we don't get it, we'll keep them here." All Area offices will remain at no lower than Planning Level 2 staffing levels.
- The Division of Forestry will be releasing one of its two contract Convair 580 air tankers to the Lower 48 either today or tomorrow because there currently isn't the need for two air tankers in Alaska. With minimal fire activity in Alaska, DOF is making Tanker 52 based in Fairbanks available for assignment in the Lower 48. Chances are good it will be snapped up immediately. While the tanker will remain on contract with DOF, the costs will be picked up by the management agencies who hires it, thus saving the State of Alaska money. The tanker's availability will be on a "short leash" so that it can be brought back to Alaska quickly if needed.
- A Division of Forestry engine working on the Munson Creek Fire east of Fairbanks hit a moose Monday night but no firefighters were injured. The moose, a young calf, had to be dispatched as a result of the accident. There was no damage reported to the engine.

Current Lower 48 Situation

- As of yesterday, a total of 33,953 fires had burned 2,061,054 acres in the Lower 48 and Alaska this year. That compares to the 10-year average of 33,953 fires and 2,940,721 acres.
- Fire season continues to escalate in the drought-stricken western U.S. and conditions are expected to worsen, which means it could be a busy post-Alaska fire season for Alaska firefighters. Idaho, Montana and Oregon are the current hot spots of activity. There are currently 51 uncontained large fires burning in the western U.S.
- As of today, there are nine Type 1 teams assigned to fires in California, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington and 15 Type 2 IMTs assigned to fires in Arizona, Idaho, Minnesota, Montana, Oregon and Washington. The Alaska Type 1 Incident Management Team commanded by DOF Fire Program Manager Norm McDonald will be made available as a national resource on July 19.

- The number of personnel assigned to fires in the Lower 48 jumped by another 2,000 yesterday. There were more than 14,200 firefighting personnel assigned to fires in nine different states as of Tuesday morning, an increase of about 5,000 since last week. There are more than 5,000 personnel working on fires in Washington and Oregon and Washington has run out of available crews. There are almost 3,500 personnel on fires in Idaho and Washington. Northern California has almost 3,000 personnel assigned.

Weather

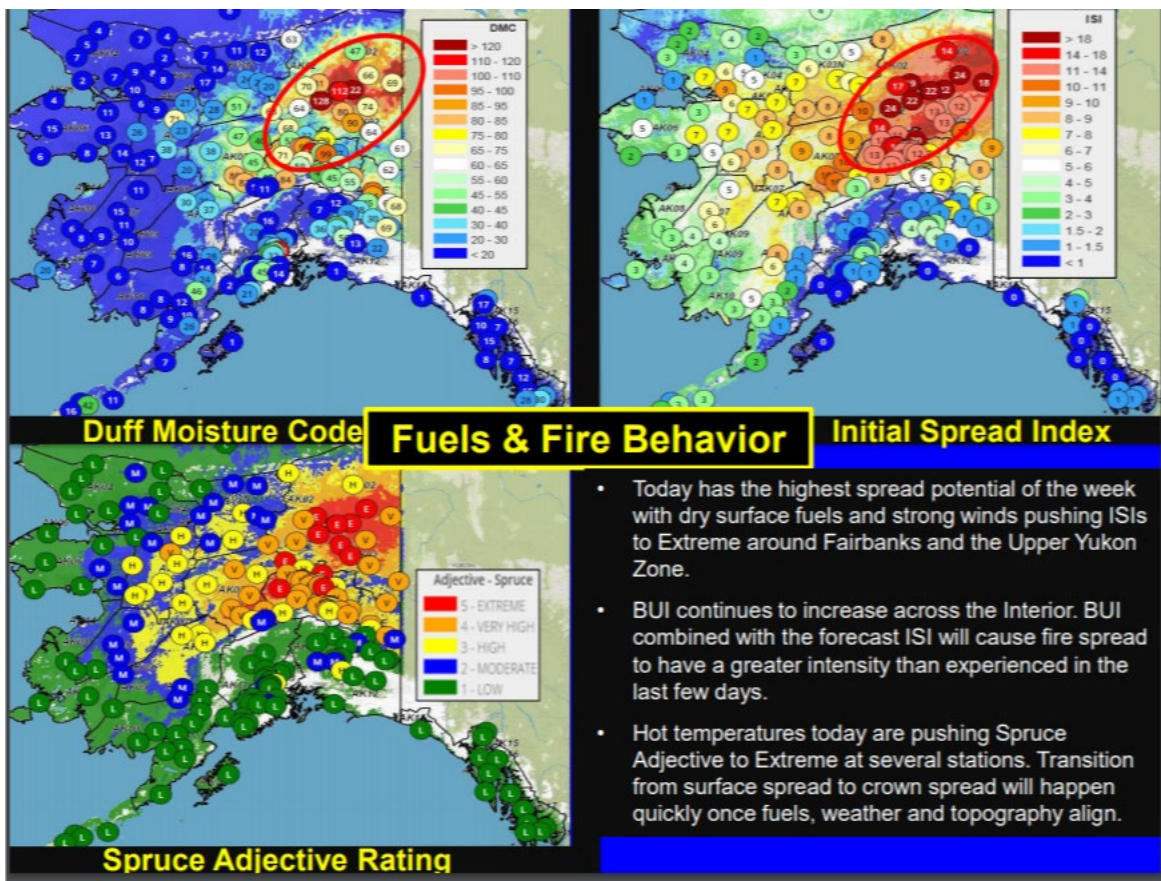
• SHORT-TERM FORECAST

- Near Red Flag conditions today in the northeastern Interior
 - Isolated wet thunder
 - Warm and dry
 - Southwest winds 15-25 mph
 - High Fire Weather Indexes, especially Initial Spread Index.
- Over the sunny Interior: daily mountain-valley winds will predominate.
- Areas of rain (again) today from Southcentral across to the Panhandle.

• LONG-RANGE FORECAST

- More thunder tomorrow than today for the Interior, still wet.
- Thunder continuing Thursday, possibly beyond, even into the weekend.
- Warmest temperatures later this week will be over Mat-Su Valley.
- Southwest flow looking less likely.

Fire danger/potential



Staffed Fires

Munson Creek Fire 38,245 acres, 52 miles northeast of Fairbanks, Limited protection area, 134 personnel.

- Slight increase in acreage (1,600+) due to growth on to north and east.
- Burnout operation along Monument Creek east of Chena Hot Springs on Monday and Tuesday was a success and that section of line is being mopped up.
- The “Go” evacuation level for Chena Hot Springs Resort and cabins and homes along Chena Hot Springs Road between mileposts 48 to 56.5 will be reduced to a “Set” effective Wednesday, July 14.
- Pioneer Peak Hotshots will be demobilized tomorrow. Current resources are being allowed to time out and some will be demobilized late this week. Tentative transition date from Type 3 to Type 4 organization will occur Saturday.
- Pumps, hose and sprinklers that were set up around cabins and homes along Chena Hot Springs Road will remain in place so they are ready if needed.
- All hose around structures at Chena Hot Springs Resort has been pulled.
- The three crews remaining on the fire – Gannett Glacier, UAF Nanooks and White Mountain – will work on cutting a saw line paralleling Chena Hot Springs Road when they finish mopping up the burn operation near Monument Creek. UAF crew will time out on Saturday and Gannett Glacier times out on Monday. White Mountain Crew will remain on fire with Type 4 organization.



Members of the Pioneer Peak Hotshot and UAF Nanooks crews conduct a backfiring operation on a hillside along Monument Creek on Monday, July 12 on the Munson Creek Fire east of Fairbanks near Chena Hot Springs. Kris Baumgartner/Pioneer Peak Hotshot Crew



- 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 has increased slightly with warming and drying weather. Fire line constructed by North Star crew is secure along the Zitziana River. Tentative demobilization for all resources scheduled for Wednesday.

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

- Fire was 25% active with torching. Fire still had heat at the bottom of Sam's Creek but it has not crossed Sams Creek. Firefighters continue to prepare allotments and structures in the area for anticipated warmer and drier conditions.

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.