



DOF Daily WildFire Update

July 14, 2021



2021 Alaska Wildland Fire Numbers

As of Wednesday, July 14



- **Number of wildfires: 305**
- **Acres burned statewide: 173,703**
- **New fires yesterday: 0**
- **Current active fires: 36**
- **Current number of staffed fires: 3**
- **Personnel assigned to fires: 147**
- **Human-caused fires: 202**
- **Lightning-caused fires: 86**
- **Natural-caused fires: 6**
- **Undetermined fire causes: 11**



Chad Mahler of the UAF Nanook crew uses a hose to mop up a hotspot after a burnout operation near Monument Creek on the Munson Creek fire on Tuesday, Ira Hardy/Alaska DNR-Division of Forestry

Current Alaska situation

- No new fires reported on Tuesday. There have been only 12 human-caused fires and no lightning-caused fires since July 4.
- Alaska is down to only two staffed fires – 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. Personnel were demobilized from the 50,745-acre Dry Creek Fire, the largest fire in Alaska this season, on Wednesday. There are only 5 personnel working on the Cutlas Fire to protect a pair of historic cabins and there were 129 personnel assigned to the Munson Creek Fire as of Wednesday morning but that number is shrinking daily.
- 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. At this point, meteorologists at the Alaska Interagency Coordination Center (AICC) say the models are not aligning and it's hard to tell what will happen. It does look like a ridge will build in again this weekend, bringing warm and dry conditions to most of the state, especially

Southcentral and Southwest. "Each model run seems to be waffling considerably so we're going to wait a day or two until we make a call on which weather pattern will be the dominant one next week," meteorologist Heidi Strader said during Wednesday's weather briefing. "But do expect to see a significant pattern change Monday or Tuesday."

- 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.
- One of the Division of Forestry's two contract Convair 580 air tankers departed for Moses Lake, Wash. on Wednesday to assist with fire activity in the Pacific Northwest. With minimal fire activity in Alaska, DOF made Tanker 52 available for assignment in the Lower 4 and it was snapped up as soon as it became available. 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.

Current Lower 48 Situation

- The National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group, or NMAC, elevated the National Preparedness Level to PL5 (on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the highest) on Wednesday due to significant wildfire activity occurring in multiple geographical areas, an increase in incident management team mobilization, and heavy shared resources commitment to large fires nationally. PL 5 is the highest level of wildland fire activity. Several geographic areas are experiencing large, complex wildland fire incidents, which have the potential to exhaust national wildland resources. Given the continuing hot and dry weather, the increase in initial attack and large fires in the western U.S., the decision to move to PL 5 depicts the complexity that fire managers are encountering to ensure that adequate firefighting resources are available for protection of life, property and our nation's natural resources. This is the earliest PL 5 in the past 10 years. In 2002, PL 5 was set on June 21 and in 2008, PL5 was set on July 1.
- As of yesterday, a total of 34,216 fires had burned 2,221,835 acres in the Lower 48 and Alaska this year. That compares to the 10-year average of 30,514 fires and 3,125,009 acres.
- The number of personnel assigned to fires in the Lower 48 jumped by another 2,000 yesterday. There were 16,650 firefighting personnel assigned to fires in nine different states as of



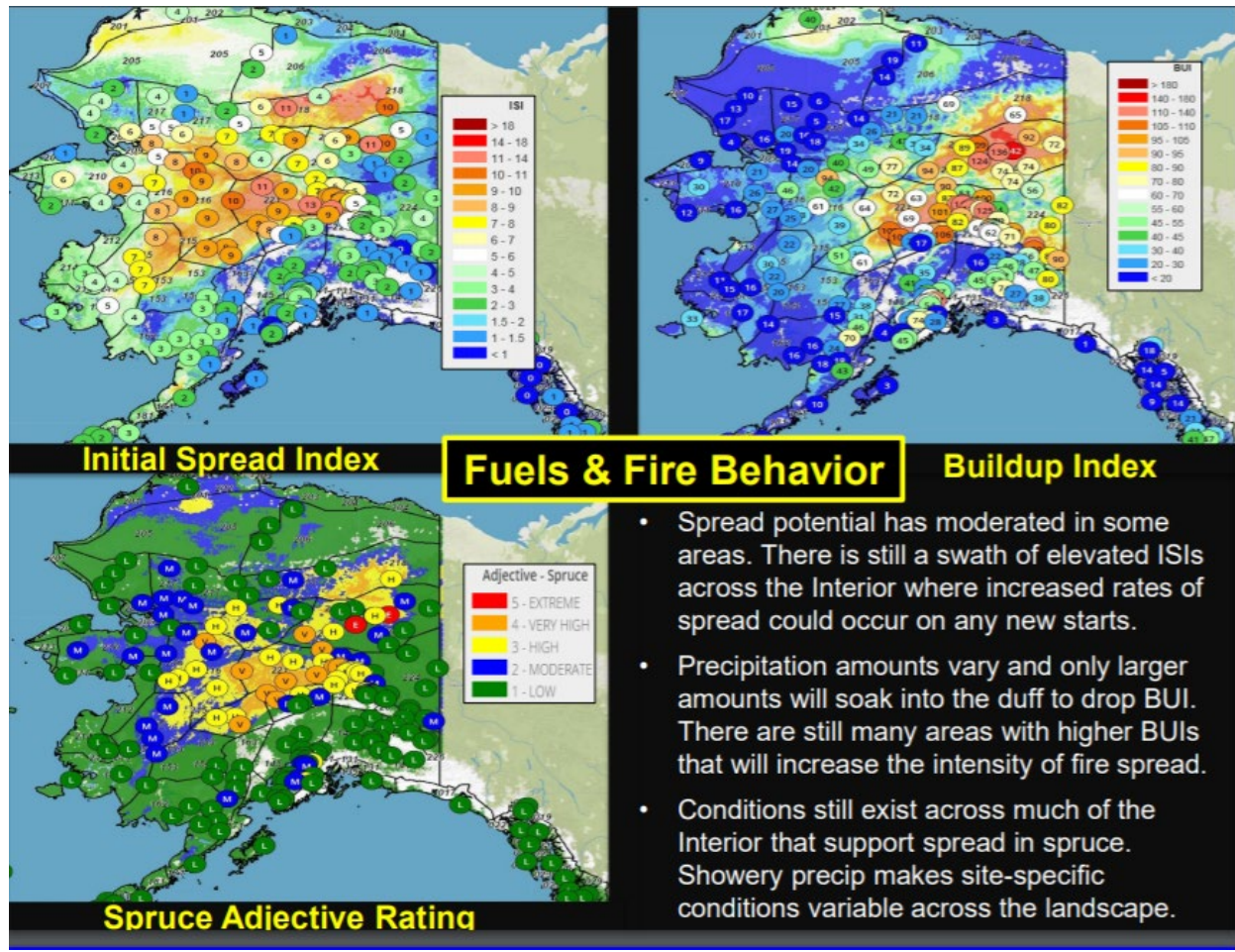
Wednesday morning, an increase of about 7,000 since last week. There are nearly 6,000 personnel assigned to fires in Washington and Oregon. Washington has run out of crews and incident management teams. There are more than 3,500 personnel on fires in Idaho and Washington. Northern California has almost 3,500 personnel assigned.

- As of today, there are nine Type 1 teams assigned to fires in California, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington and 17 Type 2 IMTs assigned to fires in Arizona, Idaho, Minnesota, Montana, Oregon and Washington. There are currently 54 uncontained large fires burning in the U.S.
- The Idaho Department of Lands issued a press release on Wednesday saying there is an “urgent need” for workers to refurbish firefighting equipment at the Coeur d’ Alene Interagency Fire Cache in Coeur d’ Alene, Idaho. Workers are needed to wash hose, box supplies, load and off load trucks, pressure-test water equipment and other jobs. They are looking for 10 truck drivers and 20 warehouse workers. Currently, hours are 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., 6 days a week, with one scheduled day off per week, at \$16.76 an hour. Positions are overtime eligible.
- **‘Scary’: Fuel shortage could ground firefighting aircraft.** A shortage of jet fuel has managers at tanker bases across the western United States worried that they may run out of fuel to power planes and helicopters that drop water and retardant on during what is shaping up to be a ferocious wildfire season. Sporadic shortages at some tanker bases in Oregon and Utah have already been reported. The worry is that multiple bases go dry simultaneously during what is shaping up to be a very busy wildfire season in the U.S. West. Tanker bases in Arizona, where many large fires are burning, have also had jet fuel supply issues in the last month. Read the full Associated Press story here: <https://apnews.com/article/business-health-government-and-politics-fires-environment-and-nature-29b3eb2572c64109ecce45258a93f78c>

Weather

- **SHORT-TERM FORECAST**
 - Warming and drying trend for Southcentral and Southwest: downright hot on Friday in Southcentral with highs in the mid-80s.
 - Cooler and damper in eastern Interior through Thursday.
 - Isolated wet thunderstorms in eastern Interior today, shifting into Copper River tomorrow.
 - Breezy west to southwest winds across much of Interior.
- **LONG-RANGE FORECAST**
 - Ridging moves across the state beginning Friday, bringing hot and dry weather for most of the Interior, Southwest, Southcentral and Copper River Basin.
 - Next week looks like a significant pattern change, but models are waffling on longer range solutions.

Fire danger/potential



Staffed Fires

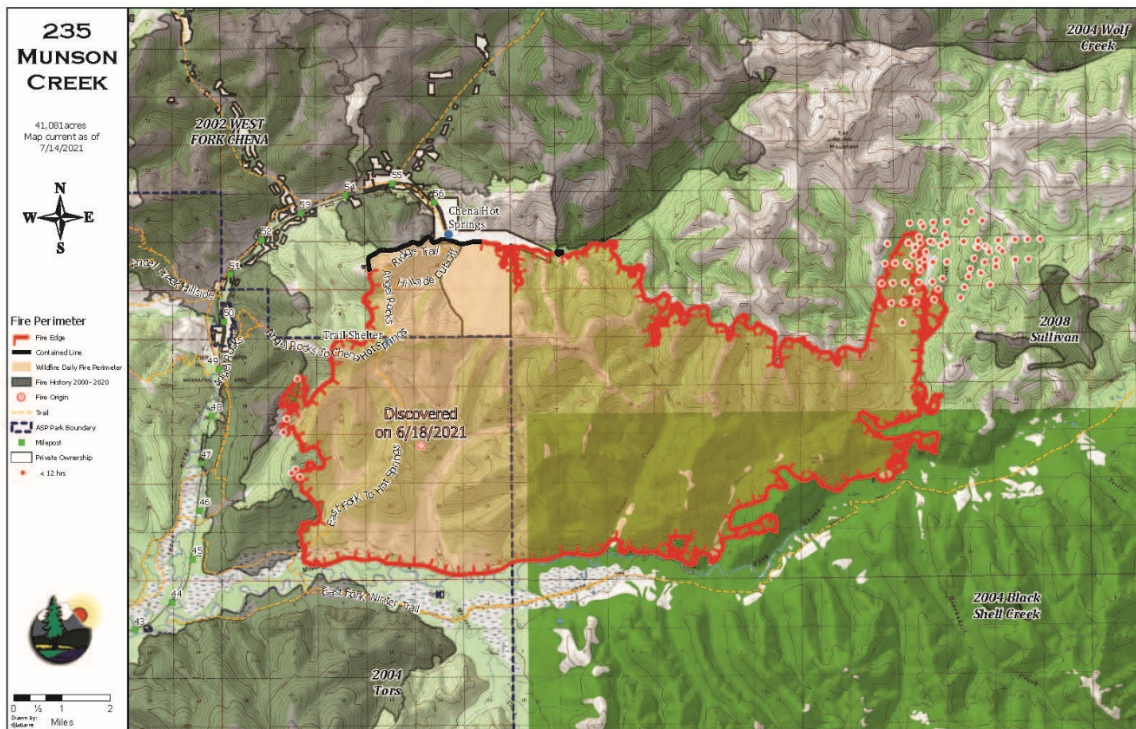
Munson Creek Fire 38,245 acres, 52 miles northeast of Fairbanks, Limited protection area, 129 personnel.

- Slight increase in acreage (2,800+) 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 was reduced to a "Set" effective today.
- Pioneer Peak Hotshots were demobilized today and returned to Palmer.



Jacob Dixon of the UAF Nanooks Crew uses a pulaski to dig out a hot spot following a burnout operation near Monument Creek on the Munson Creek Fire Tuesday, July 13, 2021. Ira Hardy/Alaska DNR-Division of Forestry

- Tentative transition from Type 3 to Type 4 organization will occur Saturday. Resources that will remain on the fire include the White Mountain Crew, 6 Type 6 engines for road patrol, 1-2 task force leaders, 1 medium helicopter, 1 helicopter manager, 2 security guards and 1 bear guard
- Hose and sprinklers set up around cabins and homes along Chena Hot Springs Road will remain in place so they are ready if needed. Pumps are being pulled and will be stored in a safe place at the fire for security reasons.
- All hose around structures at Chena Hot Springs Resort has been pulled.
- 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.
- Estimated cost of fire to date is \$1,561,164.



The most recent perimeter map of the Munson Creek Fire. The fire is now estimated at 41,081 acres but is likely much larger. This perimeter is based on satellite imagery taken at 3 p.m. yesterday. The red dots are heat signatures detected in the previous 12 hours. As you can see, the majority of the heat is on the north and east corner of the fire where the fire is burring into a limited protection area with minimal values threatened.

Dry Creek Fire, 50,353 acres, 6 miles S Manley Hot Springs, Full protection area, 0 personnel

- All personnel were demobed off fire today.
- Estimated cost to date is \$1,413,000.

Cultas Creek, 33,043 acres, 135 miles east of Fairbanks in Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve, Limited protection area, 8 personnel.

- Fire activity was mostly on the north part of the fire Tuesday next to Charley River. Some spotting in continuous black spruce. Fire had a 20-25% active perimeter. 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.