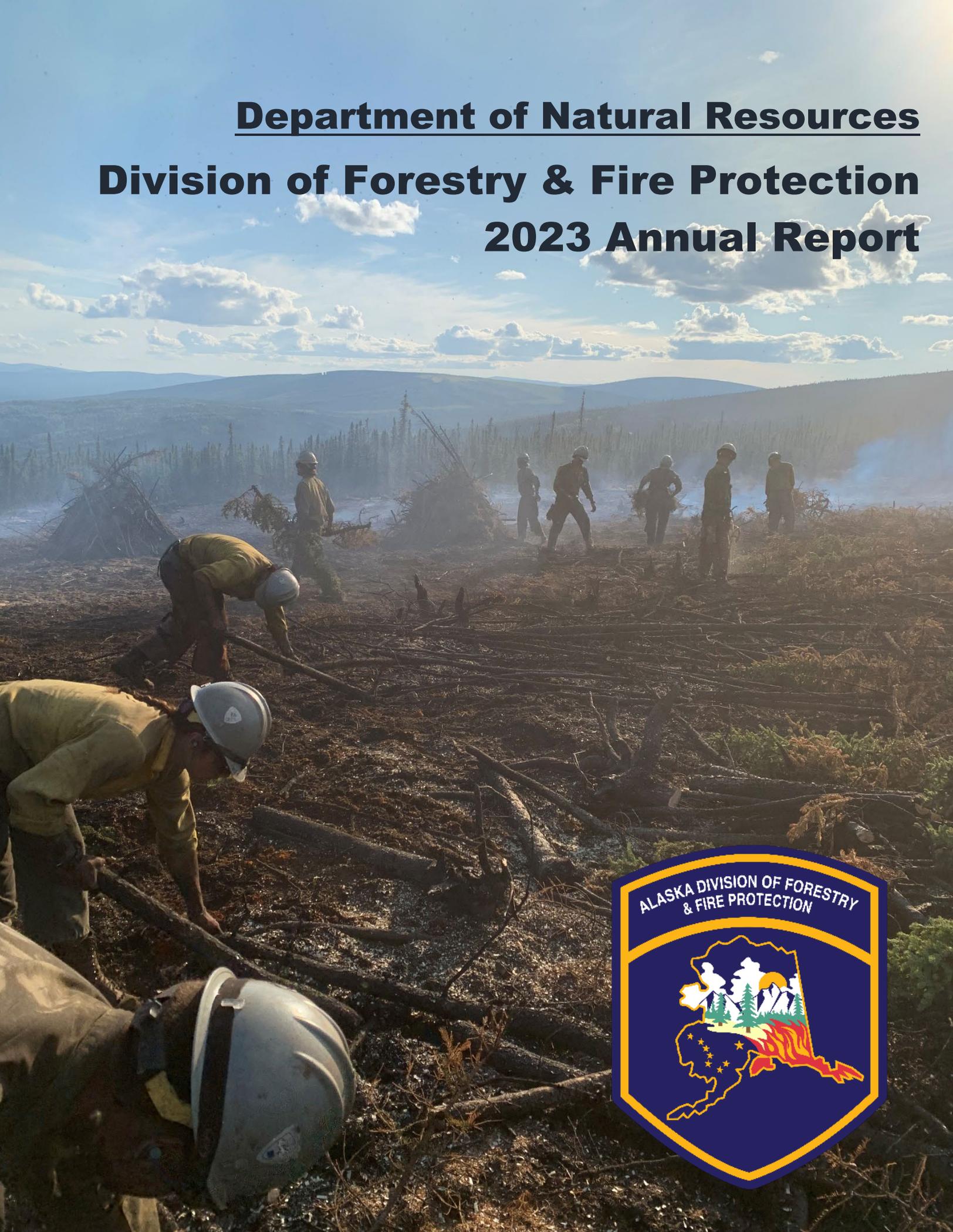


Department of Natural Resources
Division of Forestry & Fire Protection
2023 Annual Report





Super Scooper CL-415 dropping 1,620 Gallons of water from nearby Quartz Lake along the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. Pogo Mine Road Fire. *Gabe Pease-Madore/DOF*

Alaska Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry & Fire Protection 2023 Annual Report

The mission of the Division of Forestry & Fire Protection is to protect the lives and property of Alaskans from wildfire and manage Alaska’s forests to provide a sustainable supply of forest resources.

The Division of Forestry & Fire Protection:

- Manages a wildland fire program on public, private, and municipal land
- Encourages development of the timber industry and forest products markets
- Conducts timber sales for value added and fuel wood commercial use, and provides permits for personal use
- Protects water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, and ensures reforestation through appropriate forest practices and administration of Forest Resources and Practices Act
- Manages the Southeast, Haines, and Tanana Valley state forests, totaling 2.1 million acres
- Administers the federally funded Community Forestry, Forest Health Protection, and Forest Stewardship programs
- Gives technical assistance to owners and managers of forested land

The State Forester’s Office is in Anchorage. The division has regional offices in Fairbanks and Palmer, and other offices throughout the state. As of December 2023, the division had 113 full-time, 198 part-time/seasonal, and 12 non-permanent positions.

Front cover photo: Pioneer Peak Interagency Hotshot Crew on the Lake George Fire near Delta Junction. The crew spent several days working in the black, felling and bone piling fallen trees and gridding for any remaining heat in the ground. *Kris Baumgartner/DOF*

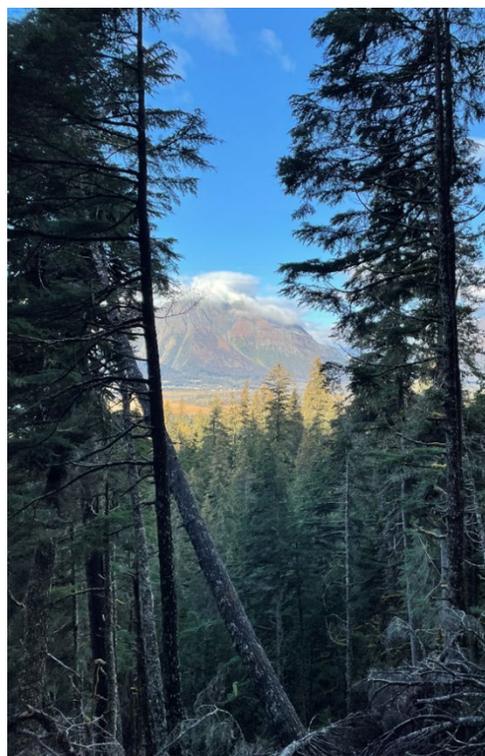
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Alaska State Foresters

Earl Plaurde October 1959 to June 1968	Tomas Boutin March 1993 to January 1997
William Sacheck July 1968 to June 1974	Dean Brown (acting) January 1997 to July 1997
George Hollett July 1974 to June 1976	Jeff Jahnke July 1997 to July 2005
Theodore Smith July 1976 to April 1982	Dean Brown (acting) July 2005 to October 2005
John Sturgeon May 1982 to June 1986	John “Chris” Maisch October 2005 to February 2021
George Hollett (acting) July 1986 to February 1987	Tim Dabney (acting) February 2021 to June 2021
John Galea March 1987 to May 1988	Helge Eng June 2021 to March 2024
Tom Hawkins (acting) June 1988 to December 1988	
Malcolm “Bob” Dick January 1989 to November 1992	
Dean Brown (acting) December 1992 to February 1993	



Above: Mountain views near Seward, AK.
Geneva Preston/DOF

FORESTRY PROGRAM

The reorganization of the division into two distinct branches was completed in 2023. The Forestry branch is tasked with managing the three state forests, offering timber to commercial entities and personal use on state land and implementing the cooperative programs that aid private landowners and municipalities as well as monitor forest health issues across the state. Additionally, the forestry branch works closely with the fire protection branch in the implementation of fuels and fire mitigation projects to protect communities, private property, and other values on the landscape. The foresters also perform as jurisdictional agency administrators during complex fire incidents, representing the interests of the state land management agencies to the incident management teams that are delegated to manage those fires.

The emphasis of the forestry branch has always been to make timber available to the industry but in 2023 we have focused on longer term contracts such as 10-year sales, so the industry has a guaranteed supply of timber and can invest in their capacity with new equipment. Building capacity in the industry for all aspects of timber harvesting and fire mitigation is an objective the division is working toward. In 2023, legislation passed for the development of a local use lumber program which will allow for more mill operations to provide dimensional lumber into some residential construction applications. This is intended to create more opportunities for timber harvest operators as well as milling operations.

In 2023, Alison Arians, the Division Deputy Director of the Forestry Branch moved on from state employment. Alison saw the division through the reorganization and provided the forestry branch with the leadership needed to successfully navigate that change. We will miss Alison and wish her all the best in future endeavors. Jeremy Douse, who was the Northern Region Forester, accepted the Deputy Director position in December and is looking forward to implementing the many initiatives of the division and working with all the professionals that make up the forestry branch.

Forest Practices Implementation on State, other Public, & Private Land

The Division of Forestry & Fire Protection (DOF) administers the Forest Resources and Practices Act (FRPA) on private, trust, municipal, university, and state lands. The division reviews notifications of commercial timber harvest and road construction, conducts forest inspections, monitors compliance, provides training and public information; and when necessary, takes enforcement action.

Under FRPA, a permit is not required before an operator begins a commercial harvest activity. Rather, operators submit a Detailed Plan of Operations (DPO) to the Division of Forestry & Fire Protection (DOF). In coordination with the Department of Fish & Game and the Department of Environmental Conservation, DOF reviews the DPO for compliance with FRPA. With limited exceptions, the operator may begin operations after the 30-day review period has ended or when the review is completed, whichever comes first. Operators usually submit notifications well in advance of beginning operations and most reviews are completed within less than 30 days.

Occasionally, areas for which notifications have been reviewed are not harvested within the one-year notification period. These areas require a renewal notice before operations begin.

Forest Practices Activities

Notifications and inspections

In 2023, DOF received and reviewed 20 Detailed Plan of Operation for commercial timber harvest activity, 35 DPO renewals, and eight new reforestation/timber stand improvement DPOs for operations on private and other public lands. The 20 new DPOs encompassed 4,522 acres of harvest and 50 miles of new forest road construction.

Statewide the number of new DPOs reviewed and acreage notified was greater in 2023 than in 2022. The greatest increase of activity occurred on Afognak Island in the Kenai-Kodiak Area. The Mat-Su and Fairbanks area also showed an increase in activity, while the Southeast Area showed a decrease in harvest activity.

No requests for variation from riparian standards was received in 2023.

The division conducted 13 inspections on private and other public land; 65 inspections on state timber sales; and 13 regeneration surveys on previously harvested DNR managed lands.

Variations and Enforcement

The Division of Forestry & Fire Protection issued one charging document in 2023, related to a harvest of timber within a retention area.

Compliance monitoring

DOF conducted BMP compliance monitoring on most FRPA and state timber sale inspections. The number of completed compliance monitoring scoresheets increased from 573 in 2022 to 817 in 2023. The increase was primarily due to more inspections being conducted as DOF staffing levels improved. Overall, compliance scores in all three FRPA regions were high and had slightly increased from 2022. Statewide, 91% of the 817 individual BMPs rated scored at least a 4.0 out of a perfect score of 5.

Training

Training for operators, landowners, and resource agency staff is essential to ensure effective implementation of the forest practices. In 2023, the division conducted one operator on-the-ground training session in which 7 attended and two separate all-day plus one half-day field session for DOF staff in which 19 people attended.

Board of Forestry

The Board of Forestry advises the state on forest practices issues and provides a forum for discussion and resolution of forest management issues on state land. The board also reviews all proposed changes to the Alaska Forest Resources & Practices Act and its regulations. Board members are appointed by the governor for three-year terms and represent a variety of forestry-related interests.

Alaska Board of Forestry Members

Vacant, Ex-officio Chair
State Forester

Bill Morris
Fish/Wildlife Biology - Non-Governmental,
Fairbanks

Denise Herzog
Mining Organization, Fairbanks

John Rusyniak
Recreation, Tok

Keith Coulter
Forester - Non-Governmental, Anchorage

Eric Nichols
Forest Industry Trade Association,
Ketchikan

Vacant
Commercial Fishery

Nathan Lojewski
Native Corporation, Anchorage

Brian Kovol
Environmental Organization, Anchorage

Harvest Acreage in New Notifications

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Southern SE	7,843	1,860	1,095	637
Northern SE	1,242	683	13	0
Mat-Su/SW	0	148	131	689
Kenai-Kodiak	1,085	1,479	1,339	3,166
Coastal Total	10,170	4,170	2,578	4,492
Fairbanks	45	38	15	30
Delta	0	0	0	0
Tok	0	0	0	0
Copper River	0	0	0	0
Northern Total	45	38	15	30
TOTAL	10,215	4,208	2,593	4,522

New Notifications Detailed Plans of Operation

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Southern SE	33	13	12	6
Northern SE	5	5	1	0
Mat-Su/SW	0	2	1	3
Kenai-Kodiak	3	3	6	10
Coastal Total	41	23	20	19
Fairbanks	1	1	1	1
Delta	0	0	0	0
Tok	0	1	0	0
Copper River	0	0	0	0
Northern Total	1	2	1	1
TOTAL	42	24	21	20

Road Miles Notified

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
SSE	36	41	10.3	10.2	4
NSE	14	15	2.3	1.9	0
Mat-Su/SW	0	0	0.3	0.5	4
Kenai-Kodiak	6	8	16.9	18.1	42
Coastal Total	56	64	29.7	30.7	50
Fairbanks	3	7	1.0	0.3	0.0
Delta	0	0	0	0	0.0
Tok	0	0	0	0	0.0
Copper River	0	0	0	0	0.0
Northern Total	3	7	1.9	0.3	0.0
TOTAL	59	71	30.7	31.0	50.0

State and Federal Projects

The Good Neighbor Authority

The Division of Forestry undertook Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) federal grant projects in the Tongass National Forest in 2016 in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Region 10. The GNA stems from the 2014 Farm Bill that allows the USFS to enter into agreements with state forestry agencies to accomplish critical management to keep forests healthy and productive across land ownerships.

Kosciusko Island Timber Sale

This GNA forest restoration project is in the Tongass National Forest on Kosciusko Island near Edna Bay. The sale includes 1,500 acres of various harvest prescriptions containing about 25 million board feet (MMBF) of young growth spruce and five MMBF of young growth hemlock. The timber sale contract was signed in September 2017 and ended in 2023. Several price reductions were negotiated due to market tariffs, oversupply of beetle-killed wood in Europe, and COVID-19.

There is no road access to Kosciusko Island. Although located entirely within Tongass National Forest, hauling from the sale must cross two other landowners' roads and contractors use a state log transfer facility. Use of the road and sort yard is allowed under a road and facility use agreement. The contractor is responsible for all permits, surveys, and cleanup associated with the timber sale.

In September 2022, the Alcan Timber Inc., the purchaser, mobilized a new logging contractor, Papac Alaska Logging Inc., to log the remaining volume in the GNA timber sale. Papac Alaska logging Inc. finished hauling operations in 2023. All the units have been cut, yarded, and hauled. Scaling operations concluded on July 28, 2023. The scaled inventory has been moved out of the sale area and is no longer on the island. The state, in collaboration with the USFS timber administration and engineering staff, defined items for closeout required by the contract and developed a work list that it transmitted to the purchaser. The Purchaser completed the closeout work. The state organized the files for an administrative inspection of the project file with the USFS and final closeout. The state and USFS have discussed contracting for a lesson's learned report.

Vallenar Bay Timber Sale

The Vallenar Bay Timber Sale was the first true GNA project in Alaska in that it includes joint management on both state and national forest lands. The timber sale includes about 481 acres within the Southeast State Forest and Tongass National Forest on the northwest end of Gravina Island. The Vallenar Bay sale involves about 16 MMBF of timber from a mix of old and young growth Sitka spruce, western hemlock, red alder, western red cedar, and Alaska yellow cedar. The project will require about three miles of road construction on state and federal land and timber will be harvested through a combination of ground-based and cable logging systems.

No operations have occurred on the federal portion of this GNA timber sale since the sale was purchased. The Purchaser has been harvesting on state land in units 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and on a separate timber sale on University of Alaska land as well as intermittently constructing the 2000 spur road to access state units 5A and 3. Activity has mainly focused on shovel logging settings in the young growth on state land in Unit 2 since the first quarter of 2023. The remaining standing timber in Unit

2 is projected to be cable logged. Most of the felled timber has been processed and decked roadside. The Purchaser will wait to sell the timber as market conditions in 2023 have not provided a good selling point for young growth.

Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy Challenge Cost Share Agreement

The Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy Young Growth II Transition Challenge Cost Share Agreement for April 12, 2022 and continued through 2023.

1. Young Growth Working Forest Analysis

A delivery order was issued to Terra Verde, Inc. to create a stand type map for all non-federal land from Yakutat south and east to the Alaska border with British Columbia. The mapping work is complete, and the map is now undergoing quality control review and analysis by federal and state forestry staffs.

An additional \$204,000.00 was secured from the U.S. Forest Service, State, Private & Tribal Forestry, to advance the Young Growth Working Forest Analysis specifically on state, private and trust lands in Southeast Alaska.

2. Tongass Transition Collaborative

The Tongass Transition Collaborative was reconvened in the fall of 2022 at the request of the State of Alaska Division of Forestry & Fire Protection, in coordination with the Tongass National Forest Leadership Team and US Forest Service Region 10, for the purpose of providing a five-year review of the 2016 Tongass Land Management Plan Amendment.

Progress toward implementation of young growth goals was a challenge. Other than the pre-commercial thinning goal, Tongass Transition Collaborative members generally rated progress poorly and emphasized that the Forest needs to acknowledge that there was not as much progress as hoped.

A primary challenge is that the 2016 Amendment did not align with the rest of the Forest Plan. (“A young growth focus was tacked onto an old growth plan.”) There is a need to create a young growth strategy and a new set of goals that recognize the changes that have taken place over the past several years. The federal political direction to accelerate the transition (i.e., end old growth harvest except for five million board feet annually) has further complicated the situation. The approach to old growth “bridge timber” is uncertain (e.g., need to determine how the five million board feet goal will be implemented).

3. Southeast Alaska All-Landowners Group

The Southeast Alaska All-Landowners Group continued to coordinate with Division of Forestry & Fire Protection senior management to request that the U.S. Forest Service waive its investment cost recovery fee on future shared road use agreements. The State Forester provided a formal waiver request to the U.S. Forest Service. No written response has been received from the U.S. Forest Service at the time of this writing.

Forest Management

Forest Inventory and Analysis

In 2023, Forest Inventory Program managed five inventory projects funded by six federal grants. The federal grants supported the following 27 positions to implement these projects.

The Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) provides information to assess America's forests. In interior Alaska the DOF has partnered with the USFS to install and measure plots through a Joint Venture Agreement. As the nation's continuous forest census, the program monitors the status and trends of all public and private forestlands in the US. This is especially important in Alaska where significant changes in temperature, permafrost, and plants are occurring and expected to increase. A suite of information items is sampled at each plot including trees, soils, understory plants, and woody debris. State field crews have successfully conducted the Interior Alaska FIA program for eight years and have met all USFS quality control metrics. In 2023, the field hubs were Iliamna, Red Devil, and Osprey Lodge. A total of 221 plots have been installed and measured.



Above: Dorothy O'Donnell, FIA Crew Lead, waits by an improvised landing zone for pickup. Most interior Alaska FIA plots are remote and accessed by helicopter. *FIA*

Cooperative Alaska Forest Inventory

Cooperative Alaska Forest Inventory (CAFI) was implemented by University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) in 1994. The CAFI is by far the longest forest inventory project in the interior Alaska and 200 road accessible plots are widely distributed from Kenai Peninsula up to Coldfoot. The data have been used by many researchers to evaluate forest conditions, such as forest growth, diversity, carbon stocks, and forest health. Despite the highly valuable datasets, due to a lack of resources at UAF, the project was discontinued in 2015. The DOF started remeasuring the plots in 2020 and secured grants in 2021. Funding from USFS Evaluation Monitoring Program is used to remeasure the CAFI plots in southcentral Alaska to assess the effects of spruce beetle outbreak. The DOF is also collaborating with UAF researchers to measure the remaining plots. Continuous monitoring of growth and conditions in highly managed, accessible parts of forest will provide invaluable information for forest

management. In 2023, we remeasured 31 plots across the interior and southcentral Alaska, including Kenai Peninsula, Mat-Su Valley, and Copper River Basin.



Above: On a CAFI plot near Wasilla. The CAFI crew measured trees larger than 1.5” in diameter at breast height on three 0.1-acre subplots to evaluate forest conditions. From left to right: Jason Moan, DOF Forest Health Program Manager, Breeauna O’Rear, Crew Member/UAF technician, David Misiuk, Crew Lead/DOF technician, Kyle Stone, Crew Member/UAF technician, and Miho Welton, DOF Statewide Inventory Forester.

Miho Welton/DOF

Evaluation and Monitoring Program – FIA Pilot Plots Remeasurement



Above: DOF and UW crews heading out to the plot. From left to right: Rachel Deininger (UW), Hanna Redford (UW), Robin Halloran (UAF), Jordan Cosgrove (DOF), and AJ Hytry (DOF). The DOF crew measured trees on the ground and the UW crew used mobile laser scanner to estimate tree attributes, such as diameter. The crews accessed most plots by ATV. *Miho Welton/DOF*

The DOF has received a 3-year funding from USFS Evaluation and Monitoring Program to remeasure FIA Pilot Plots near Fairbanks to assess forest health conditions and identify a method to detect forest health issues early. This is a part of a multiscale research project in which the DOF takes a lead to collect ground truth data. USFS and University of Washington collected mobile laser scanning (MLS) data and NASA collected airborne remote sensing data which will be used to detect forest health issues and estimate other attributes, such as height and diameter of trees. The ground truth data we collect are crucial to develop predictive models and determine accuracies. During the first field season, we remeasured 45 plots out of 94. The DOF also provided logistical support to the UW crew to collect MLS data. The UW crew collected MLS data from 40 of the 45 plots we measured.

Fort Wainwright Forest Inventory

Forest inventory on lands managed by US Army Garrison Alaska Directorate of Public Works Environmental Division (USAG Alaska) is another long-term inventory project in the interior Alaska. These permanent plots are an effective method for detecting changes in vegetation health, composition, structure, forest fire fuel loading, and determining growth and mortality which can be applied to growth projection models. Inventory and monitoring also provide an indicator of ecosystem integrity, biodiversity of species and habitats, and sustained production of commercially valuable forest products. The data have been used by many researchers along with the CAFI data. The DOF has been managing the field data collection and data management since 2020. In 2023, the FIA and CAFI crew remeasured 30 plots on Yukon Training Area (YTA) behind Eielson Airforce Base. The remaining plots on YTA will be measured in 2023.

Birch Regeneration Survey

The DOF collaborated with UAF to assess forest regeneration following birch harvest on Tanana Valley State Forest between 2021 and 2023. Foresters were concerned that regeneration might be insufficient following birch harvest due to thick bluejoint grass covers. We sampled 658 plots from 34 harvest units during the three years. The harvest units were logged between 1981 and 2016. Reforestation management, including site preparation to prepare seedbed and/or planting of white spruce seedlings, were applied on some units, but others relied on natural regeneration. Based on preliminary analysis, regeneration appears to be sufficient in most harvest units, but further analysis is necessary to draw a conclusion.

Forest Planning

The Division of Forestry & Fire Protection reviews and comments on a wide range of state and federal agency land-use plans to help ensure the division and the public have continued access to forest resources on state lands. In addition, DOF works to encourage the salvage of timber when forested land is cleared for rights-of-way or other purposes and provides stipulations for protecting forest health. In late 2023, DOF transitioned to a new forest planner after Ashley List, who had held the position for several years, was hired by the U.S. Forest Service. The Forest Planner will lead efforts to revise and update all three of the State Forest Management Plans. The DOF Forest Planner also facilitated the fall 2023 meeting of the Tanana Valley State Forest Citizen's Advisory Committee.

Commercial Timber Sales on State Land Fiscal Year 2023 (MBF - 1,000 board feet)				
Area	Sales	Acres	Volume MBF	Sale Value
Southern Southeast	1	340	11,642.00	\$ 566,597.00
Northern Southeast	2	34	122.26	\$ 8,595.00
Kenai - Kodiak	0	0	0.00	\$ -
Mat Su	0	0	0.00	\$ -
Coastal Total	3	374	11,764.26	\$ 575,192.00
Fairbanks	12	255.4	2,254.98	\$ 146,356.55
Delta	13	295.2	867.22	\$ 43,952.95
Tok	0	0	0.00	\$ -
Copper River	0	0	0.00	\$ -
Northern Total	25	550.6	3,122.20	\$ 190,309.50
STATE TOTAL	28	924.6	14,886.46	\$ 765,501.50

Firewood Permits Issued & Cords Sold		
FY 19	619	3,093
FY 20	574	2,296
FY 21	653	2,279
FY 22	564	2,872
FY 23	403	1,848

Commercial Sales Harvested - FY23 By Area				
Area	Sales	Acres	Volume MBF	Sale Value
Southern Southeast	4	487.0	7,213.56	\$ 1,071,211.82
Northern Southeast	3	33.0	216.56	\$ 12,971.15
Kenai - Kodiak	0	0	0	\$ -
Mat Su	0	0	0	\$ -
Coastal Total	7	520.0	7,430.12	\$ 1,084,182.97
Fairbanks	11	276.6	1,952.43	\$ 39,625.72
Delta	10	76.2	232.18	\$ 17,329.40
Tok	1	65.0	700.98	\$ 41,591.90
Copper River	0	0	0	\$ -
Northern Total	22	417.8	2,885.59	\$ 98,547.02
State Total	29	937.8	10,315.71	\$ 1,182,729.99

Timber Sale Revenue (in thousands dollars)	
FY14	354
FY15	1,917
FY16	212.8
FY17	688.5
FY18	477.4
FY19	464.3
FY20	91.7
FY21	265.4
FY22	1,420
FY23	1,182.70

Ten-Year Record of Timber Volume Sold - MBF					
	Coastal Southeast	Coastal Southcentral	Northern Region	State Total	Statewide Sales
FY14	8,512	379	19,621	28,512	58
FY15	6,171	438	14,305	20,914	39
FY16	401	50	7,864	8,315	34
FY17	8,196	378	2,749	11,323	38
FY18	5,269	206	2,477	7,952	22
FY19	13,673	152	2,165	15,990	31
FY20	262	250	1,809	2,321	31
FY21	39,071	150	3,124	42,345	30
FY22	4,870	0	4,728	9,599	23
FY23	11,764	0	3,122	14,886	28

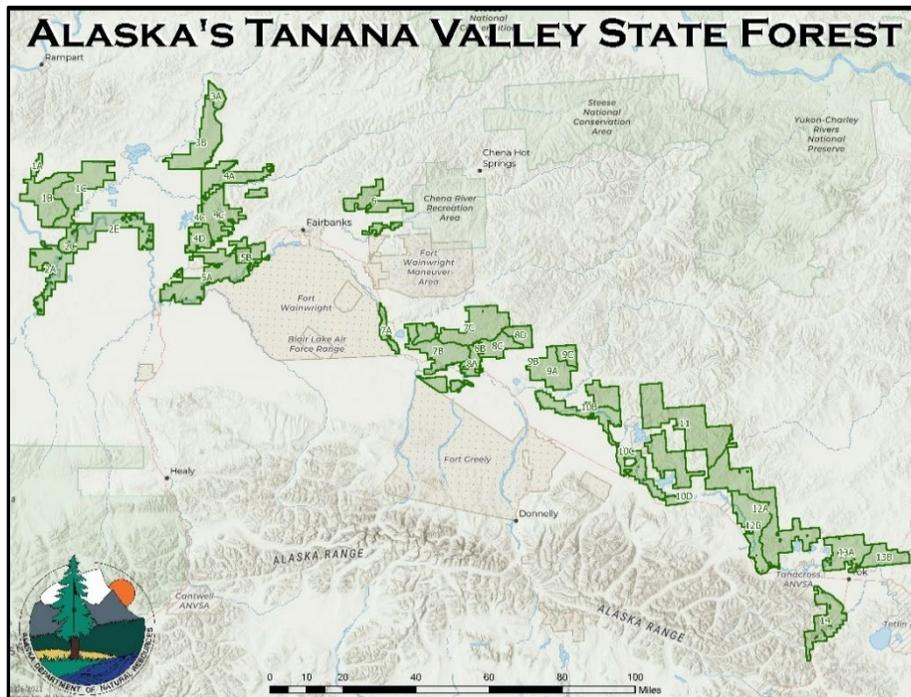
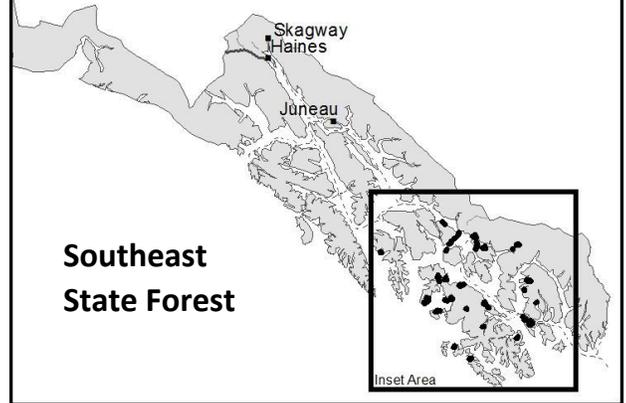
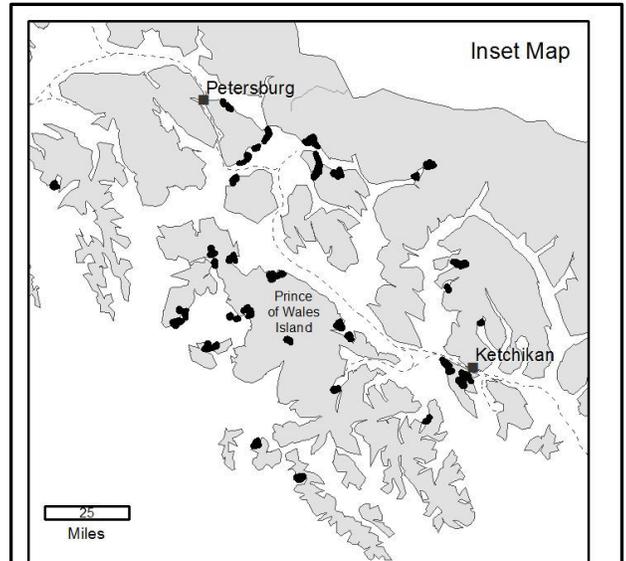
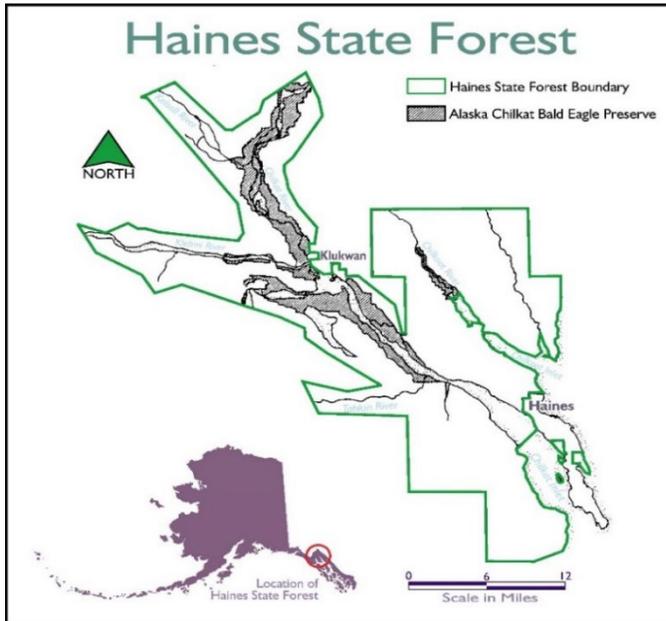
Alaska's State Forests

Alaska's three state forests are managed for a sustained yield of a variety of resources

Haines State Forest: Established in 1982
286,208 acres

Tanana Valley State Forest: Established in 1983
1.78 million acres

Southeast State Forest: Established in 2010 48,472 acres



Coastal Region

Kenai-Kodiak Area

This Area includes the Kenai Peninsula and Kodiak Archipelago, totaling approximately 10 million acres. The Area supports initial attack wildland fire response and manages state timber sales and the Forest Practices program in Regions I and II. Timber is marketed as firewood, round logs for dimensional milling, and house logs. Multiple small mill operators on the Kenai Peninsula rely on timber harvest on state lands as a material source, producing dimensional lumber, cabin kits, and dunnage. Firewood demand from the public remains high and land management agencies coordinate to provide public access for gathering firewood. The state maintains eight miles of forest roads on the Kenai Peninsula, providing access for the public, future commercial timber sales, and personal use firewood gathering.

A total of 25 permits for 88 cords of firewood have been issued to date. Requests for permits / firewood are about average this year. No designated firewood areas were established this season. Personnel work with individuals requesting permits to locate areas in smaller parcels that would meet their needs. DOF worked in conjunction with other agencies to provide firewood to the public.

In Region I, one detailed plan of operation (DPO) was received for reforestation of 484 acres on Kodiak Island with a request for spot spraying on 194 of those acres. Seven DPOs were received for clear cut timber harvest operations on Afognak Island on Afognak Native Corporation lands. An estimated 2,545 acres were scheduled for harvest and 36 miles of new spur roads to be constructed. Timber operators on Afognak Island anticipate a harvest of 26 million board feet in 2023 which is approx. 8 MMBF lower than the annual average.

Forest Resource Practices Act (FRPA) inspections were completed on Afognak Island. One violation was voluntarily reported by the operator and an investigation was conducted.

In Region II, three DPOs were received for salvage harvest. Two of the harvest units were adjoining parcels on corporate and municipal lands. A total of 305 acres were harvested. These parcels were 90% dead qualifying them for reforestation exemptions. One DPO was received for salvage harvest on approximately 148 acres of Kenai Peninsula Borough lands.

Kenai Peninsula Fuels Treatment

Kenai Peninsula College:

An RSA for \$120,000 was issued to Kenai Peninsula College (KPC) for treatment of a 30-acre unit on the southeast side of the area. The scope of the project is to remove all dead and down spruce trees in the unit, removal of slash 70' in from the public bike path and lop and scatter for rest of slash. Boles may be retained by the operator and removed or decked in an accessible area for removal.

City of Kenai, Ryan Creek Trail:

In January and February of 2023, hazard trees were felled along the first section of Ryan Creek Trail. This trail is heavily used during spring through fall. Under the direction of Kenai Parks and Recreation Director, the slash was piled for later removal and the boles were decked for public firewood. Approximately 510-man hours were spent resulting in 360 trees cut and 340 slash piles created in a treatment area of 6 acres.

City of Kenai Forest Road Project:

A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was signed with the City of Kenai for fuel mitigation work in the Forest Lane area. This project was placed out to bid in 2022 by the City of Kenai with work being conducted in 2023 -2024. DOF personnel conducted site inspections of the progress in March and June 2023. Work was halted during the summer and resumed in the fall.

City of Kenai Slash Disposal Site:

A separate MOA was signed with the City of Kenai to provide an area for slash disposal by the public and to staff the area with city personnel. This MOA is to be completed by December 2024.

Mat-Su & Southwest Area

This Area includes the Mat-Su, Anchorage, and western Prince William Sound (14.6 million acres) and Southwest Alaska (85.4 million acres) for a total of 100 million acres, making it the largest administrative district managed by DOF. The Anchorage Bowl, including Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson and Eagle River, encompasses the largest wildland/urban interface in the state, while lands in Southwest Alaska are among the least populated and most remote. The Area is managed from Forestry's Palmer office and a seasonal office in McGrath. It supports initial attack wildland fire response and administers state timber sales and the Forest Practices Act.

Public demand for firewood remains high. A total of 412 cords of personal-use firewood were sold through 121 online permits in the Mat-Su and Southwest Area. The Area sold five negotiated personal use contracts for 11 cords of firewood, 2.6 MBF of sawlogs, and 2,400 lineal feet of house logs for residents to harvest beetle killed trees from state lands near their homes and remote properties for heating and to reduce hazardous fuels. There is one active state commercial timber sale for 45 acres in the Mat-Su. The Area also approved detailed plans of operation for three timber sales on Mat-Su Borough lands totaling 689 acres.

The area produced, public noticed and adopted a preliminary best interest finding for 1,271 acres of proposed timber sales in the Houston, Willer-Kash, West Petersburg and Fish Creek areas. A forest land use plan was adopted for 256 acres of proposed timber sales in the Willer-Kash area and will be up for auction in late 2023/early 2024. Field recon work is on-going as the Area works to develop a forest land use plan for proposed sale units in the Houston area next.

Fuels Mitigation

Capitalizing on the groundwork laid during the fall of 2022 for Sunset fuel break, the 6.2-mile fuel break, located between Houston and Meadow Lakes, mechanized treatment by Alaska HydroAx began on January 5 and was completed by March 9. All told, six Primetech forestry masticators and



an excavator with a masticating head treated fuels outside of the riparian corridors, despite the unrelenting winter snowpack and cold. Wildland fire crews and initial attack staff continued to work in the sensitive riparian corridors of the five anadromous streams the break intercepts, working diligently to create a shaded fuel break that strikes a balance between fuels reduction and preservation of the habitat values and riparian protections the forest canopy provides.

Left: Jared Kemp inspects progress on the Sunset fuel break.

Steve Nickel/DOF

Changes in the Mat-Su

On August 17, Mat-Su/Southwest Resource Forester Martin Schoofs resigned from state service to spend more time with his family. Martin was instrumental in the operations of the Area's resources program, providing much-needed bandwidth to maintain a robust personal use timber sale program and further the Area's efforts to make timber available to the commercial sector. Martin's history with the Forest Health Program, knowledge of the area, strong GIS skillset, and always positive and can-do attitude will be missed greatly.

Right: Martin Schoofs, Mat-Su/SW Resources Forester pauses collecting data for a photo opportunity. Martin resigned from state service in August 2023.

Steve Nickel/DOF



Southeast Area

The Southeast Area covers the Alaska panhandle from Haines to Ketchikan. The public and private land in the area has traditionally provided most of the timber volume and revenue harvested from forested land in Alaska. The area offices manage the Southeast and Haines State forests and administer the Alaska Forest Practices Act on extensive private holdings within its jurisdiction. The predominate ownership in the area is federal land managed by the USFS. The DOF has continued to see strong interest in its timber base with the decrease in timber management activity on federal land.

Activity continued at the 15 MMBF Bayview timber sale purchased from the State by the Viking Lumber Company in Klawock in 2021. Most of the road building was completed by the end of 2023; logging operations will likely finish at the site in 2024. Timber has been predominately processed in Alaska.

Alcan Timber Inc. of Ketchikan continued to harvest on the State portion of the timber on the 16 MMBF joint federal and state Vallenar Good Neighbor Authority timber sale. While predominately old growth timber was harvested in 2022, mostly young growth remained and was harvested in 2023. Timber from Vallenar was shipped to round log markets in the lower 48 and overseas such as Japan and China.

The 4.8 MMBF Edna Bay Parlay One timber sale on Southeast State Forest land at Kosciusko Island was completed by the end of calendar year 2022 by Alcan's new logging contractor Papac Alaska Inc., who restarted and finished logging operations on the Kosciusko Good Neighbor Authority timber sale in late summer of 2023. This six-year long state timber sale was all on federal land but sold and administered by the local DOF office. By mid-summer, the DOF was able to conclude planning efforts and sell the 11.6 MMBF Parlay Two timber sale on Kosciusko Island to keep Papac Alaska Inc. and Alcan Timber Inc. active at the location. Papac continued working on the new sale through the fall of 2023. Timber from these sales has been exported in the round overseas.

Area staff conducted additional planning and design efforts for new timber sales near the communities of Whale Pass, El Capitan, Naukati, Thorne Bay, Edna Bay and Petersburg. By late fall the DOF had offered and awarded most of this timber.

Local small mill users of the Haines State Forest timber remain strong. The division performed several maintenance projects on the forest road system associated with the flooding in the spring to maintain access to the forest for a variety of commercial operators and the public. By early fall, Northwest Forest Products Inc. using local contractor Southeast Road Builders Inc. had installed the 60-foot modular bridge across Glacier Creek. This crossing accesses a significant amount of new area in the on the south side of the Klehini River drainage between Porcupine and Jarvis Creeks of the Haines State Forest and is part of the 23 MMBF Baby Brown timber sale.

Northern Region

Fairbanks-Delta Area

Commercial timber is harvested throughout the Fairbanks and Delta areas, with 82 active timber contracts with 33 operators on State land as of December 1, 2023. The demand for spruce saw logs and birch fuel wood remains stable, and Resource staff provide sales for all sizes of operations, from 1 acre up to 288 acres.

Aurora Energy Solutions LLC, which formed in 2020, is producing kiln dried firewood for interior Alaska markets. Most of the raw material used by this company comes from timber sales on the Tanana Valley State Forest. They report expansion plans that will increase their raw material needs to 9,000 cords annually to meet community demand.

Northland Wood Products, located in Fairbanks, remains the primary purchaser of Tanana Valley State Forest spruce sawlogs. It procures and processes approximately three million board feet

annually and supplies interior Alaska with locally processed dimensional lumber, cabin logs, tongue and groove siding and rough timbers.

The effects of the spruce bark beetle epidemic in the Mat-Su area have led some mill operators south of the Alaska Range to look north for sawlogs, and this demand is providing an interesting new market for the local logging industry. The State has seen increased interest in timber sales from Anderson to the Nenana area.

Fire salvage timber continues to be a major part of the Delta Junction area market, particularly as a source of dry fuelwood. The Pogo Mine Road Fire (August 2023) created a major challenge impacting 8 active timber sales but also creating opportunities for future salvage harvest.

Personal use firewood sales have remained steady since last year, and usage remains within average 10-year levels. From January 1 through December 1, 2023, the Fairbanks Area sold 183 permits for a total of 729 cords and the Delta Area sold 46 permits for a total of 194 cords.

Regeneration surveys continue every spring in the Fairbanks-Delta Area, and 11 sale units totaling 359 acres were surveyed. Four timber sale units surveyed did not meet the required stocking level of 450 trees per acre but are expected to meet that requirement within the allowed 12-year window due to abundant seed trees within and adjacent to the unit. The sales will be monitored and considered for seedling augmentation in the future if needed. Scarification (tilling or blading the soil surface) is a common post-harvest treatment to promote natural regeneration.

New road projects and a backlog of maintenance are an ongoing need in the Fairbanks-Delta Area. Contractors and DOF staff work on road projects annually to ensure multi-use access to the Tanana Valley State Forest. Equipment operators, including DOF employees, conducted brushing and grading operations on many of the mainline forest roads, as well as assisting with fire response and fuels treatment projects. The Fortune Creek Bridge replacement finished up in Spring 2023, which included upgrades and improvements along Cache Creek Rd, re-opening access further into the State Forest. The work, which was partially funded through a Pittman-Robertson grant, was administered by the Alaska Department of Fish & Game and DOF to improve hunter access.



Above: Spring 2023, installation of the new Fortune Creek Bridge and abutments.
DOF

Tok/Copper River Area

The Tok/Copper River Area encompasses approximately 30 million acres in the eastern Tanana River Valley and the Copper River Basin. This ownership is comprised of private, state, federal and native corporation lands. Offices in Tok and Glennallen support initial attack wildland fire response for the region and manage state timber sales.

The highest demand for raw materials from state lands continues to be fuel wood followed by logs and biomass in the Tok area. There have been requests for house logs and saw timber in the Copper River Area, but fuel wood is the top required resource. Seasonal access and broken ownership patterns continue to be the limiting factor for personal use fuel wood in the Copper River Basin. The Tok Area had an abundant supply of fire killed spruce, this supply has dwindled greatly or succumbed to rot over the years. The Tok/Copper River area is exploring other accessible permitted firewood cutting locations.

Four commercial firewood operators were active this year harvesting approximately 750 cords of fire killed spruce for fuel wood with some value-added products included in the Tok Area. The value-added products were used as cabin kit production and dimensional lumber.

One Negotiated 10-year sale initiated and is active in Tok. Two other 10-year negotiated sales are in the process of completion.

The Alaska Gateway School District (AGSD) harvested approximately 40 acres of their timber sale. There are future plans to potentially develop biomass heating at the Northway school. Should this plan happen, the AGSD would request additional acres under the charitable clause under DNR policy for biomass.

Two large, negotiated sales were active this last year. The units within these sales consist of dense mature white spruce stands. The goal for these units is to create openings and promote moose browse during early successional seral stages of stand development. Area staff have had discussions with the Alaska Division of Fish and Game (ADF&G) regarding unit shapes to benefit habitat, prescribed fire, and other post-harvest treatments to promote browse species.

Tok Area has assisted ADF&G with several habitat projects. Dozer work on roads and trails to access habitat and roller chopping units south of town were completed. The total project area is 450 acres with 5 miles of road and trail maintenance and 45 acres of roller chopping.

A Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is being developed in the Copper River Basin to reduce hazardous fuel loading and create potential biomass markets. Various groups within the Copper River Basin have discussed utilizing the byproducts of fuel break construction as fuel for biomass heating facilities. The Tok/Copper River Area have been working closely with these groups to help provide information and support as these discussion progress.

Cooperative Forestry

The Forest Health, Forest Stewardship, and Community Forestry programs provide technical and financial assistance to a diverse group of landowners and managers. The USDA Forest Service funds these programs, contributing over \$1 million in federal funds annually to the state economy. The programs assist Alaska Native corporations, other private forest landowners, businesses, local governments, and non-profits who contribute matching funds.

Forest Health Program

The Division of Forestry & Fire Protection (DOF) Forest Health Program provides a wide range of assistance to forest landowners, resource managers, and others, and is a primary source of forest health expertise in the state. The program focuses on monitoring native and invasive forest pests, pest management, technology development, and technical assistance. In a typical year, the main way Alaska's forests are monitored is through cooperative DOF and USDA Forest Service Forest Health Protection (FHP) aerial detection surveys. In 2023, however, with funding support from FHP, aerial surveyors from the DOF were solely responsible for surveys in Interior and Southcentral Alaska and assisted FHP with surveys in Southeast.

Aerial detection surveys are an indispensable tool in documenting the location and extent of many active forest insect infestations, abiotic damage events, and some disease damage. The data recorded from the annual aerial detection surveys offer a snapshot of statewide conditions though they generally do not represent the acres affected by pathogens, many of which are not visible by aerial survey.

A summary of the 2023 preliminary survey results is included within Program Highlights – Surveys Overview, below. Some of this survey content as well as more detailed information pertaining to surveys and monitoring efforts for forest insects, tree diseases, invasive plants, abiotic disorders, and other biotic damage agents is included in the annual Forest Health Conditions in Alaska report published by FHP in collaboration with DOF and other key cooperators.

Program Highlights

Staffing:

In 2023, the long term non-permanent (LTNP) Forest Health Forester II position within the Forest Health Program was replaced by a newly created permanent Forester Flex 1/2 position. Both the LTNP and the newly created permanent position were filled by Dana Brennan.

Program Manager, Jason Moan, recently completed his tenth year leading the Forest Health Program with the division. Over the course of his tenure, the program has provided forest health outreach, education, and technical assistance to more than 3,500 landowners, natural resource professionals, and others. The DOF Forest Health team has additionally flown over 90 cooperative forest health aerial detection survey missions across Alaska's forests documenting insect, disease, and abiotic damage.

Outreach:

In 2023, DOF Forest Health staff connected with roughly 385 individuals, providing forest health assistance or information. Outreach contacts decreased by roughly 32% compared to 2022 (566 individuals). Outreach events and requests for forest health information generally closely follow the relative populations of major forest pests, such as spruce beetle or western blackheaded budworm.

Forest Health staff gave presentations to a wide variety of audiences and various events, including the Alaska Board of Forestry, a Denali National Park and Preserve spruce beetle summit, the Alaska Entomological Society annual meeting, the Alaska Wildland Fire Coordinating Group's Fuels Planning Workshop, and others. Spruce beetle remains the primary topic. Forest Health and DOF Forest Stewardship also co-presented in a McKinley Village Volunteer Fire Department-hosted Community Wildfire Education Workshop, focusing on small woodlot management, Firewise, and spruce beetle.

Western Bark Beetle Initiative:

DOF continued its Western Bark Beetle Initiative (WBBI) cost-share program to assist non-federal landowners with bark beetle prevention, suppression, and restoration efforts. In 2023, staff awarded WBBI funding to three additional 2020 landowner applicants whose properties had been assessed previously and one new applicant. Additionally, staff issued amendments extending three existing agreements.

Applied Research:

DOF Forest Health staff continued to assist in evaluating improved methodology for protecting trees from spruce beetle. This work consists of two ongoing projects, both being conducted in conjunction with the USFS Pacific Southwest Research Station and FHP.

- Systemic pesticide spruce beetle tree protection study
 - This project was initiated in 2018, the study trees were treated in 2019, and 2023 was the final year of reassessment. This project is complete.
- SPLAT-MCH spruce beetle tree protection studies
 - SPLAT-MCH (ISCA Technologies, Inc) is a biodegradable paste infused with the spruce beetle anti-aggregation pheromone MCH. This year was the third year of this effort and built off the trap-based results from 2021 and initial treatment trials in 2022. The 2023 effort occurred on state land managed by Alaska State Parks and tested SPLAT-MCH in combination with other semiochemicals for protecting individual trees. These efforts will continue in 2024; a publication manuscript summarizing the 2021 and 2022 efforts is currently in preparation.

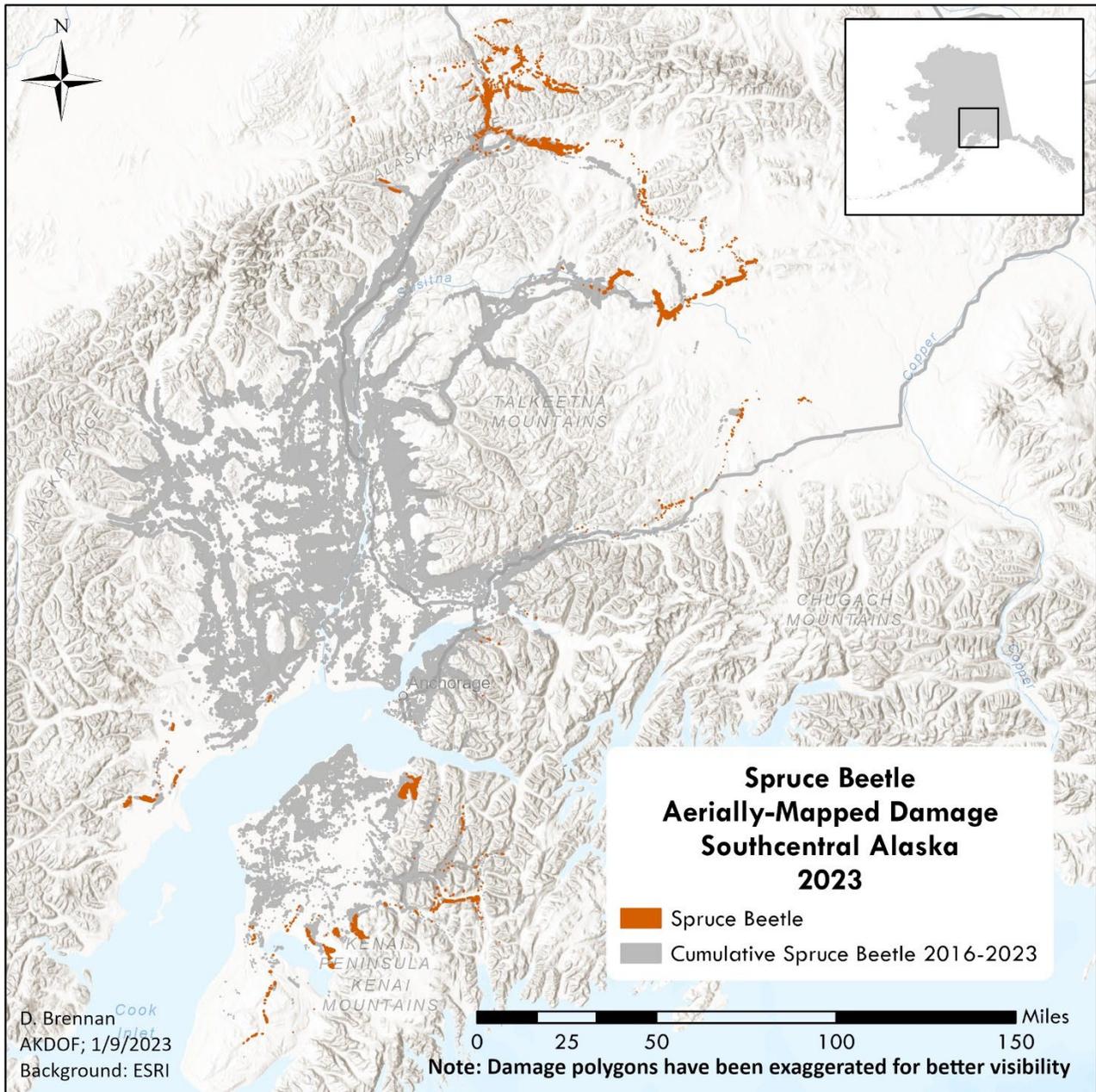
DOF Forest Health staff are also collaborating on spruce beetle and forest health-related projects with Denali National Park and Preserve staff and researchers at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. This year also marked the final year of a USFS-funded spruce beetle Evaluation Monitoring project managed by the DOF Forest Inventory Program. DOF Forest Health staff have been assisting with this project throughout the three-year duration.

Surveys Overview:

In 2023, DOF and FHP staff collectively mapped about 289,000 acres of current forest damage on the 16.8 million acres surveyed. In order of acres of damage observed, the top three damage agents documented during the surveys in 2023 were spruce beetle (90,100 acres), aspen leafminer (80,600 acres), and western blackheaded budworm (63,000 acres). The 2023 Forest health aerial detection survey data are currently being finalized. The acreages reported herein were derived from a near final version (Dec 18, 2023) of that data and should be considered draft.

Spruce beetle

Southcentral Alaska is estimated to be in the eighth year of a spruce beetle outbreak. The outbreak is now estimated to have affected around 2.17 million cumulative acres of mixed spruce and birch forests in the region. Spruce beetle activity was observed on nearly 90,100 acres in 2023, an approximately 85% increase from 2022 (about 49,000 acres). While spruce beetle activity increased in 2023 from that observed in 2022, the acres affected were still lower than any other year in the outbreak thus far.



About 99% of the spruce beetle damage observed in 2023 was associated with the spruce beetle outbreak in Southcentral. The outbreak continues to be most active in the southern Denali Borough, the eastern Matanuska-Susitna Borough, and portions of the Kenai Peninsula Borough. The 2023 activity observed within the outbreak-affected boroughs is summarized below, from north to south.

Denali Borough (33,300 acres): Activity was prevalent along the Nenana from the southern borough boundary north to the Yanert Fork river, where activity continues up the Yanert Fork river valley and its tributaries, as well as along Montana Creek, Moody Creek, and Healy Creek. Scattered activity within Denali National Park and Preserve continues with notable activity along the Park Road west to the Toklat. The northward expansion of the outbreak is being closely monitored.

Matanuska-Susitna Borough (25,700 acres): Most of the observed spruce beetle damage was in the northern and eastern portions of the borough. Damage continues along the upper Susitna River around the Denali Highway crossing and was also noted along Clearwater Creek, Jay Creek, Goose Creek near its confluence with the Susitna and the valley just north of that confluence, and the hills north of Tyone River east to Monsoon Lake. To the south, activity was mapped along the drainages north of Sheep Mountain continuing east to Eureka. There is also scattered activity east of the borough boundary around Lake Louise and Tazlina Lake.

Municipality of Anchorage (160 acres): Minimal spruce beetle damage was observed within the Anchorage Municipality in 2023. Damage in the municipality was noted around Eklutna Lake and the Eklutna River with smaller damage areas scattered throughout.

Kenai Peninsula Borough (29,800 acres): Spruce beetle activity has continued to expand on the Peninsula, though appears to have declined some within the Kenai Mountains. Damage continues around Kenai and Cooper Lakes and in parts of the Chugach National Forest. Activity was also noted on the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge just west of the National Forest boundary near Turnagain Arm, between Skilak and Tustumena Lakes, and around the Caribou Hills. On the west side of Cook Inlet, damage was mapped around Big River Lakes north towards the Chakachatna River.

Elsewhere in the state, scattered spruce beetle activity was observed in the Interior, including about 160 acres around Salcha, and in the Copper River area in Southcentral. No notable spruce beetle activity was documented in Southeast in 2023.

Defoliating Insects

Aspen leafminer was responsible for about 80,600 acres of defoliation in 2023, with widespread activity throughout the Interior. Damage was mapped along the Tanana between Dot Lake and Nenana and the surrounding hillsides, along the Wood River to the foothills of the Alaska Range, along the hillsides in Goldstream Valley, around the hills surrounding the Minto Flats north towards Livengood, and along the Zitziana River. Aspen leafminer is commonly observed throughout the Interior.

The hemlock sawfly outbreak that began in 2018 in Southeast had subsided by 2021 and no new damage was detected in 2023. Likewise, the ongoing western blackheaded budworm outbreak is subsiding with damage mapped on about 63,000 acres in 2023, a significant decrease from the apparent peak of 685,000 acres in 2022. Light western blackheaded budworm activity was observed near Holkham Bay and north to Skagway. Active defoliation was also recorded near Hoonah and Excursion Inlet. The defoliation impacts diminished to the north and stopped more abruptly to the south. Hemlock mortality from past defoliation was minimal in most areas, with some exceptions. Very high levels of hemlock mortality occurred in some pockets on Admiralty and Chichagof Islands and along Excursion Inlet. Previously unmapped hemlock mortality attributed to these outbreaks was observed on 28,700 acres in 2023.

A hardwood defoliation event in the forests south of Kachemak Bay on the Kenai Peninsula continued in 2023 (3,400 acres), though appeared to have declined from that seen in 2022. The species responsible for this damage has not yet been determined but is likely a generalist-feeding moth. Alder is the primary hardwood species in which the damage is being observed, though ground reports indicate that numerous species from low growing woody plants to hardwood trees are being affected.

Tree diseases

Extensive amounts of spruce needle rust were observed in the Copper River valley, on the Kenai Peninsula, and in the Matanuska River valley in 2023 (8,200 acres), presumably exacerbated by the wet spring and summer experienced across the region. The acres observed are surely an underestimate of the overall area impacted, as the aerial surveys conducted over the western Kenai Peninsula occurred roughly 1-2 weeks before the damage was most visible there.

State Forest Survey Summaries

Each year, aerial detection surveys cover portions of the Tanana Valley, Haines, and Southeast State Forests. In 2023, about 75,000 acres of damage was noted within or partially within the three forests, with the majority occurring within the Tanana Valley State Forest (approx. 61,500 acres). The top three damage types (in terms of acres affected) for each forest are listed below; all acreages are rounded:

Tanana Valley State Forest – Aspen leafminer (52,100 acres), willow leaf blotchminer (3,300 acres), and defoliation in Alaska paper birch – cause unknown (1,000 acres).

Haines State Forest – Western blackheaded budworm (10,800 acres), wind damage (450 acres), and porcupine damage (250 acres).

Southeast State Forest – Yellow cedar decline (95 acres), western blackheaded budworm (50 acres), and previously unmapped hemlock sawfly/western blackheaded budworm-induced hemlock mortality (11 acres).

Forest Stewardship Program

The goal of the Forest Stewardship Program is to provide landowners with technical forestry assistance to help guide their decisions about how to manage their forest land. Landowners have a variety of goals for their land, including wildfire risk reduction, wildlife habitat improvement, privacy, scenery, firewood production, and leaving a legacy for future generations. Funded entirely by the U.S. Forest Service State, Private, & Tribal Forestry, the nationwide program responds to the requests of landowners to prepare Forest Stewardship Plans that include field visits and contain the latest technical forestry advice. Plans often address forest health, reforestation, timber stand improvement, and defensible space from wildfire. Alaska Native corporations are the largest private landowners in Alaska and DOF provides sub-grants to allow them to hire private consulting foresters who prepare Forest Stewardship Plans. Plans for individual private landowners are written primarily by Division of Forestry & Fire Protection stewardship foresters.

By the Numbers

- Nationwide, 25 million acres are managed under a current Forest Stewardship Plan. In 2023, Alaska represented 14 percent of these acres.
- More than 1,100 Alaskan landowners and thousands of Alaska Native corporation shareholders have benefitted from Forest Stewardship Plans.

2023 Highlights

- Two Alaska Native corporations with sub-grants for developing Forest Stewardship Plans were awarded extensions for the continued development of plans that will cover more than 49,000 acres when completed.
- An additional two Alaska Native corporations began the planning process for developing stewardship plans covering more than 480,000 acres.
- Eighteen Forest Stewardship Plans covering more than 670 acres were prepared for individual forest landowners.
- Twelve homeowners completed wildfire fuel reduction projects using federally funded cost-share grants, with more than 30 total defensible space assessments made in 2023.

Alaska Native Corporations

Alaska Native corporations are the largest private landowners in Alaska and providing sub-grants that allow these corporations to develop Forest Stewardship Plans is an important service of the Alaska Forest Stewardship Program. Biomass energy development, commercial timber production, forest health enhancement, forest resilience, wildlife habitat, and reforestation were all important goals of Alaska Native corporations in 2023. Since the inception of the Forest Stewardship Program in 1992, 69 plans covering more than 7.6 million acres have been written for Alaska Native corporations; plans expire after 10 years, meaning that 3.9 million forested acres are currently being sustainably managed with guidance from a professionally written forest management plan. These plans help guide sustainable timber development and commercial operations, bringing economic benefits to rural villages and helping restore previously logged areas for traditional land values. Other benefits include the potential to sell carbon credits on the California carbon credit market,

which several Alaska Native corporations have successfully done after completing Forest Stewardship Plans.

Individual Landowners

Stewardship Plans covering more than 670 acres were prepared for 18 private landowners in 2023. Wildfire defensible space, spruce beetle mitigation, and reforestation were primary goals for individual landowners. Since 1992, over 1,100 individual landowners have adopted Forest Stewardship Plans covering a total of more than 53,000 acres. Most Stewardship Plans are for landowners in the Matanuska-Susitna, Fairbanks North Star, and Kenai Peninsula boroughs.

Cost-Share Assistance and Competitive Grants

Forest Stewardship Program personnel assisted private forest landowners by providing advice on ways to mitigate the risk of wildfire. Wildland Urban Interface Grants from the U.S. Forest Service and Council of Western State Foresters have provided funding for cost-share payments to landowners to conduct fuel reduction projects. More than a dozen homeowners completed work on these projects in 2023 in the Kenai Peninsula Borough.

Staff Updates

Program Manager: This November, Trevor Dobell-Carlsson, Forest Stewardship Program Manager since 2017, transitioned into the Cooperative Forestry Program Manager role. In his time with Forest Stewardship, Trevor has written more than 70 plans, covering well over 3,000 acres of private individually owned land. In addition, Trevor's work with Alaska Native corporations across the state has resulted in the sustainable management of hundreds of thousands of acres and has empowered rural communities to increase economic opportunity through projects such as carbon credit marketing and selling log cabin kits. Congratulations on your new position, Trevor! We are glad to be keeping you in the DOF crew. Hiring for the Forest Stewardship Program Manager should occur in Late January.

Interior Alaska: The Stewardship team was sad to bid farewell to Nick Lisuzzo, Fairbanks area stewardship forester, in mid-October. 2023 was a productive year for Forest Stewardship in the Northern Region regardless, with 13 new forest management plans covering 490 acres of private land. In addition, hundreds of public contacts were recorded through landowner assistance and outreach including: 7 wildland fire risk assessments, 17 outreach events, and cooperative projects with the Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Fairbanks Folk School, and Project One Tree Alaska. 2023 was a pioneer year in terms of Cooperative Forestry's social media presence. Nick spearheaded a social media campaign, featuring 24 forestry-related posts that were shared with the public throughout the year. Nick also helped in serving as acting Forest Stewardship Program Manager in May, June, September, and October. Thanks, Nick, for all your hard work and happy trails!

Southcentral Alaska: Though the stewardship forester position meant to be based in Palmer was advertised and offered multiple times this year, no luck was had in filling this position for the Mat-Su area.

Kenai Peninsula: In January, Geneva Preston began as the stewardship forester based in the Homer DOF office and providing landowner assistance across the Kenai Peninsula. This year Geneva wrote 8 Stewardship plans, covering 227 acres of privately owned land. With this position, a Wildland-Urban Interface fuels reduction grant was inherited in its final year. In 2023, 47 landowner contacts, 42 site visits, and more than \$20,000.00 in awarded funding bring the Kenai Peninsula Borough WUI grant closer to its close in April 2024. This fall, Stewardship Forestry initiated our first ever cone and seed collection campaign, the first in a 3-year project to increase Alaska native seed stores. Spruce and birch seed was collected at sites spanning from Seward to Homer's outskirts over 5 days in early October. Geneva has been acting in the Forest Stewardship Program Manager role since early November.

Project Learning Tree

An initiative of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), Project Learning Tree (PLT) is a national program that provides natural resource and conservation education materials coupled with professional development training and events that focus on increasing people's understanding of forests and forest concepts. PLT encourages educators to expose students to the natural world and uses trees and forests as a platform for teaching and learning. The Forest Stewardship Program began funding PLT in 2019, which revitalized the PLT program in Alaska by hiring a state PLT Coordinator through a partnership with Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). In 2023, new funding from the Alaska Forest Stewardship Program and the Inflation Reduction Act allowed the program to continue to grow and reach educators across Alaska. Additional funding from Wasilla SWCD, a Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) grant and SFI supports the PLT coordinator position, and the AK PLT program has also recently been named as a sub-award recipient in an U.S. EPA grant proposal.

In 2023, PLT reached 150 educators, and over 200 additional community members, students, and natural resource professionals with workshops and events, presentations, and engaging directly with students. In February, AK PLT hosted its first facilitator training and 17 educators, camp directors and foresters became certified to host PLT workshops in their communities. Classroom teachers received renewing education credits by attending both in-person workshops and new online university level classes that were developed with partner organizations that provide teacher courses to Alaskan teachers. AK PLT also reached a new audience of educators by providing training and curriculum books to Alaska's early childhood educators through Thread: Alaska's Early Childhood Resource and Referral network. Over 60 people were introduced to PLT's "Trees and Me" which engages our youngest citizens in activities that connect to neighborhood trees and forests.

Because AK PLT is funded in part by a WUI grant awarded to the Alaska Natural Resource and Outdoor Education Association (ANROE) through DOFFP funding, the program has a large focus on fire education, including public outreach that combined forces with the DOFFP's fire prevention mascot Spruce Moose. Also in 2023, AK PLT focused on enhancing the ANROE fire education program with current and relevant curricula that combined national PLT's "The Nature of Fire" activity collection with a new Alaska specific fire curriculum developed by University of Alaska

Fairbanks’s EPSCoR program called, “Wildfire and Change in Alaska.” The EPSCoR program donated its printed curriculum guides and accompanying game (in which students learn fire behavior in the boreal forest, fire management practices, and create their own response to a wildland fire) to the AK PLT program for educators and classrooms. Beyond learning about fire ecology in Alaska, educators at fire themed PLT workshops will receive hands-on activities to take back to their students who will learn how to manage and monitor forest resources.

AK PLT also engaged with existing partnerships with Renewable Energy Alaska Project, Alaska Geographic, the Anchorage Park Foundation’s Schools in Parks program and forged new partnerships as well. In Spring 2023, AK PLT trained US Forest Service interpreters on how to engage students in the woods through a program with Alaska Outdoor School, run by the Kenai Mountains Turnagain Arm Heritage Area, and taught students during their fall sessions in a field study called, “Chugach Forest Explorers.”

With a strong network of partners, natural resource professionals, and educators, AK PLT continues to bring forest related learning to communities across the state.

2023 Forest Stewardship Committee

The Forest Stewardship Program receives guidance from the Forest Stewardship Committee, which is comprised of representatives from a broad range of private landowner and land management interests. Area of discussion include grant and cost share rates, eligibility criteria, outreach methods, and Forest Stewardship Plan requirements.

Recruiting new members for the Forest Stewardship Committee will be a priority in 2024.

Community Forestry Program

Urban forests, comprised of city trees and greenspaces, provide a multitude of benefits to the people they surround. They improve mental and physical health, clean the air and water, and benefit the economy. However, these benefits can only be realized through proper care and planning. The Division of Forestry & Fire Protection Community Forestry Program (CFP) provides support and guidance to help communities maximize the potential of their urban forests.

Two program staff, funded through a partnership with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), offer technical, financial, and educational assistance to local governments, state and federal agencies, tree care professionals and nonprofit organizations.

2023 Forest Stewardship Committee

Clare Doig, Consulting Forester, Forest & Land Management Inc., Anchorage

Priscilla Morris, Wood Biomass Utilization Coordinator, USDA Forest Service State, Private & Tribal Forestry, Anchorage

Sue Rodman, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Anchorage

Chris Tcimpidis, Natural Resources Conservation Service Alaska Forester, Palmer

Clay Hoyt, Staff Forester, Chugachmuit Inc.

The Alaska Community Forest Council (ACFC) serves as an advisory body to CFP, helps set priorities for the program, and provides expertise and advice to the division. The fifteen-member council represents the diversity and broad spectrum of interests and experiences in the state. The members are valuable partners in local community forestry efforts.

Supporting community forestry is an important role for state government because:

- Community forests provide essential services and benefits that we cannot live without
- A healthy community forest is the result of proper planning, management, and community investment
- Healthy community forests can help solve community problems
- Community forests and rural forests are connected and good management of one helps the other

Good News in 2023. More Funding!

Community Forestry has received a baseline funding increase. The Consolidated Payment Grant, which supplies baseline funding for CFP, is typically around \$200,000. In FY23 the USFS increased the baseline funding to \$302,000. This funding goes a long way to stabilizing the program. For the first time both the Community Forestry Program Coordinator and Community Forestry Volunteer Coordinator's positions are almost completely funded. In the past leftover funds or supplemental grants were needed to cover the salaries of both positions.

In an unprecedented and historic action Congress approved 1.5 billion dollars nationwide for Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). All state UCF programs were encouraged to apply in the first round of grants, which were available to state UCF programs only. With a few exceptions, grant awards were based on state population. Alaska received \$750,000, of which \$600,000 must be distributed in subaward grants, with a preference for projects that benefit underserved and disadvantaged communities. CFP will begin initiating the subawards in 2024.

The USFS also offered a second round of funding, open to other state and local agencies, non-profits, and tribal entities. Staff distributed the [USDA Forest Service for IRA – Urban and Community Forestry Notice of Funding Opportunity \(NOFO\)](#) to eligible organizations throughout the state and encouraged them to apply. Four Alaskan organizations were awarded grants totaling over \$5 million through the NOFO: Alaska Village Initiatives, the Anchorage Park Foundation, Rural Alaska Community Action Program, Inc. (RuralCAP), and the Metlakatla Indian Community.

Community Assistance

Anchorage

Alaska Run for Women

For the Fourth year in a row CFP collaborated with the Arbor Day Foundation and the MOA Parks and Recreation Department to conduct a tree giveaway as part of the 31st annual Alaska Run for

Women. Under permit from a commercial landscaper one hundred seedlings were harvested from nearby Chugach National Forest and distributed to participants. The trees were paid for through a generous gift from an anonymous donor.

Over 3,500 participants from all 50 states plus the District of Columbia took part in the event.

Palmer

CFP provided over 50 white spruce seedlings to the One Health Festival in Palmer in August.

Public Education & Outreach

Tree Risk Assessment Qualification Workshop

In conjunction with the Pacific Northwest Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture (PNW-ISA) CFP hosted a 3-day Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (TRAQ) workshop for ISA Certified Arborists in April. Jim Flott, president of Community Forestry Consultants, Inc. of Spokane, Washington instructed the class. This program “offers tree care professionals the opportunity to learn a standardized, systematic process for assessing tree risk and providing information to tree owners and risk managers when making decisions that will promote the safety of people and property and enhance tree benefits, health, and longevity.” Fifteen arborists attended, hailing from across Alaska, as well as California and the Yukon Territory. The workshop was held at Russian Jack Springs Park in Anchorage.

Alaska Arborist Workshop

CFP also collaborated with the PNW-ISA to host an Alaska Arborist Workshop at the University of Alaska Anchorage campus in September. Over the course of two days, Board Certified Master Arborists John Ball from South Dakota and Casey Clapp from Portland, Oregon instructed attendees on a variety of topics including tree biomechanics, worker safety, and fruit tree care. Over 35



Above: Kara Monroe, UAA Landscape and Grounds Supervisor and AKRFW finisher posing with donated trees.



Above: Jim Flott, Community Forestry Consultants Inc. addressing students during the TRAQ workshop. *Josh Hightower/DOF*

attendees, including arborists, municipal staff, master gardeners, and landscape architects took part.

Anchorage Tree Forum

Staff organized the second Anchorage Tree Forum, a follow-up to the original forum held in 2020. This was an opportunity to learn and ask experts about community forestry related issues and was attended by over 60 members of the public. Featured speaker John Ball delivered a talk entitled



Above: Anchorage Tree Forum attendees at Wendler Middle School learn about community forestry in Anchorage. *Josh Hightower/DOF*

“Common tree care mistakes: Are you doing something for the tree or to it?” The forum also included short presentations from the University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service, University of Alaska Anchorage Institute of Social and Economic Research, Anchorage Parks Foundation, Girdwood Fire Department, Municipality of Anchorage Parks and Recreation, and Society of American Foresters.

Canopy Assessments – Davey Resource Group

CFP organized and hosted a presentation by Davey Resource Group on community forest canopy assessments. The event was open to the public, and was attended by tree care industry professionals, as well as local and state government staff.

Statewide Community Forestry Survey

In preparation for the USFS IRA funding, CFP contracted with Confluence Research and Consulting to develop a statewide survey. The goal of the survey was to assess priorities among Alaskan communities regarding community forestry programs and projects that could be offered using incoming IRA funding. Over 900 survey invitations were sent to community leaders, agencies, nonprofits, and schools in approximately 251 Alaskan communities. The projects that communities were most interested in included:

- Green Infrastructure Projects
- Invasive Species Management
- Tree Care Education and Outreach
- Urban and Community Forest Management Plans
- Tree Planting

Invasive Tree Mapping

On June 6 and June 9, Division of Forestry & Fire Protection Community Forestry and Forest Health staff performed fixed-wing aerial surveys along the boundary of Chugach State Park. The goal of these surveys was to detect and map invasive *Prunus virginiana* and *Prunus padus* that had escaped cultivation and spread into native forest. All major valleys between Eklutna and Girdwood were surveyed, and observers mapped nearly 100 *Prunus* occurrences over the course of approximately 3 hours. Inclement weather and an abnormally late bloom period limited the duration and effectiveness of the flights, but fixed wing surveys show promise for future use.

Plant A Tree Guide

Staff reviewed updates to “Plant A Tree – An Alaskan Guide to Tree Care”. This informational brochure provides guidance to homeowners on tree selection, planting, and maintenance. The brochure has been updated to reflect advances in industry standards and will be available to the public in 2024. Collaborators include the Alaska Community Forest Council, UAF Cooperative Extension Service, and others.

Arbor Day

Alaska’s Arbor Day was officially celebrated on Monday, May 15th. Events commemorating Arbor Day began on May 6th and continued through the end of the month. It was chilly throughout Alaska in 2023 and many tree planting events were postponed until later in May. Because of the cold spring, some communities gave away seedlings or hosted educational events in lieu of planting.

Fairbanks

The Fairbanks Arbor Day Committee held three events to plant and celebrate trees.

Two events included elementary school students, those from Denali Elementary School who planted trees at Growden Memorial Park and students from the Immaculate Conception School who planted two trees on the afternoon of Arbor Day.



Above: On May 15th two classes from Denali School planted two birch trees in Growden Park. Fairbanks North Star Borough Mayor Bryce Ward assisted. *Ritchie Musick/Fairbanks Arbor Day Committee*

The third event was when colleagues and coworkers planted a tree and installed a memorial sign at the Fairbanks DNR compound on June 9th in honor of Kathryn “KT” Pyne. KT was a firefighter, forester, and friend who worked at the Division of Forestry for many years. She was a strong advocate for Arbor Day, and a cherished member of the Fairbanks Arbor Day Committee.



Above: Fairbanks DNR staff honor Kathryn “KT” Pyne with memorial and tree planting. *Ritchie Musick/Fairbanks Arbor Day Committee*



Above (left): Katherine “KT” Pyne – Firefighter, Forester, and Friend.



Above (right): Memorial for Katherine “KT” Pyne, Fairbanks DNR Compound. *Ritchie Musick/Fairbanks Arbor Day Committee*

Juneau

The Juneau Urban Forestry Partnership (JUFP) and the Juneau Garden Club organized a planting ceremony on Arbor Day at Evergreen Cemetery. Juneau City Manager Rory Watt read an Arbor Day Proclamation, and third and fourth grade classes from Harborview Elementary planted a fir tree and a cherry tree. Linda Togerson organized a seedling giveaway and distributed 95 pine seedlings to students. Seedlings were donated by JUFP.



Above: Tree planting at Evergreen Cemetery with Harborview Elementary School students. *Jeff Barnard/Juneau Urban Forestry Partnership*

Anchorage

Municipal Parks and Recreation landscaping and horticultural staff planted a tree in Town Square Park on May 19.

Conferences & Education

In October, staff attended the PNW-ISA Annual Training Conference in Tacoma, Washington. Staff also travelled to Washington, D.C. to attend the 2nd World Forum on Urban Forests, which was held in conjunction with the Arbor Day Foundation Partners Conference and annual State and Federal Community Forestry Coordinators meeting.

CFP again offered to pay for the registration fees for several workshops, training events, and virtual conferences where ISA Continuing Education Units (CEUs) could be earned. This opportunity was made available to ACFC members, agency staff, and others.

Staff attended the Society of American Foresters statewide meeting in Anchorage. The theme for the second morning of the meeting was Urban & Community Forestry in Alaska. Guest presentations included:

- Green Infrastructure Projects in Fairbanks; Jackson Fox, Fairbanks Area Surface Transportation
- Tackling Invasive Chokecherry Trees on the Kenai Peninsula; Katherine Schake, Homer Soil and Water Conservation District
- Downtown Street Trees in Anchorage; Jim Renkert, Community Forestry Program
- Growing Fruit in Alaska; Mark Wolbers, Alaska Pioneer Fruit Growers

Staff also led a walking tour of downtown that showcased the “good, the bad, and the ugly” of Anchorage street trees.

Staff attended the annual Alaska Invasive Species Workshop in Sitka in early November.

Green Infrastructure Grants

Metlakatla Indian Community was awarded a Green Infrastructure Grant to construct a rainwater collection system for their community garden.

National Association of State Foresters (NASF) Centennial School Tree Challenge/TreeVitalize Grants

In 2023 CFP awarded a TreeVitalize grant to the Wasilla Soil & Water Conservation District/Project Learning Tree, which funded the purchase of tree related educational curriculum for use in Alaskan classrooms. Upon payment this grant spent out all the grant monies for the NASF Centennial School Tree Challenge grant program and the “TreeVitalize” grant programs. These grants provided funding for tree-based educational curriculum, school tree plantings, school orchards, nature walks, and Arbor Day celebrations.

Invasive Species

In 2019 the USFS provided CFP a grant to address the invasive tree species *Prunus padus* and *Prunus virginiana*. In subsequent years, this funding has been used for control and outreach efforts throughout the state. In 2023 new or additional funding was awarded to the Anchorage Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Fairbanks SWCD, Homer SWCD, and, the Citizens Against Noxious Weeds in the North (CANWIN) - Anchorage Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA).

The CANWIN-CISMA grant controlled invasive chokecherry in Anchorage at Tikishla, Kincaid, Taku Lake, Winchester and Spruce Parks in Anchorage; several locations in Chugach State Park; and the entrance to Potter Marsh in the Seward Highway right-of-way. The Anchorage CISMA also helped coordinate the Anchorage Invasive Weed Smackdown at Tikishla Park that had approximately 85 volunteers. The Airport Heights Community Council organized two additional events with about 30 total volunteers. The Weed Smackdown was promoted through a Public Service Announcement (PSA) on KSKA Public Radio.

The Homer SWCD submitted an interim report for their 2023 *Prunus* control grant. Homer SWCD performed work on 24 different parcels of land in Homer, Soldotna, Hope, Moose Pass, Cooper Landing and Seward. According to the report at least ten of the properties were directly funded by our DOF grant. In addition to control work, grant monies were used for a low-cost fixed wing aerial survey in the Nikolaevsk area and PSAs on two Kenai Peninsula radio stations.

CFP staff also recorded an invasive species PSA on *Prunus* species for the Alaska Broadcasters Association. The PSA aired 10,300 times from June 12 to August 31, 2023 on multiple commercial radio stations around the state. According to the broadcaster’s association the value of the radio spots totaled \$197,414.

Arbor Day Foundation Recognition

The national Arbor Day Foundation recognized seven Alaska communities, three military bases, three utilities and one university for their efforts to protect and enhance community forests.

Tree Cities USA: The City of Wasilla, Ketchikan Gateway Borough, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Eielson Air Force Base, Fort Wainwright, Fort Greely and the Municipality of Anchorage all re-attained Tree City USA status.

Tree Lines USA: Chugach Electric Association, Golden Valley Electric Association, and Matanuska Electric Association.

Tree Campus Higher Education: University of Alaska Anchorage retained its TC Higher Education status. Alaska Pacific University (APU) achieved TC Higher Education status for the first time. Congratulations APU!

Tree Campus Health Care: In 2019 the Arbor Day Foundation implemented a new program entitled “Tree Campus Healthcare” to recognize health institutions that make a mission aligned impact on community wellness through tree education, investment and community engagement. There are a many Alaska hospitals and clinics that have the potential to be Tree Campus Health Care facilities.

Tree Campus K-12: Also rolled out in 2019 was the Arbor Day Foundation program for students in schools K-12. We hope to see schools take on the challenge of becoming a Tree Campus K-12. What school will earn the bragging rights as the first TC K-12 Campus in Alaska?

Community Forestry Organizations

In FY2023, volunteers donated over 799 hours to community forestry projects in Alaska. Citizen groups around the state organized volunteers, applied for grants, raised funds, supported tree planting and care, and offered educational programs. CFP also engaged with other organizations that are involved in tree plantings, received a grant, or organized events to remove invasive species.

Organizations worked with or assistance provided to:

- Municipality of Anchorage
 - Parks & Recreation Department
 - Project Management & Engineering
 - Planning Department
- University of Alaska Anchorage
 - Tree Campus Higher Education
 - Hosted PNW-ISA Classes
- Alaska Pacific University
 - Tree Campus Higher Education
- UAF Cooperative Extension Service
- Alaska Botanical Gardens
- Anchorage School District
- Anchorage Park Foundation
 - Youth Employment in parks

- Government Hill Commons
- Anchorage Soil & Water Conservation District
- Fairbanks Soil & Water Conservation District
- Homer Soil & Water Conservation District
- Palmer Soil & Water Conservation District
- Wasilla Soil & Water Conservation District
- Southeast Alaska Watershed Coalition
- Society of American Foresters
- Seeds of Change
- Alaska Run for Women
- Project Learning Tree
- Arbor Day Foundation
 - Tree City USA
 - Tree Campus Higher Education
 - Tree Line USA
 - Community Recovery and Reforestation Programs

Alaska Community Forest Council

In 2023, the Alaska Community Forest Council (ACFC) held quarterly meetings in March, May, August, and October. The August meeting was held in Fairbanks for the first time in many years and included field trips to a phytoremediation site, green infrastructure project, local nursery, private orchard, the Georgeson Botanical Garden, and a borough park undergoing Prunus control work.



Above: Field trip to phytoremediation site at a former petroleum transfer site adjacent to the Fairbanks Airport. *Jim Renkert/DOF*

Ginger Hudson, manager of the Jensen-Olson Arboretum in Juneau, joined ACFC in the Municipal Planner seat. Below is the ACFC member list as of December 2023:

Seat	Member	Term
A. Arborist	Paul Guzenski	2023
B. Forester	Dan Rees	2025
C. Municipal Planner	Ginger Hudson	2025
D. Landscape Architect	Elise Huggins (Chair)	2024
E. Horticulture	Patrick Ryan	2025
F. Construction/Right-of-Way	Robert Gorman	2024
G. Small Community Service	Mitch Michaud (Treasurer)	2023
H. Community Forestry/Beautification	David Ezra Jay	2024
I. Industry/Business	Anthony Lindfors	2023
J. AK Cooperative Extension Service	Alex Wenninger (Secretary)	2024
K. Member-at-Large	Adam Davis	2024
L. Member-at-Large	Gatgyeda Haayk	2025
M. Member-at-Large	Emily Becker	2023
N. Member-at-Large	Kathleen Heindl	2025
O. Member-at-Large	Meg Burgett	2024

Chugach Electric Association, Paul’s Tree Service, and the SAF – Cook Inlet Chapter each donated \$1,000 to the Alaska Community Forest Council to support its mission.

FIRE PROTECTION PROGRAM

2023 Fire Season

The 2023 Alaska fire season was a tale of two extremes with a record-breaking lack of fire activity in the Spring, followed by a short but extreme burst of fire activity in late July. Ultimately the season ended with one of the lowest statewide acreages burned on record. A total of 295,767 acres burned in 2023 compared to 3.1 million acres burned in 2022. Unusually wet and cool weather in May, June and early July delayed fire season in Alaska’s interior and prevented it from arriving in other parts of the state. Of the total acreage burned, 72% (213,014 acres) was located in State of Alaska’s northern protection areas. These fires threatened life, property, and infrastructure essential to Alaska’s economy. In the space of four weeks during July and August, the Division of Forestry and Fire Protection (DOF) was required to simultaneously protect the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, Clear Space Force Base, Pogo Mine and four subdivisions within the Fairbanks North Star and Denali Boroughs, as well as hundreds of remote homesites and structures.

With the slow start to the Alaska season, Canada was experiencing record-breaking wildfires across the western provinces due to historically dry conditions. Canadian response agencies spent most of the summer at Preparedness Level 5, which is the highest fire danger level on a scale of 1-5. The DOF took advantage of its quiet early season at home to assist our Canadian partners with firefighting resources made available through the Northwest Compact. Alaskan fixed wing “Air Attack” aircraft responded to fires in both the Northwest Territories and British Columbia. The Pioneer Peak Hotshot Crew responded to fires in Alberta and British Columbia and the Gannet Glacier Type 2 IA Module responded to a fire in the Northwest Territories. An Alaskan Incident Management Team was deployed to manage a fire in British Columbia, and both of DOF’s contracted retardant-dropping air tankers were sent to support firefighting efforts in Alberta for three weeks. In contrast, during the fire season of 2022, Canadian resources were sent to support Alaska during one of our busiest seasons on record. The exchange of international firefighting resources highlights the importance of national and international resource sharing agreements, such as the Northwest Compact. No single agency or region has enough resources to manage large, rapidly changing, complex fires without help.

Despite the slow start to the 2023 fire season, abnormally hot and dry conditions in mid- July combined with over 40,000 lightning strikes in the Interior ignited 115 new fires over a five-day period. Typically, by this time the entire state of Alaska has received wetting rains, but fire danger remained elevated well into August with no significant precipitation and continued lightning activity. Alaska filled resource orders for over 87 fixed wing firefighting and logistical support aircraft, dropped 170 loads of retardant from air tankers, dropped 1,500 scoops of water from water scooping aircraft, and filled 43 helicopter orders. A total of 1,867 orders were filled with Alaskan resources and 16 hand crews were needed from the Lower 48. As the Alaskan season ended at the end of August, the lower 48 fire activity escalated. With little reprieve, Alaskan firefighters and equipment were sent south to support the Pacific Northwest and Northern California. The Alaska Incident Management Type 1 Team was deployed to Oregon to manage the Smith River Complex and Alaskan fire crews worked on fires in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana and California. In a

second flurry of activity in the Southeastern States in October and November, Alaskan resources were again deployed with many of the DOF dispatchers and firefighters assisting until after thanksgiving. Mutual aid agreements allow states and the federal government to request, share and compensate each other for firefighting resources.

2023 Acres Burned by Landowner		
Landowner	Fires	Acres
State	129	213,014
DOD	15	62,206
BLM	34	8,951
USFWS	19	6,799
ANCSA	29	2,708
NPS	6	1,230
Private	90	818
Borough	11	36
City	6	3
BIA	1	2
USFS	3	<1

Number of fires reflects landownership at origin.

Record High Fire Seasons 1950-2023*		
Year	Fires	Acres
2004	701	6,590,140
2015	768	5,111,453
1957	391	5,049,661
2005	624	4,649,597
1969	685	4,231,820
1990	750	3,189,079
2022	562	3,107,470
2009	516	2,934,608
2019	719	2,589,893

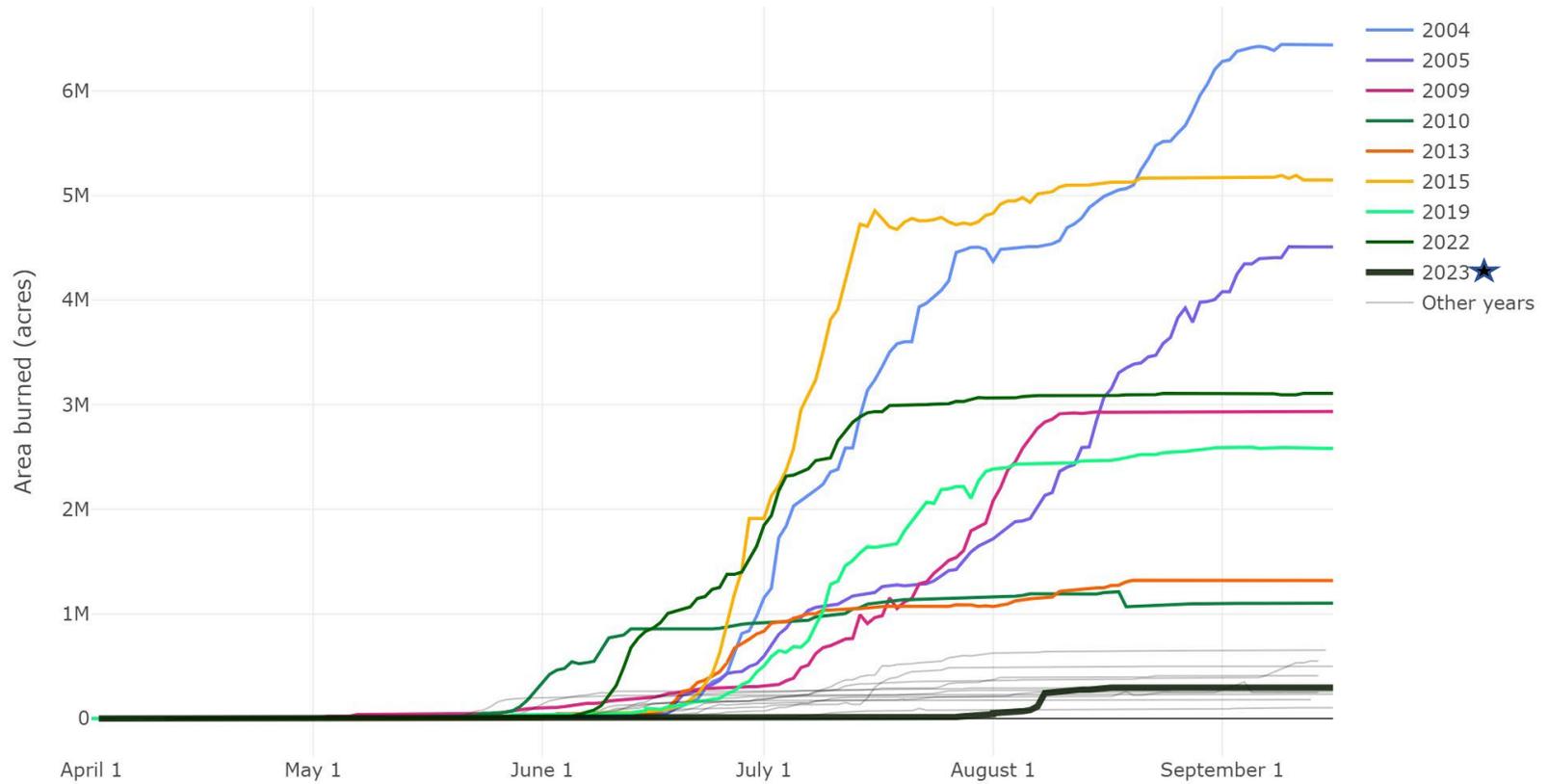
**2023 was a below average fire season*

2023 Wildfires by Cause and Protection Area								
Cause	All Fires		State DOF		AFS		USFS	
	Fires	Acres	Fires	Acres	Fires	Acres	Fires	Acres
Human	168	741	149	638	10	91	9	10
Lightning	175	295,026	71	142,876	104	152,153	0	0
Total	343	295,767	220	143,514	114	152,244	9	10

Data for fire related tables is from Jan 1, 2023 – Sept. 15, 2023. Data source for fire statistics is from the Alaska Interagency Coordination Center: <https://fire.ak.blm.gov/predsvcs/intel.php>

2023 Year Comparison

Alaska Statewide Daily Tally Records, 2004-Present,
April 1—September 16



Graph Courtesy: Alaska Interagency Coordination Center

Fire Logistics

State Fire Cache Warehouse

The state Fire Supply Cache Warehouse Manages 22 and a half million dollars of inventory, 13 and half million dollars of that inventory is in Fairbanks. Overall, it was a short but active late fire season with a flurry of activity supplying fires in the interior of Alaska. The Cache supplied over five thousand gallons of fuel to support boat operations off the Salcha and Nenana Rivers. The supply cache keeps the fire fighters fed with that help of a contractor that builds fresh food boxes. Initially firefighters are fed military rations or “meals ready to eat” MRE’s, then after three days fresh food can be ordered. The supply cache delivered 2,000 fresh food boxes that can feed 2-4 people for 3 days. Fire supply for the state of Alaska works closely with the federal fire cache system exchanging supplies to high need area as well as personnel to assist in the fire support effort.

Communications

With the late fire season, the communications shop was still quite busy as nearly 1,000 handheld radios were issued to firefighting staff. The staff also install units in the fire trucks and coordinates aviation radios purchase and installation. Some firefighting aircraft have as many as six radios that they monitor to complete safe missions. Communications also maintains satellite radio systems for the fire effort as well as dispatch counsels. The extensive repeaters system is also maintained by the radio shop, these are infrastructure that often sits on mountain tops and is solar powered to relay radio messages across or over barriers where communications would not be possible otherwise. Sometime bears take a liking to the repeaters and damage them and then the maintenance really kicks in to keep them operating.

Ground and Other Support

Ground support north and south of the range were steady assisting employees with agency vehicles to support fires, fuels, and training needs. We can utilize the nation equipment rental vehicle system (NERV) which helps us greatly with acquiring modern vehicles as our aging fleet is a challenge at times for modern safety features and reliability. We brought up 4 jet loads of crews from the continuous 48 state to assist our low numbers and ground support is always there providing wheels for the crew to get to fires from the airport. With the firefighting forces from out of state we stood up a mobilization (MOB) center. We often use schools to assist in the fire effort for command post and MOB centers but as this was a late season, we were unable to use the universities. We reached out to the Army National Guard, and they were of great help with their building in Fairbanks to set up our MOB center for crews to get a shower, sleep and fed before their return home after a couple of weeks of hard work on the fire line.

Working closely with aviation and procurement teams we were able to facilitate the move of five large 12,000 tanks from Fort Wainwright tanker base to Fairbanks International Airport moving from a federal tanker base to a State of Alaska supported tanker base. This will be more accessible and in time become a modern base able to support the retardant demands for fires in the interior.

Aviation Program

The Wildfire Aviation Program is a highly trained air-ground firefighting team available for Initial Attack (IA) rapid response to wildland fires. Wildfire Aviation is comprised of four Wildfire Aviation Aircraft.

The four-division aircraft totaled 626.3 flight hours this year, with the Cessna Caravan flying well over half of those hours. Pilot Doug Burts and Air Attack Tim Whitesell took the Commander 1000 on assignment to the Lower 48 from September into October. A USFS Federal Excess Property Program DHC-2 Beaver, and the division's Cessna Caravan and 690 Commander provided logistical support and ATGS training, aerial firing, and INFRARED mapping missions.

This was the first year of a seven-year contract for two of the new age DeHavilland Q400-AT, type 2 air tankers. One was based in Palmer and the other in Fairbanks. These air tankers had 363.2 flight hours and dropped over 429,049 gallons of retardant in Alaska. In May & June the air tankers were ordered by the Canadian Forest Service for duty in Alberta and British Columbia. Through contract extensions they remained on duty until the end of September. With the late start to the Alaska Fire season in Fairbanks, both Q-400 tankers shared only 144.7 Hours of Flight time on Alaska Fires. Our Canadian friends to the East paid and used the tankers for a total of 218.5 hours. The favor of using our air tankers was returned to us in August by Canada sending a Bird Dog and three type 2 air tankers to help in Anderson, Fairbanks, and Delta fire control.

Soloy Helicopters provided two long-term contracted type 2 helicopters (BK-117) located in Palmer and Soldotna. Temsco Helicopters provided two type 2 helicopters (Bell 212), one in Fairbanks and Delta. Pathfinder Helicopters provided two type 2 Helicopters (Bell 212) for Tok and McGrath. These Rotorcraft provided platforms for both initial attack helitack and logistical support. Total flight time for these aircraft was 760.4 hours.

We used a couple of call-when-needed aircrafts this year. They are getting harder to find every year. The division used 23 Fixed Wing call-when-needed aircraft and six call-when-needed Rotor Wing aircraft, we had to call a couple from the lower 48 for our Fairbanks fire season.

We used EFF to staff and get the job done. Thanks to every one of our Emergency Firefighter (EFF) personnel from rampers to pilots you made it happen and kept it safe. Way to go Team! We had an EFF employee count of 24 during the summer between all the bases and they did a great job. Special thanks to Chuck Greer, Steve Elwell and Dean Paulson filling a major role as pilots for us as we had no luck filling our pilot PCN at the beginning of the year. Hats off to the Ramp and Tanker Base EFF Team, they kicked it into gear when it was time to go and got it done. I'd like to thank EFF's Gene Boyd and Ed Kluver for keeping the BBQ going all fire season and Blake Taylor for being our all-around good hand in Palmer. Congrats also go to Dan Chacon as he recently accepted the Wildland Forestry Technician position to staff Fairbanks Tanker Base.

The Aviation Program also welcomed two new employees. Jeremy Wood, the new aircraft mechanic came from Seaplanes in Juneau, AK where he was a part of their maintenance team. He also has an

FAA 107 license and looks forward to working with the New UAV Coordinator to help keep the State drones flying and maybe help flying in the summer on fires. Christina Karpinski, our new Palmer Tanker Base Manager came from the Federal side of fire having worked at bases in Utah, Colorado, Wyoming and Idaho for BLM and USFS, as well as fire assignments in many states in the lower 48. She found her way to wildland fire inadvertently during flight training attending school on her GI Bill. A ground school classmate who was also a wildland firefighter recommended she sign up to help at the local tanker base in the summer. Building her qualifications over the next 10 years, including some time as a wildland firefighter, she's never looked back. In her free time Christina enjoys reading, learning homesteading skills, hunting, fishing, flying, and knitting. She hopes to have a hobby farm off grid when she retires from fire (many years from now) and a small herd of Alpacas & Llamas again so she never runs out of yarn!

The division also appreciates the ongoing work by Candy Turner to ensure that all the administrative requirements are met, which is key to a smooth-running program. She also keeps us in snacks and makes sure we are well-powered for the workday.

Air Attack officers Tim Whitesell, Duane Morris and Zane Brown spent long hours in the cockpit mapping and detecting fires, as well as providing Aerial Supervision for multiple air tankers on a daily basis. Hats off to the Air Attack team as they single handedly put on a the first ever Alaska Aerial Supervision Academy this year which was a great success. The Air Attack program was also able to also go do some cross training in Canada this year.

Behind the scenes and long flight hours, DOF's two-man maintenance staff of Thomas Abbe and Jeremy Wood were busy keeping division aircraft in top shape and faced a long list of winter maintenance tasks following the season. Also behind the scenes is Jason Jordet & Greg Scully doing it right. They are the reason that Fire aviation works every year and making sure our vendors are willing to come back to work for us.

Congratulations to everyone in the Aviation Program who helped attain a safe year with no accidents or incidents. Safety and the training required to remain safe are always the division's top priorities.

As always, we keep the propellers spinning.

Western Wildland Urban Interface Fund

Take Time to Learn Before You Burn

<https://dnr.alaska.gov/burn>

The Take Time to Learn Before You Burn is a USDA forest service wildland-urban interface grant campaign. In 2023, the grant focused on public education and outreach in conjunction with safe burning practices, and campaign awareness. DOF Prevention staff attended 51 events across the state. The campaign directly staffed 11 prominent events such as the Alaska Federation of Natives convention, Salmonfest, the Alaska Conference on Environmental Management, and the Deltana, Tanana Valley, and Alaska state fairs. Events such as Fairbanks Children's Museum's Super Saturday,

and the Kinross Youth safety awareness day were crucial in sharing fire prevention tips and techniques to receptive families and younger audiences.

Extensive statewide radio campaigns shared information about safe burning practices, burn permit enforcement during fire season, and news on burn closures and public safety. There were 1,359 radio spots statewide and 20 “Firewise Friday” interviews in the Mat-Su Valley throughout fire season.

The campaign successfully produced a statewide safety campaign for hunters in areas recently affected by fires and fire prevention messaging with a cartoon accompanied by a web app, graphics, radio PSA, and printed maps.

Our commitment to education extended beyond traditional avenues, as demonstrated by strategic partnerships with Alaska Teen Media Institute and Project Learning Tree. Together, we produced two Safe Burning Practice PSA's targeted at children and young adults, enriching our outreach efforts.

Other alternate outreach efforts include designing, baking and constructing a firewise gingerbread house for Fairbanks' annual gingerbread house contest and won first place in its category.

Community Wildfire Defense Grants

The Community Wildfire Defense Grants (CWDG) are available from the USDA Forest Service through the Division of Forestry & Fire Protection. The grants help at-risk communities, local governments, tribes, non-profits, state forestry agencies, and Alaska Native corporations plan and reduce the risk of wildfire. Local and tribal governments are encouraged to conduct planning exercises to assist their communities with wildfire preparedness, response, and adaptation. The grants are funded through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The CWDG helps communities implement the three goals of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy: restore and maintain landscapes, create fire adapted communities, and improve wildfire response.

The CWDG provides funding for two primary project types:

- Developing and revising Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs).
- Implementing projects described in Community Wildfire Protection Plans that are less than ten years old.

Grants will fund up to \$250,000 for creating and updating Community Wildfire Protection Plans or to conduct outreach and education, and up to \$10 million for associated infrastructure and resilience projects. Projects must be completed within five years of the award.

In the first few months of this program, DOF created a webpage with links to the grant posting, eligibility, frequently asked questions, documentation resources, and recorded webinars. Alaska fully manages the program, including administering sub-grants to communities and nonprofits. The benefits of this are that the state can:

- Provide education and outreach to promote CWDGs
- Assist communities in determining eligibility

- Assist communities and partners in preparing applications
- Participate in updating the list of communities that are “at risk”
- Cover costs associated with reviewing, ranking, scoring, and prioritizing applications as part of a regional or national review process
- Offer guidance to communities on CWPP development
- Attend meetings and/or trainings that benefit the program

The CWPP collaborative process improves coordination and communication between emergency response agencies and the community. Developing a CWPP helps clarify and refine priorities to protect life, property, infrastructure, and valued resources. This process can lead communities through critical discussions about private and public land management and identifying opportunities for fuels reduction within a designated wildland/urban interface boundary. Information and links for Alaskan communities that want to create or update their Community Wildfire Protection Plan: <https://forestry.alaska.gov/fire/cwpp/index>

2023 Volunteer Fire Assistance Grants to Rural Fire Departments

The Division of Forestry & Fire Protection provided more than \$177,089 thru the Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) grant award program to 32 rural fire departments across Alaska. The Volunteer Fire Assistance program provides Federal financial, technical, and other assistance from the USDA Forest Service to State Foresters to organize, train and equip fire departments in rural areas and rural communities to suppress fires. Rural fire departments represent the first line of defense in meeting expanded protection needs for wildland-urban interface fires. All volunteer fire departments in Alaska were given the opportunity to apply. (The following page contains the 2023 grantee information).

Fire Department	DOF Area	Amount Awarded
Delta Junction VFD	Delta Area Office	\$ 5,973.88
Rural Deltana VFD, Delta Junction	Delta Area Office	\$ 6,000.00
Chena-Goldstream Fire & Rescue, Fairbanks	Fairbanks Area Office	\$ 5,848.20
North Pole VFD	Fairbanks Area Office	\$ 6,000.00
North Star VFD	Fairbanks Area Office	\$ 5,959.89
Ester VFD	Fairbanks Area Office	\$ 5,658.41
Moose Pass Vol. Fire Co.	Kenai Kodiak Area Office	\$ 5,239.78
Lowell Point VFD, Seward	Kenai Kodiak Area Office	\$ 6,000.00
Cooper Landing VFD	Kenai Kodiak Area Office	\$ 5,384.36
Western Emergency Services Area, Anchor Point	Kenai Kodiak Area Office	\$ 5,844.96
Seward FD	Kenai Kodiak Area Office	\$ 4,229.32
Bear Creek Fire/EMS dept, Seward	Kenai Kodiak Area Office	\$ 3,293.55
Kenai FD	Kenai Kodiak Area Office	\$ 5,987.94
Kachemak Emergency Services, Homer	Kenai Kodiak Area Office	\$ 5,923.60
Central Emergency Services, Soldotna	Kenai Kodiak Area Office	\$ 5,331.60
Nikisiki FD	Kenai Kodiak Area Office	\$ 4,358.47
Palmer Fire and Rescue	Mat Su Area	\$ 5,759.45
Talkeetna VFD	Mat Su Area	\$ 6,000.00
Sutton VFD	Mat Su Area	\$ 5,999.99
Butte FD, Palmer	Mat Su Area	\$ 5,999.75
Houston FD	Mat Su Area	\$ 5,931.00
Trapper Creek	Mat Su Area	\$ 6,000.00
Girdwood Volunteer Fire & Rescue, INC	Mat Su Area	\$ 5,810.00
Whale Pass VFD, Ketchikan	Southeast Alaska	\$ 3,471.50
Haines VFD	Southeast Alaska	\$ 6,000.00
Bethel FD	Southwest District	\$ 4,963.68
Tok VFD	Tok Area Office	\$ 5,992.00
Kennicott/McCarthy VFD	Valdez-Copper River Area Office	\$ 5,367.24
Kenny Lake VFD, Copper Center	Valdez-Copper River Area Office	\$ 5,887.71
Gakona VFD	Valdez-Copper River Area Office	\$ 5,975.10
GlennRich Fire Rescue, Glennallen	Valdez-Copper River Area Office	\$ 5,611.50
2023 TOTAL		\$ 171,712.88

Fuels Reduction Program

The Division of Forestry & Fire Protection protects Alaska’s people, communities, resources, and other values at risk from wildland fire through fuel reduction. Removing woody material around areas of risk creates fire suppression options for fire managers.

In 2023, DOF continued to increase capacity to mitigate fuels by adding area level positions to our geographic areas. The new positions assist the areas in project identification, planning, implementation, and project site supervision. The positions are fuel reduction centric while also aiding in fire suppression during times of high fire danger. The Fuel Reduction Program leveraged both the passing of House Bill 209, which allows the use of emergency firefighter (EFF) outside of emergencies, and the academy efforts to adequately train new personnel. This was highlighted in 2023 by DOF’s efforts in southwestern Alaska. The local area was able to employ local EFF from communities surrounding McGrath to recruit, train via the academies, implement fuel reduction, and bolster suppression forces during high fire danger. DOF was an active member of interagency workgroups with the goal of aligning and maximizing our efforts with other stakeholders, ultimately providing more efficient service to the public by bringing interagency programmatic strengths together under the same mutual goals.

In 2023, DOF supported over 20 fuel reduction projects. Work included shaded and mechanical fuel breaks, burning debris, agreements with local governments to protect critical infrastructure, and community wildfire protection planning. Recently completed contracts include Sunset Fuel Break (protecting the communities of Meadow Lakes and Houston), and Delta River West (protecting the communities of Whitestone, Delta, and Donnelley Training Grounds), combining for over 460 acres in 2023.



Above: Sunset Fuel Break *Todd Mears/Alaska Hydro-Ax*

2022-2023 Projects

Coastal Region

Morgan’s Landing State Park Recreation Site: DOF personnel removed dead trees in this highly visited recreation area, mitigating spruce beetle, and creating a shaded fuel break to protect the public from wildland fire. It was funded through federal and state sources.

Russian River Campground: DOF completed work to remove hazardous trees near the Russian River Campground, with funds provided through the Good Neighbor Authority with the USDA Forest Service.

City of Kenai: Two government-to-government agreements were continued to dispose of hazardous fuels and to install a shaded fuel break within the wildland urban interface. The projects were funded by state appropriated funds.

City of Soldotna: An agreement between DOF and the City of Soldotna was enacted to remove hazardous fuels and protect critical infrastructure. In 2023, a larger allocation to this project was approved allowing the treatment of three high priority areas for the city. The work was funded through state funds.

Alut Avenue: Planning and site layout for this shaded fuel break protecting homes and infrastructure on the eastern side of Homer treating 28 acres, funded through state funds.

Wharf Ave: Phase One of a shaded fuel break treatment protecting the community of Funny River outside of Soldotna treating 30 acres, using state funds.

Hidden Hills Road: Phase two of a shaded fuel break along the Hidden Hills Road to protect ingress/egress for the community of Caswell was initiated to extend on work previously done in the area, funded through state appropriated funds.

Lynx Lake: DOF personnel made significant progress creating a shaded fuel break along the access route to the Lynx Lake community using state funds.

Houston: 113 acres of the Sunset Fuel Break was completed through mechanized local contracting to help protect the communities of Houston and Meadow Lakes. 32 acres of sensitive riparian area remains to be completed in 2024.

Takotna, Nikolai, Telida, and McGrath: The second phase of work continued to bolster previous work done in the communities to reduce the chance of wildfire escapement. This phase is funded by the state.

City of Dillingham: A local government agreement was established to aid in removing hazardous fuels from the local disposal site. This work was completed, hardening the community, and offering solutions to mitigate future fire spread from the community waste collection site.

Mat-Su Borough: A government-to-government agreement assists the borough in offering hazardous fuels disposal options to the community. It is funded by federal and state sources.

Northern Region

Anderson Fire Resilient Landscape: In this project 80 acres were thinned to create a shaded fuel break and defensible space adjacent to fire prone areas. It provided a strategic option for firefighters during the 2022 and the 2023 fire season. Final work will be completed during the winter of 2023.

Washington Creek: This project was planned to initiate during the 2023-2024 field season. The Lost Horse Creek fire inundated this area and project. During the fire implementation of this planned fuel break occurred. This 300-acre fuel break protects the Himalaya Subdivision, outside of Fairbanks.

Legacy Debris Piles: Debris piles were disposed of in the Cripple Creek and Goldstream Alaska subdivisions, which helps the shaded fuel breaks protect the subdivisions. Over 1,500 piles were burned during the winter of 2023, using state funds.

Denali Borough Disposal: A government to government agreement provides two sites for landowners to dispose of hazardous fuels and protect property from wildland fire. This agreement is federally funded.

Delta River West: Work was completed for Phase One of this project totaling 349 acres, located on the west side of the Delta River. Phase two will total 13 miles and 750 acres protecting Donnelley Training Area to the community of Whitestone. This project is federally funded.

Tok and Delta Community Disposal: Sites in Tok and Delta provide the communities with a safe option for disposing of hazardous fuels taken from private property. The sites are federally funded.

Eagle Subdivision Fuel Break: Two fuel breaks will protect the community of Tok by treating a total of 187 acres, using federal funds. The contract has been awarded to push ground during the winter of 2023.

Copper River Area: Staff are updating and adding new Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) and maintaining the Glennallen fuel break.

Fire Training Program

The Alaska Division of Forestry & Fire Protection provides a training program that meets or exceeds the national standards and adheres to the standards of the National Wildland Fire Coordinating group. Our mission is to maintain a qualified and safe workforce, ready to respond to wildland fires and other emergencies. Interagency courses are open to federal cooperators, structure fire departments, local governments, other state agencies, emergency firefighters, geographic areas, and Canadian fire agencies.

National Training

The division sent 18 people to courses in the Lower 48. The courses included fire management, fire suppression, prescribed fire, and advanced falling.

Alaska Training

The division sent 4,954 people to the following courses: Incident Command, Emergency Care & Mental Health and Wellness, Fire Suppression, Dispatch, Safety, Leadership, Online, and Safetyhub (OSHA).

2023 Academies

In 2023, the division added the Alaska Wildland Firefighter Academy Program. The division offered five academies across the state and trained 96 students. Training included the following:

- Basic Firefighter Academies – Tok and McGrath
- Intermediate Firefighter Academy – Chugiak
- Alaska Engine Academy – Palmer
- Alaska Aerial Supervision Academy – Palmer

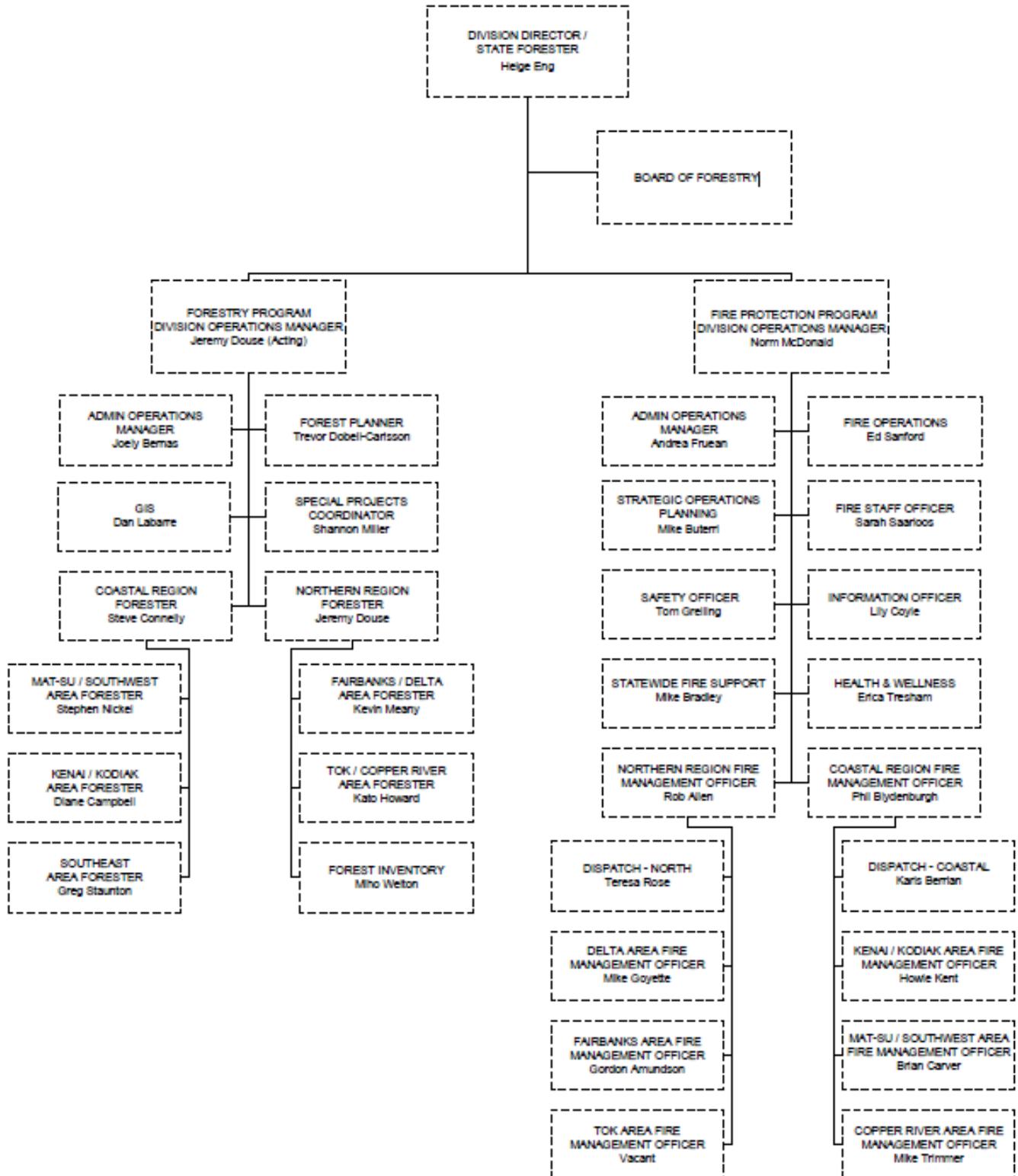
Recruitment and Retention:

Recruitment and retention continue to be a struggle for the division, as well as with the rest of the nation. In the Fall of 2022, the division established a Recruitment and Retention Workgroup that is comprised of the division's training and outreach teams.

Recruitment efforts have expanded from just posting announcements on Workplace Alaska, the State of Alaska's recruitment website, to other communication means. Additionally, the division has also used these communication channels to keep staff informed and highlight accomplishments. The division conducts outreach and communication via social media, website upgrades, newsletter and emails, participation/booths at a variety of trade shows, festivals, fairs and educational events, radio podcasts, and recruitment videos.

Retention efforts have also included continued training. The Alaska Wildland Fire Academy program combined with Initial Attack and Hazardous Fuels Programs, made it possible to not only provide high quality training, but to also provide experience and employment to almost 90 Academy Cadets in the 2023 season.

Alaska Division of Forestry & Fire Protection
Organizational Chart
December 2023



2023 Actuals

NOTE: Dollar figures are in thousands (e.g., \$27.5 is \$27,500.00)

Funding Sources	Forest Mgmt & Development	Fire Preparedness	Fire Activity	Totals
General Funds	\$3,328.7	\$17,528.7	\$44,573.6	\$65,431.0
Federal Funds	\$585.7	\$140.3	\$18,196.8	\$18,922.8
Capital Improvement	-	-	-	\$0.0
Interagency Receipts	\$0.1	\$943.7	-	\$943.8
Timber Receipts	\$639.3	-	-	\$639.3
Other (SDPR)	0.5	-	128	\$128.8
TOTALS	\$4,554.3	\$18,612.7	\$62,898.7	\$86,065.7

POSITIONS

Permanent Full- Time	36	53	-	89
Permanent Part-Time /Seasonal	10	195	-	205
Non Permanent	14	-	-	14

Forest Management & Development Component

Renewable Resource Development & Sales	Coastal Region	Northern Region	Statewide	Totals
Board of Forestry	-	-	\$12.3	\$12.3
Forest Practices	\$250.6	\$261.7	\$690.6	\$1,202.9
Forest Management	\$314.1	\$327.7	\$865.3	\$1,507.1
Interagency Receipts	-	-	\$178.5	\$178.5
Stat. Desig. Program Receipts (SDPR)	-	-	-	\$0.0
Federal Cooperative Forestry Assistance	-	-	\$1,326.6	\$1,326.6
Capital Improvement Receipts (Other)	-	-	-	\$0.0
<i>Subtotals</i>	\$564.7	\$589.3	\$3,073.3	\$4,227.4
Director's Office	-	-	\$326.9	\$326.9
Component Totals	\$564.7	\$589.3	\$3,400.2	\$4,554.3

**Fire Suppression Preparedness
Component**

	Coastal Region	Northern Region	Statewide	Totals
Preparedness	\$3,505.7	\$2,278.7	\$11,744.2	\$17,528.7
Interagency Receipts	-	-	\$943.7	\$943.7
Federal Cooperative	\$29.5	\$18.2	\$92.6	\$140.3
Initial Attack	-	-	-	\$0.0
Capital Improvement Receipts (Other)	-	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Component Totals	\$3,535.2	\$2,297.0	\$12,780.5	\$18,612.7

2024 Budget

NOTE: Dollar figures are in thousands (e.g., \$40.5 is \$40,500.00)

FUNDING SOURCES	FOREST MGMT & DEVELOPMENT	FIRE PREPAREDNESS	FIRE ACTIVITY	TOTALS
General Funds	\$3,951.3	\$22,249.9	\$74,641.0	\$100,842.2
Federal Funds	\$3,693.1	\$1,667.7	\$23,960.4 *	\$29,321.2
Capital Improvement Receipts (Fed, GF, & SDPR)	\$658.7	\$1,422.8	-	\$2,081.5
Interagency Receipts	\$626.8	\$417.6	-	\$1,044.4
Timber Receipts	\$1,091.3	-	-	\$1,091.3
Other (SDPR)	\$29.7	-	\$1,500.0	\$1,529.7
TOTALS	\$10,050.9	\$25,758.0	\$100,101.4	\$135,910.3

POSITIONS

Permanent Full-Time	38	80	-	118
Permanent Part-Time /Seasonal	10	180	-	190
Non-Permanent	13	-	-	13

FOREST MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT COMPONENT

RENEWABLE RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT & SALES	COASTAL REGION	NORTHERN REGION	STATEWIDE	TOTALS
Board of Forestry	-	-	\$18.5	\$18.5
Forest Practices	-	-	\$287.2	\$287.2
Forest Management	\$1,373.9	\$705.5	\$1,633.8	\$3,713.1
Forest Inventory and Analysis	-	-	\$1,398.1	\$1,398.1
Tongass Young Growth	-	-	\$1,298.2	\$1,298.2
Interagency Receipts Stat. Desig. Program Receipts	-	-	\$767.5	\$767.5
(SDPR) Federal Cooperative	-	-	\$29.7	\$29.7
Forestry Assistance Capital Improvement Receipts	-	-	1,588.24	\$1,588.2
(Other)	-	-	-	\$283.4
<i>Subtotals</i>	\$1,373.9	\$705.5	\$7,021.1	\$9,383.8
Director's Office	-	-	\$667.1	\$667.1
COMPONENT TOTALS	\$1,373.9	\$705.5	\$7,688.2	\$10,050.9

**FIRE SUPPRESSION PREPAREDNESS
COMPONENT**

	COASTAL REGION	NORTHERN REGION	STATEWIDE	TOTALS
Preparedness	\$4,672.5	\$3,782.5	\$13,794.9	\$22,249.9
Interagency Receipts	-	-	\$417.6	\$417.6
Federal Cooperative Forestry Assistance Capital Improvement Receipts	\$383.5	\$252.2	\$1,032.0	\$1,667.7
(Other)	-	-	\$1,422.8	\$1,422.8
COMPONENT TOTALS	\$5,056.0	\$4,034.7	\$16,667.3	\$25,758.0

Division of Forestry & Fire Protection Directory – December 2023

For current contact information see state employee directory: <http://alaska.gov/whitepages/>

State Forester's Office

550 West Seventh Ave., Suite 1450
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-3566
269-8463, fax 269-8931

State Forester

Helge Eng, 269-8474

Forestry Program Management

550 West Seventh Ave., Suite 1450
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-3566

Division Operations Manager

Jeremy Douse (Acting), 451-2670

Admin. Operations Manager

Joely Bernas, 269-8477

Forest Planning

Trevor Dobell-Carlsson, 269-8667

Community Forestry Program

Jim Renkert, 269-8465

Forest Health & Protection

(Insects & Disease)

Jason Moan, 269-8460

Forest Stewardship Program

(Landowner Assistance)

Vacant, 269-8667

Special Projects Coordinator

Shannon Miller, 269-8476

Fire Program Management

101 Airport Road
Palmer, Alaska 99645

Division Operations Manager

Norm McDonald, 761-6225

Admin. Operations Manager

Andrea Fruenan, 761-6204

Strategic Operations Planner

Mike Butteri, 356-5858

Statewide Fire Support

Mike Bradley, 451-2608
NFDC Fairbanks, 451-2680
State Fire Warehouse, 451-2667

Fire Operations

Edward Sanford, 356-5850
AICC Logistics, 356-5680

AICC Coordinator

Katie Kelley, 356-5682

Aviation Program

761-6270, fax: 761-6273
Robert Hoecher, Aviation Manager
761-6271
Coastal Aviation Mgmt, 761-6231
Air Attack, 761-6280

Coastal Region

Regional Forester - Coastal

Steve Connelly, 269-0409

Regional Fire Mgmt Officer - Coastal

Phil Blydenburgh, 761-6302

Mat-Su/Southwest Area Office

101 Airport Road
Palmer, Alaska 99645
761-6300, fax: 761-6319
Stephen Nickel, Area Forester 761-6301

Brian Carver, Area Fire Mgmt.

Officer, 761-6302

Dispatch, 761-6240

Fire line, 761-6311

Burn Permit, 761-6312

Southwest Area Office (Seasonal)

Box 130
McGrath, Alaska 99627
524-3010, fax 524-3420
Fire line, 524-3366
Dispatch fax: 524-3932

Kenai-Kodiak Area Office

42499 Sterling Highway
Soldotna, Alaska 99669
(Mi. 92.5 Sterling Hwy)
260-4200, fax: 260-4205
Diane Campbell, Area Forester
260-4210
Howie Kent, Area Fire Mgmt.
Officer 260-4220
Fire line, 260-4100
Burn Permit, 260-4269
Dispatch, 260-4232

Southeast Area Office

2417 Tongass Avenue, Suite 213
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901
225-3070, fax: 247-3070
Greg Staunton, Area Forester
225-3070
Fire line, 524-3366

Northern Region

Regional Forester - Northern

Jeremy Douse, 451-2670

Regional Fire Mgmt Officer - Northern

Rob Allen, 451-2600

Fairbanks Area Office

3700 Airport Way
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709-4699
451-2600, fax 458-6895
Kevin Meany, Area Forester 451-2602
Gordon Amundson, Fire Mgmt.
Officer, 451-2636
Fire line, 451-2626
Fire Operations, fax: 451-2633
NFDC 451-2680

Delta Area Office

P.O. Box 1149
Delta Junction, Alaska 99737
(Mi. 267.5 Richardson Hwy)
895-4225, fax: 895-2125
Kevin Meany, Area Forester 451-2602
Mike Goyette, Fire Mgmt. Officer
895-2103 Fire line, 895-4227

Tok Area Office

Box 10 Tok, Alaska 99780
(Mile 123.9 Tok Cutoff)
883-1400, fax: 883-5135
Timothy "Kato" Howard, Area
Forester, 883-1403
Vacant, Fire Mgmt. Officer, 883-1404
Fire line, 883-3473

Valdez/Copper River Area Office

P.O. Box 185
Glennallen, Alaska 99588
(Mi. 110 Richardson Hwy)
822-553, fax: 822-8600
Mike Trimmer, Fire Mgmt. Officer
822-5534

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550 W. Seventh Avenue, Suite 1450 | Anchorage, Alaska 99501
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