

2022 Alaska Region Wildfire Summary

Calm on the Forests, Active Beyond

No major wildfires occurred on USDA Forest Service lands, with 31 wildfires burning 12.6 acres on Alaska's two national forests. In contrast, the state as a whole, recorded its seventh largest wildfire season ever with 591 wildfires burning over 3.1 million acres.

National Forest	Acres Burned	Number of Fires	10- Year Average Annual Acres Burned
Chugach	9.5	16	79
Tongass	3.1	15	10

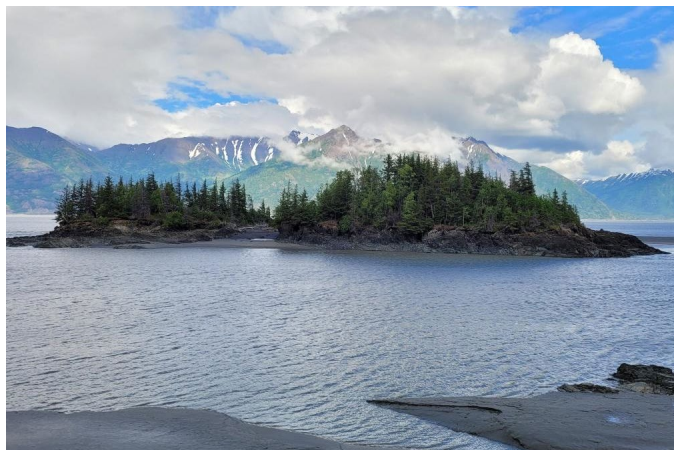


Photo: Smoke rises from a wildfire on the two-acre Halfway Island on the Chugach National Forest near the community of Hope, Alaska on June 13. The Halfway Island fire put no structures or values at risk. Photo credit: USDA Forest Service.

Mutual Support

The USDA Forest Service Alaska (Region 10) and the Pacific Northwest (Region 6) provided mutual wildfire support to each other. By June, all Interagency Hotshot Crews (IHC's) and three Incident Management Teams (IMT's) from the Pacific Northwest Region participated in fire assignments in Alaska. By July 30, most crews and fire personnel working in Alaska returned home.

Later in the summer, as fire season picked up in the Pacific Northwest, crews and IMTs from Alaska traveled south to return the favor.



Photo: Firefighter rappellers from the Malheur National Forest in Oregon spent a total of 42 days supporting the Lime Complex Fire (under the management of the Alaska Division of Forestry and Fire Protection) in May and June. Photo credit: Amanda Johnson, USDA Forest Service.

Raising Awareness

Alaska's national forests initiated fire restrictions and fire danger warnings to decrease the potential for human caused wildfires. The Tongass National Forest experienced warm and dry conditions in early June that lead to high fire danger in the north zone of the Forest. Though no fire restrictions were implemented in the Tongass, the public was encouraged to be extra vigilant with campfire safety and burning. Drier than normal conditions in early July prompted two-weeks of fire restrictions on the Chugach National Forest in the Seward Ranger District and portions of the Glacier Ranger Districts. This order coincided with a larger emergency burn closure issued for much of south central and interior

Alaska by the Alaska Division of Forestry and Fire Protection (DOF).

Spruce Beetle Mitigation

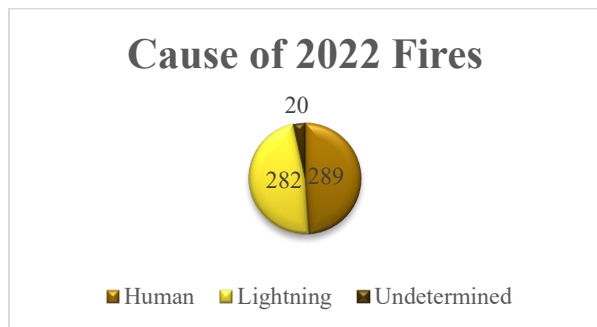
The Chugach National Forest initiated spruce beetle mitigation beginning in March. Approximately 80 acres were planned for completion in early spring. Prescribed burning of slash piles created as a result of on-going spruce beetle mitigation and hazardous fuels reduction projects is necessary to reduce wildfire potential and severity.



Photo: Pile burning of spruce beetle-killed trees on April 18 at Quartz Creek Campground in the Chugach National Forest, near Cooper Landing. Photo credit: USDA Forest Service.

Cause of Fires

Typically, lightning is the leading cause of wildfires in Alaska, but in 2022 slightly more wildfires were caused by humans state-wide. This contrasts with the number of acres burned from lightning-caused fires (3,094,575) which is far greater than the number of acres burned from human-caused wildfires (11,722) and wildfires with undetermined causes (39). Most lightning fires started in remote or inaccessible areas.



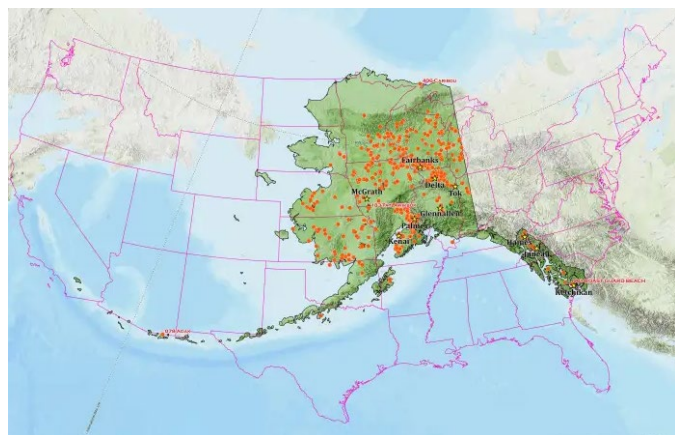
Source: Alaska Bureau of Land Management.



Photo: Firefighters respond to a quarter-acre wildfire at Salt Point on the Juneau Ranger District of the Tongass National Forest. The fire was human caused and firefighters accessed this location by boat. Photo credit: USDA Forest Service.

Big Picture: Regional Context

Dry weather in late May and June, along with early season lightning, started many fires in southwest Alaska. The state reached Preparedness Level (PL) 5, the highest level of preparedness, by the end of June. Fires were numerous in southwestern and central interior Alaska. At the peak of fire activity on July 13, there were at least 11 IMT's and over 2,200 firefighters assigned to incidents in the state. The typical mid-summer shift towards a wetter weather pattern started around July 12. It continued to be cool and wet into August, especially in the west and south resulting in the end of the fire season. Southeast and southcentral Alaska were particularly wet.



Graphic: Red dots on the map above illustrate how widespread the fire activity was during the 2022 Alaska fire season (as of July 22) by comparing the fire expanse in Alaska to a map of the lower 48. Map by Alaska Division of Forestry and Fire Protection.