

2025 Fire Suppression Update

Senate Finance Subcommittee



Presented by:
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Alaska Department of Natural Resources
March 31, 2026



Mission and Vision



Alaska's Fire Protection Program Mission

Safely manage wildland fires that pose a threat to life, property, and critical infrastructure on 150 million acres of land throughout the State of Alaska.



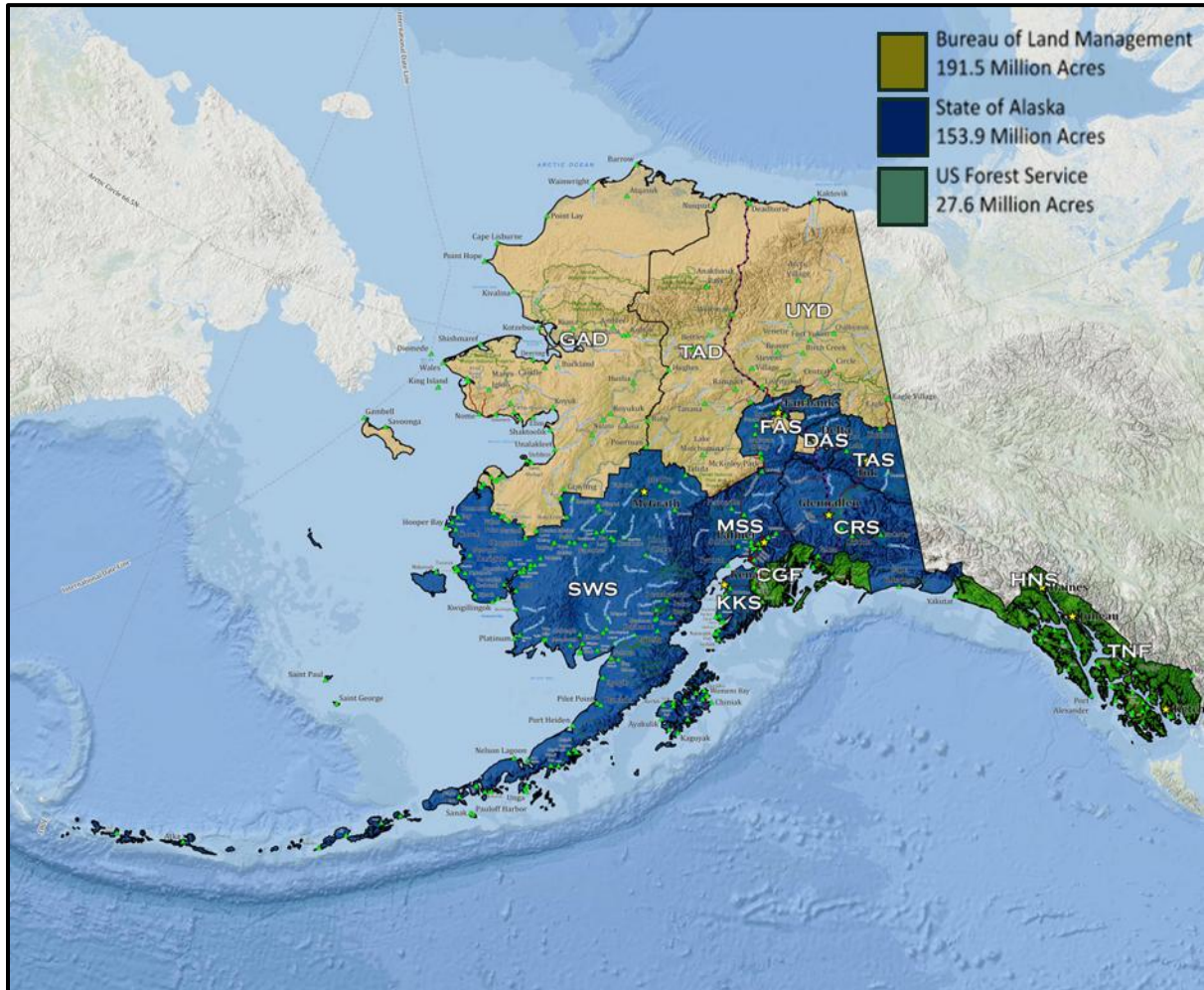
Alaska's Fire Protection Program Vision

The Division of Forestry & Fire Protection (DFFP) envisions that investing in the fire programs' four primary functions, ***preparedness, prevention, mitigation, suppression***, we will benefit Alaskans. Our communities will be fire adapted and prepared, human caused fires will be reduced, and Alaska will have a well-trained and available workforce, all of which will reduce suppression costs and increase public safety.

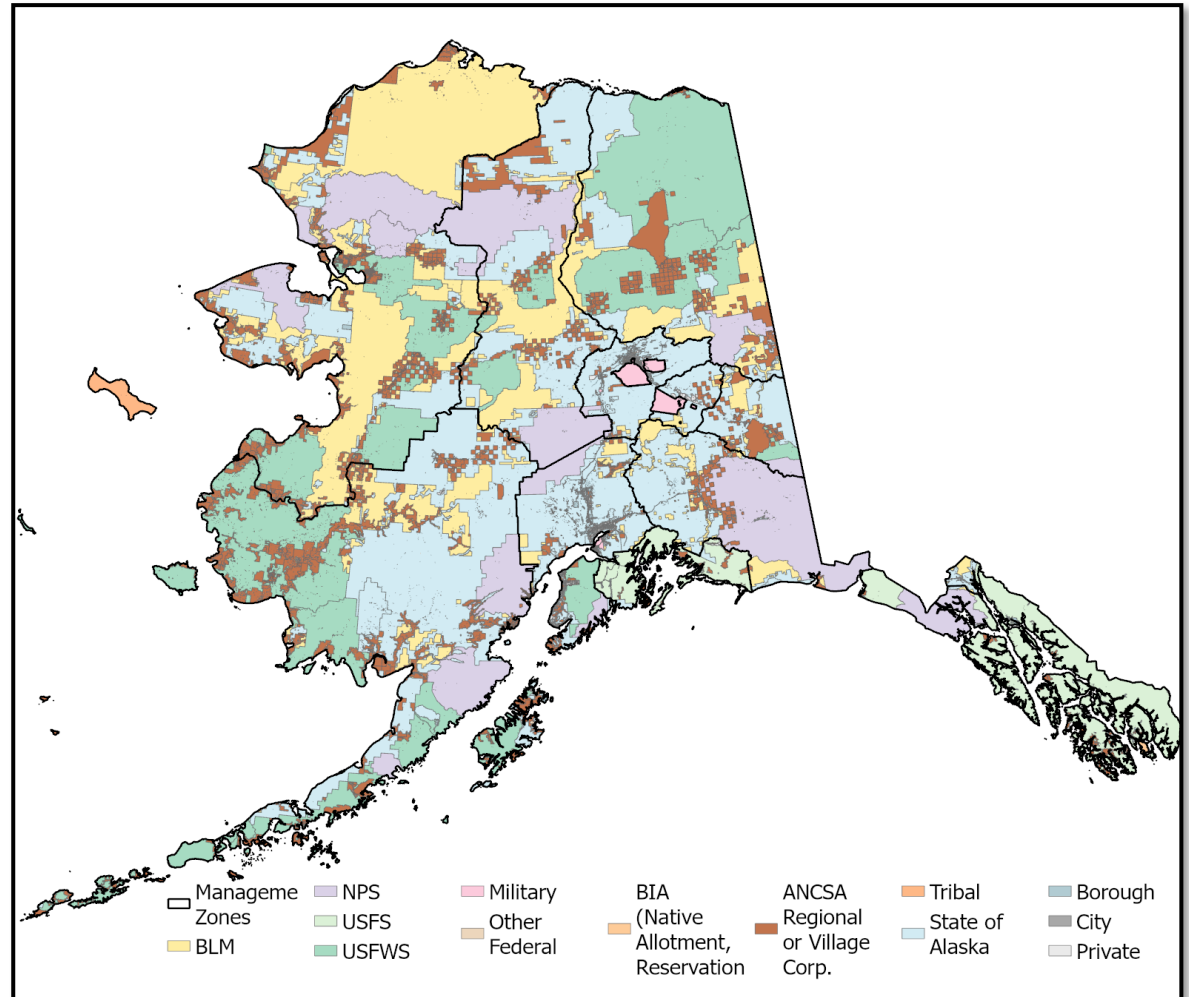
Interagency Cooperation



Protection Agencies



Jurisdictional Agencies

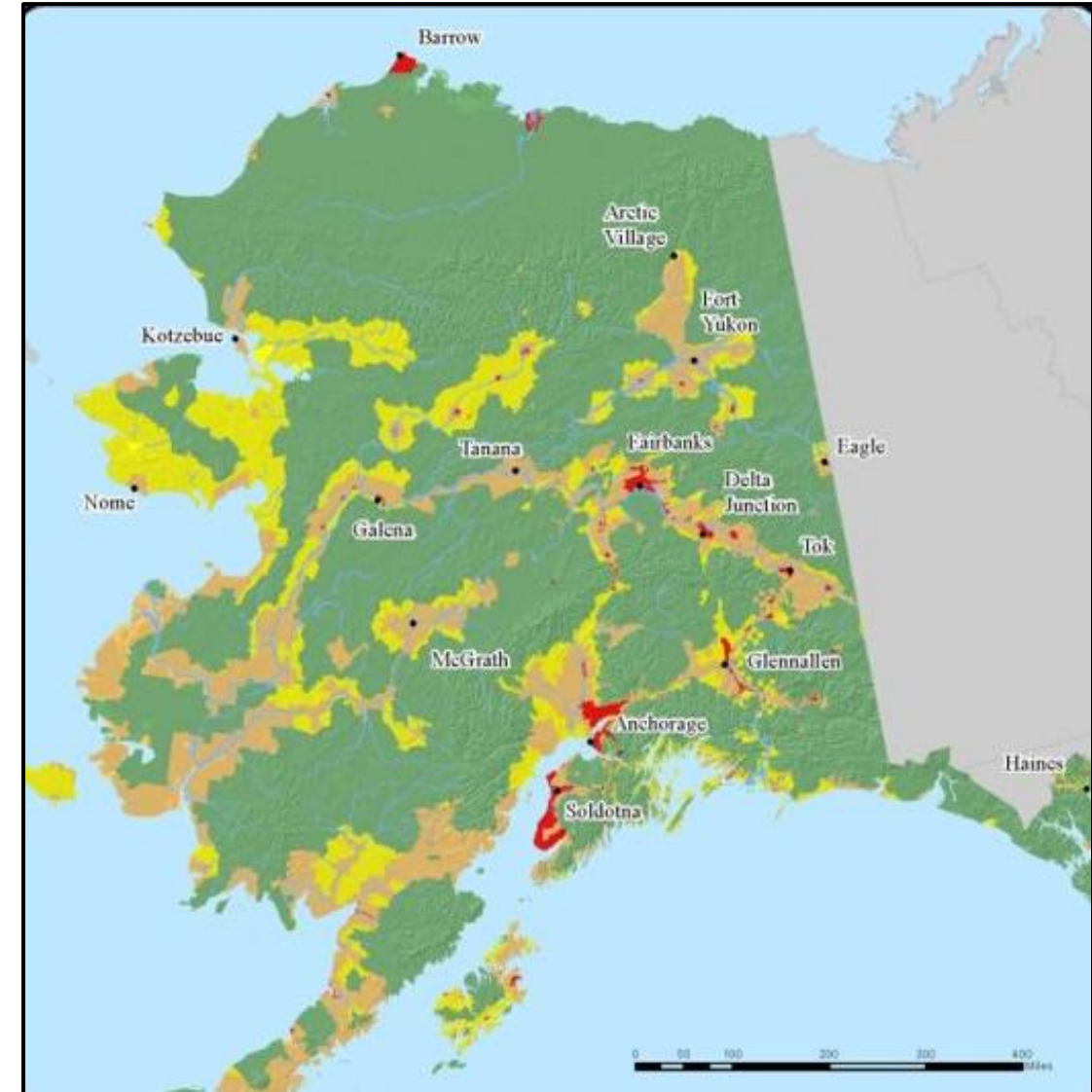


DFFP protects 154 million acres – includes almost all the roadside areas of the state (where most Alaskans live).

Alaska Interagency Fire Management Plan



- **Critical:** The highest priority for suppression actions. This includes wildland urban interface areas and other locations where there is an immediate threat to human life, primary residences, and critical infrastructure
- **Full:** High priority, but below critical. This category encompasses cultural sites, administrative sites, cabins, and high-value natural resources
- **Modified:** Designed to balance the acres burned with suppression costs and accomplish land and resource management objectives when conditions are favorable
- **Limited:** The lowest priority for fire-related resource assignments. This category is intended for broad, landscape-scale areas where fire best performs its ecological role



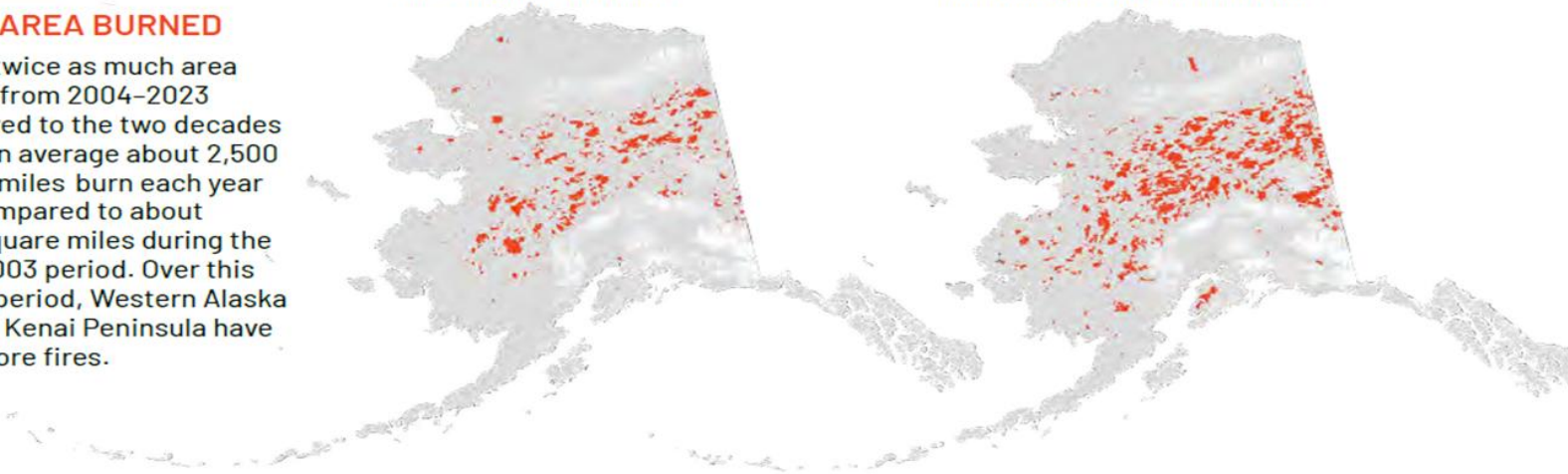
Emerging Challenges

MORE AREA BURNED

Nearly twice as much area burned from 2004-2023 compared to the two decades prior. On average about 2,500 square miles burn each year now compared to about 1,275 square miles during the 1984-2003 period. Over this recent period, Western Alaska and the Kenai Peninsula have seen more fires.

1984-2003 area burned

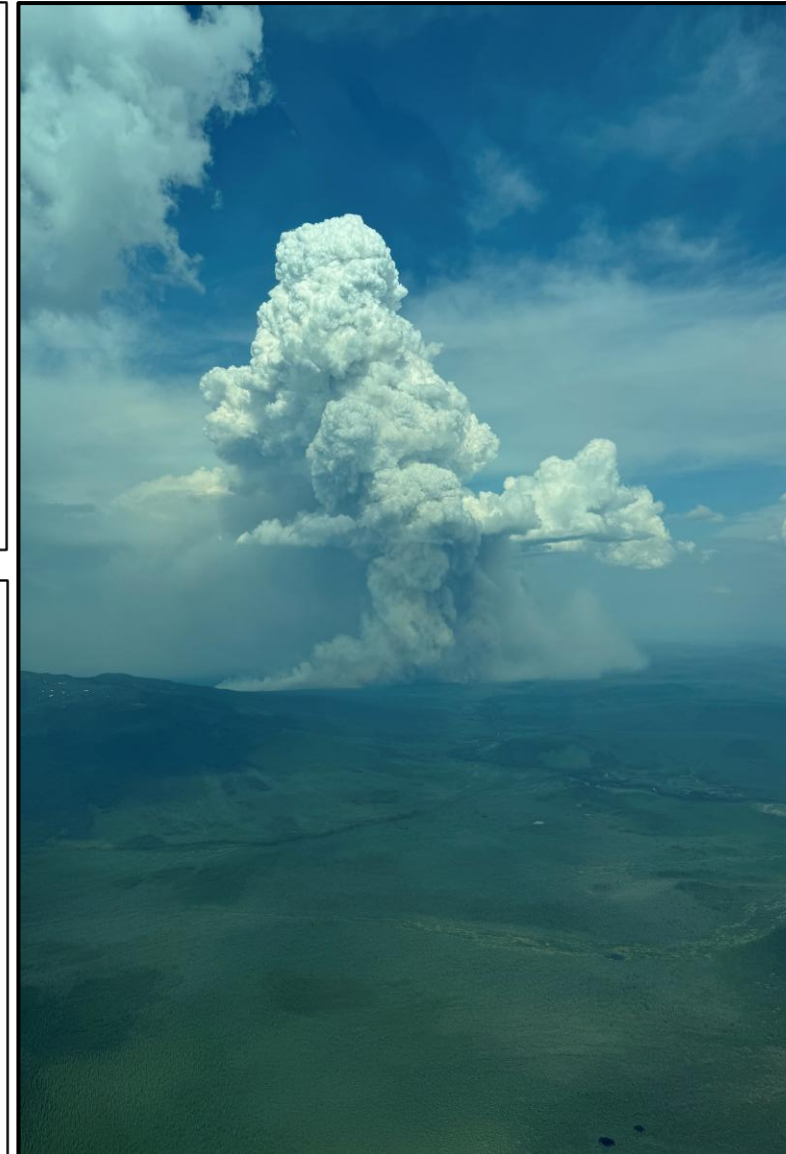
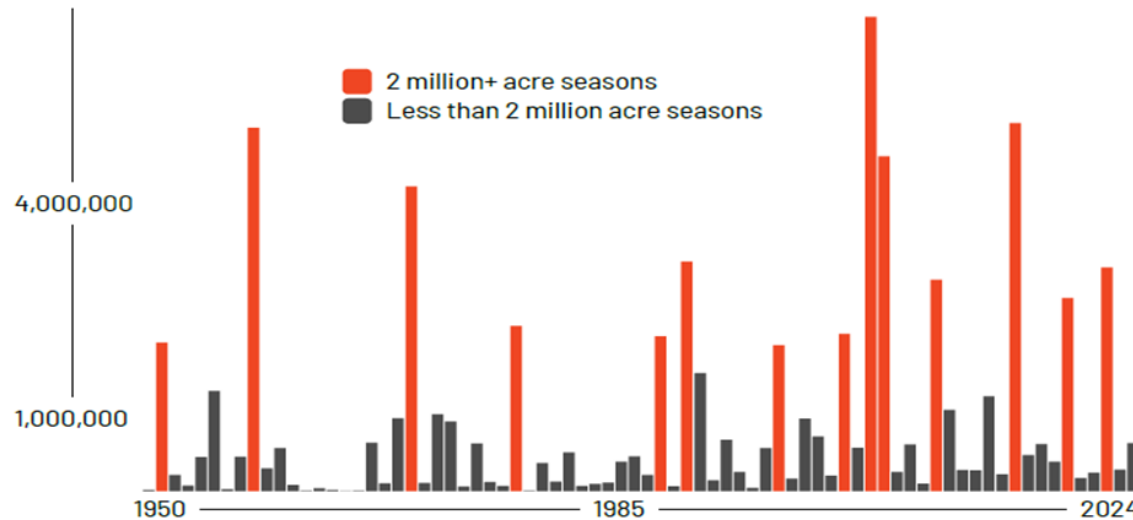
Recent 2004-2023 area burned



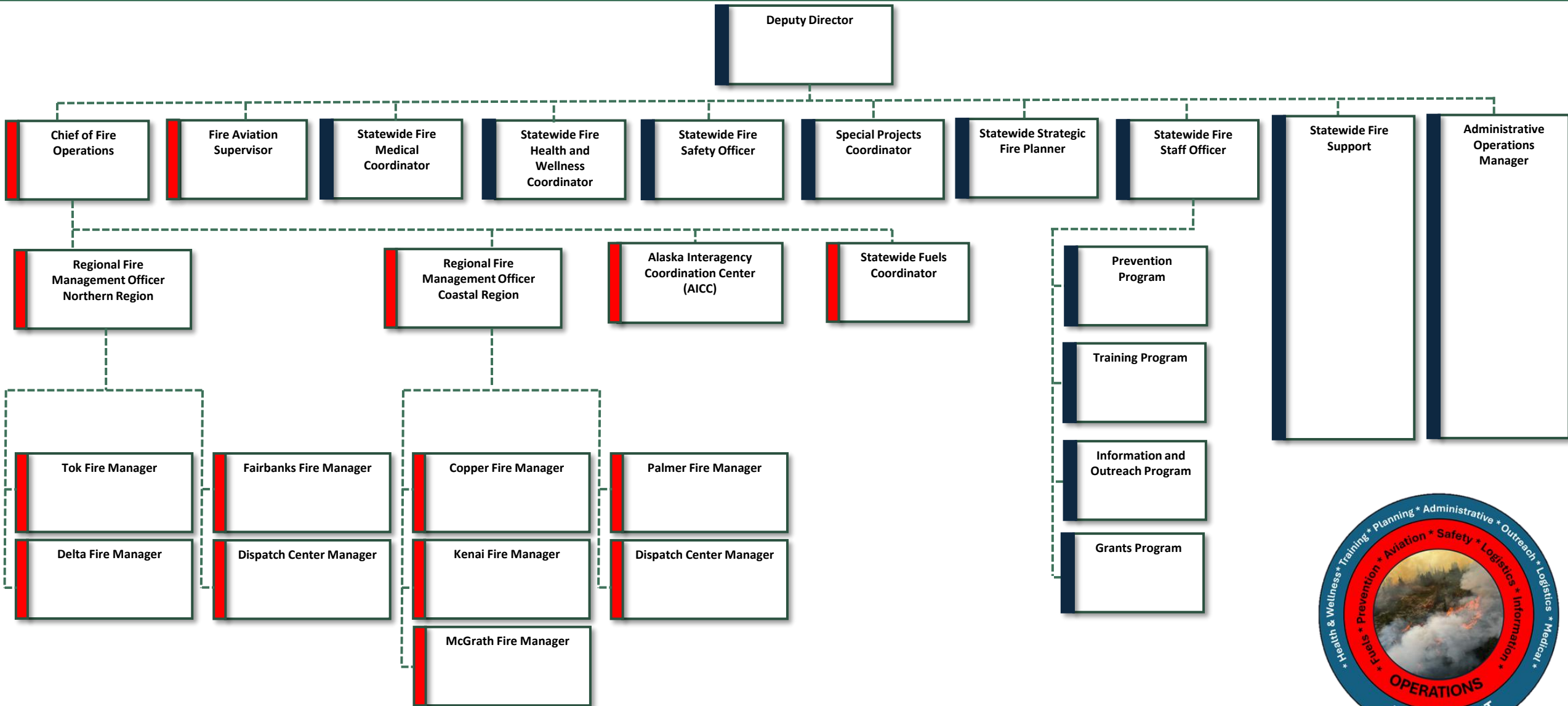
LARGE SEASONS DOUBLED

Alaska is experiencing more wildfire, and severe fire seasons, when over two million acres burn, are twice as common as they were 30 years ago.

7,000,000 acres burned in Alaska



Organizational Structure – Fire Program



Partner Agencies



- **Initial fire operations (0 hours – 72 hours)**

- DFFP coordinates with state, local and federal agencies supporting the initial response
 - Department of Transportation and Public Facilities: Road closure and traffic control support
 - Department of Public Safety: Evacuation and traffic control enforcement
 - Alaska National Guard (AKNG): Initial attack aerial firefighting support



- **Extended fire operations (72 hours and beyond)**

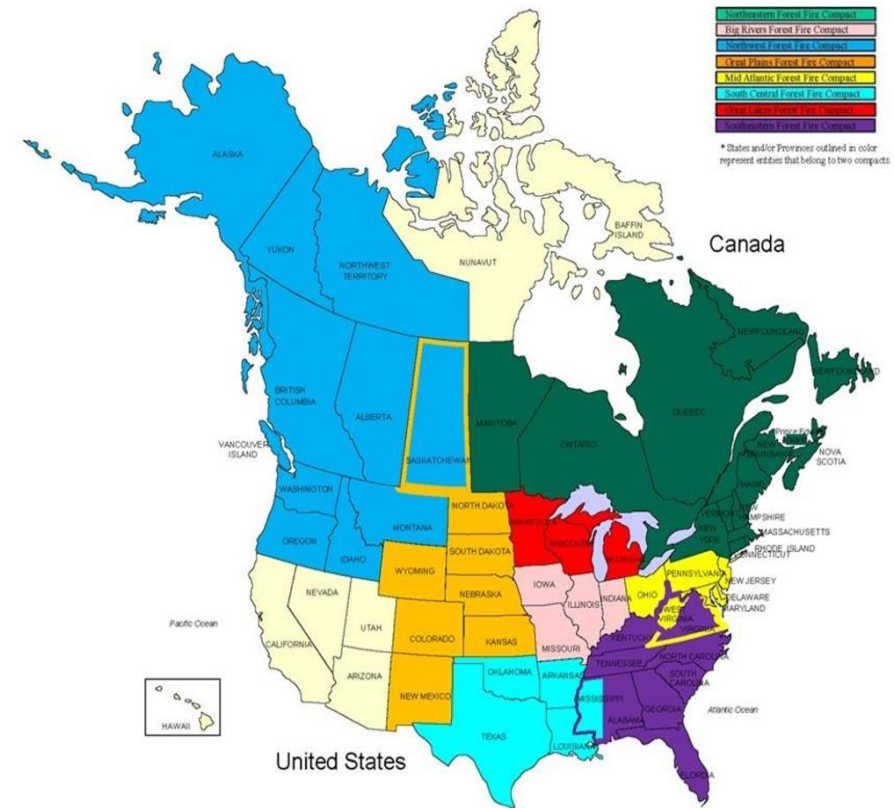
- DFFP coordinates with State Emergency Operation Centers to integrate AKNG resources into the operational cycle if needed
 - Traffic and checkpoint management
 - Aerial firefighting support
 - Logistical movement and support





Agreements and Compacts

- The State can utilize three different agreements/compacts when importing firefighting resources that outlines billing methods and procedures.
- **State to State Agreements:** When utilizing “state to state” agreements Alaska and the other states bill each other for firefighting effort expenses.
- **Northwest Compact (NWC):** When utilizing the NWC agreement, parties of the agreement bill each other for fire suppression efforts. (Alberta, British Columbia, Northwest Territories, Saskatchewan, Yukon Territories, Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and Hawaii)
- **Alaska Master Cooperative Wildland Fire Management and Stafford Act Response Agreement:** When utilizing the master agreement, the national ordering system is used. (Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Alaska Fire Service, U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Indian Affairs)



Seasonal Recap



Alaska's 2025 Fire Potential Outlook

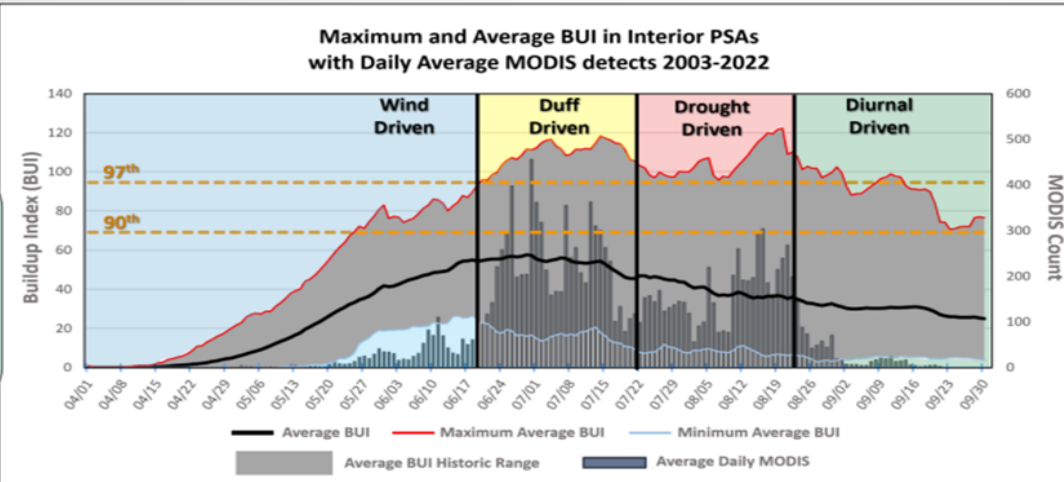


Outlook for Wind-Driven Stage
Snowmelt – Mid June

A below normal snowpack throughout the south may lead to an early start to the 2025 Alaska Fire Season. Fuels in Southwest, South Central, and the Panhandle would be exposed and available for drying early in the spring. However, one significant snowfall could change conditions significantly. [Click](#) for details.



Outlook for Duff-Driven Stage
Mid June – Mid July



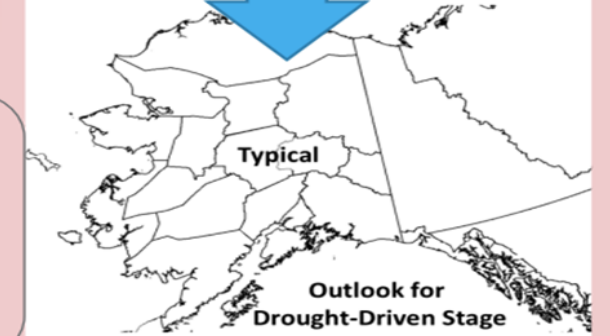
By the heart of fire season, melt date is irrelevant and activity depends on fuel dryness, current weather, and lightning or human ignitions. Resistance to control will increase and there will be some very busy periods driven by lightning, low humidity, and wind events. [Click](#) for details.

With the likelihood of end-of-season rains arriving on time, mid to late August fires will no longer be supported by deeper fuel layers. Existing fires will show some activity during the day, but resistance will be minimal. [Click](#) for details.



Outlook for Diurnal-Driven Stage
Early August – Snowfall

As mid-summer sets in, expect most areas to have dry deep-duff layers, leading to the stage where fires become more difficult to manage. If fires from the duff stage are uncontrolled, they will exhibit higher resistance to extinguishment and increase acreage during hot, dry periods. [Click](#) for details.



Outlook for Drought-Driven Stage
Mid July – Early August



Seasonal Recap

Season Start

- Season began slowly despite low snowpack in Southcentral Alaska
- Only 38 fires recorded in first half of June (lowest since records began in 1993)

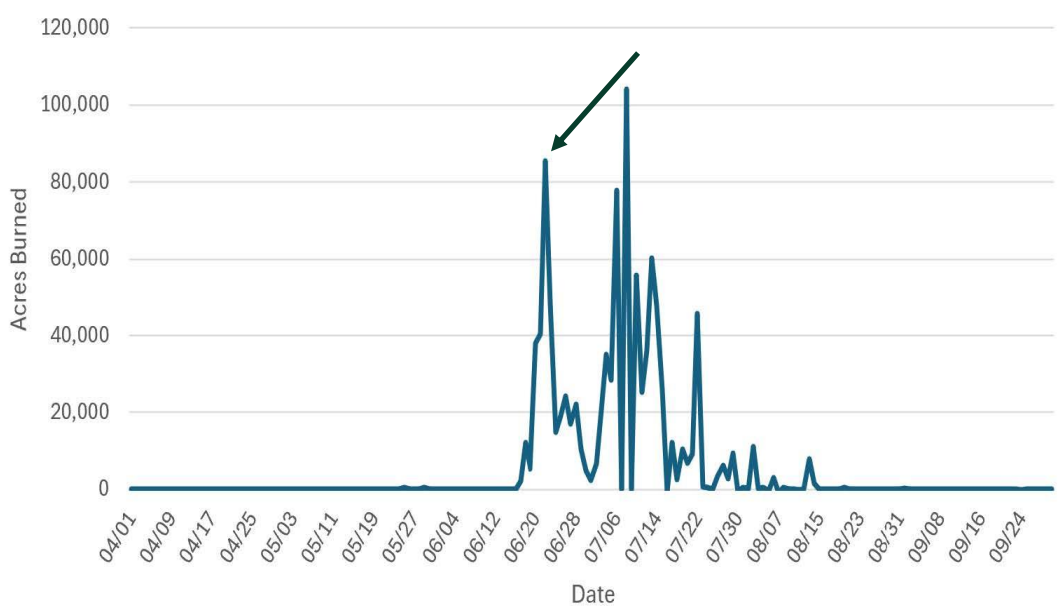
Major Weather Events

- Rapid shift in weather patterns in second week of June
- Significantly higher temperatures north of Alaska Range
- Multiple days of intense lightning activity
- June 15-21 weather surge: 173 new fires from ~54,800 lightning strikes
- Red Flag conditions (June 21-22) led to extreme fire behavior

Community Impact

- ~400 Alaskan residents evacuated from communities of Fairbanks, Healy and Tok
- Parks Highway temporary closure and traffic delays for over 14 days
- 45 residences and 43 outbuildings destroyed
- Power lines, fiber optic lines, and cell towers affected
- 276 miles of fire line constructed to protect Alaskan values

2025 Daily Acres Burned (Growth)



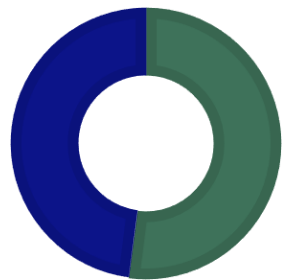
Seasonal Recap



Acres Burned in Alaska by Date and Fire Season

As of November 16, 2025, Alaska reported:

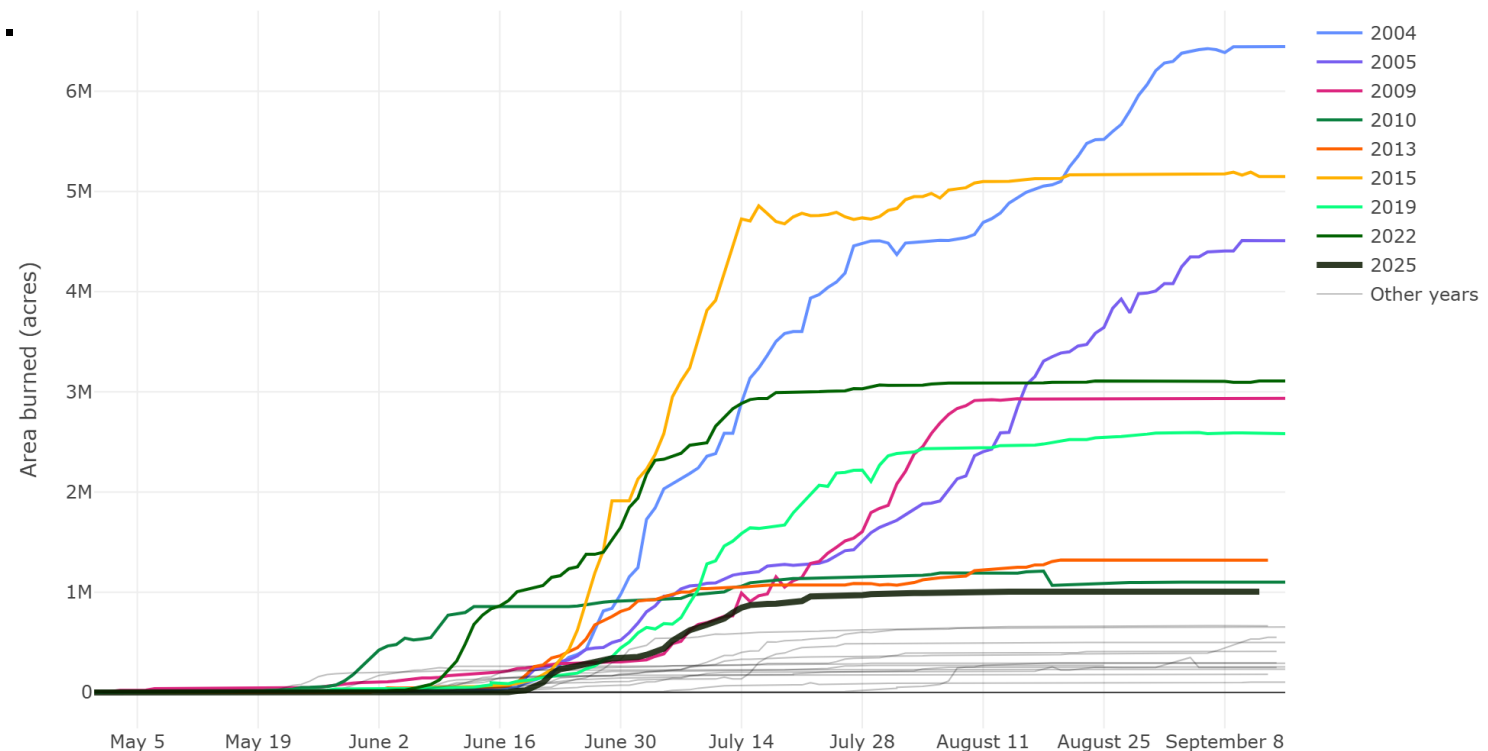
467 wildfires and 1,006,183 acres burned.



- 243 DFFP protection fires
- 224 Federal protection fires

This figure surpasses the 20-year average of one million acres burned annually.

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



Resources Mobilized to Alaska



Resources Mobilized to Alaska

~3,520 total resource orders filled with Lower 48 resources



43 crew orders filled with **899** crew members

- Five National Interagency Coordination Center jet loads mobilized 19 crews to Alaska



2,620 overhead orders

Including:

- Two Complex Incident Management Team
- Four Type three teams – 10 orders
- 77 Smokejumper loads
- Engine personnel



20 aircraft

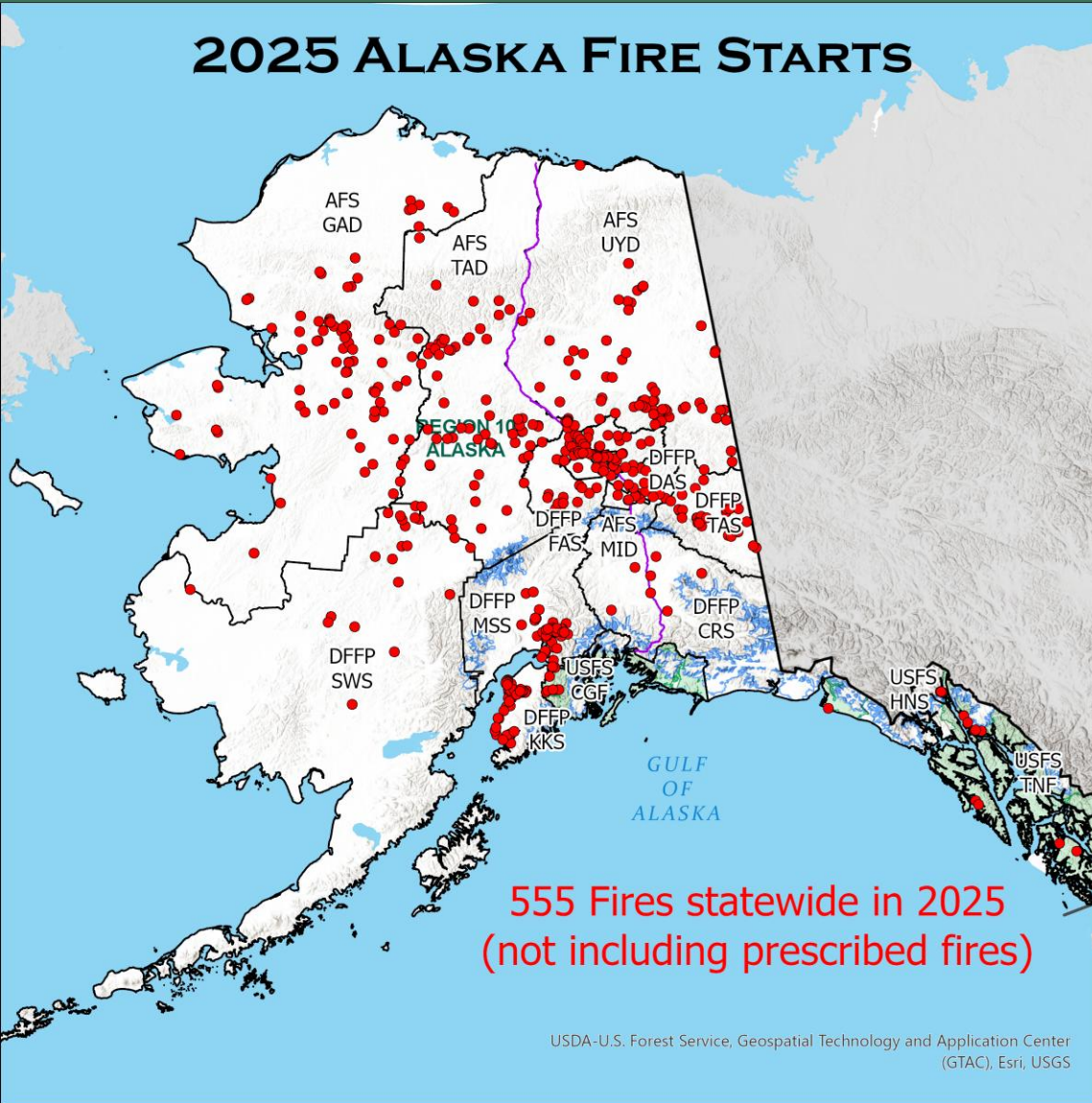
- 12 single engine airtankers
- Three tactical aircraft (fixed wing)
- Four helicopters
- One fixed wing, passenger



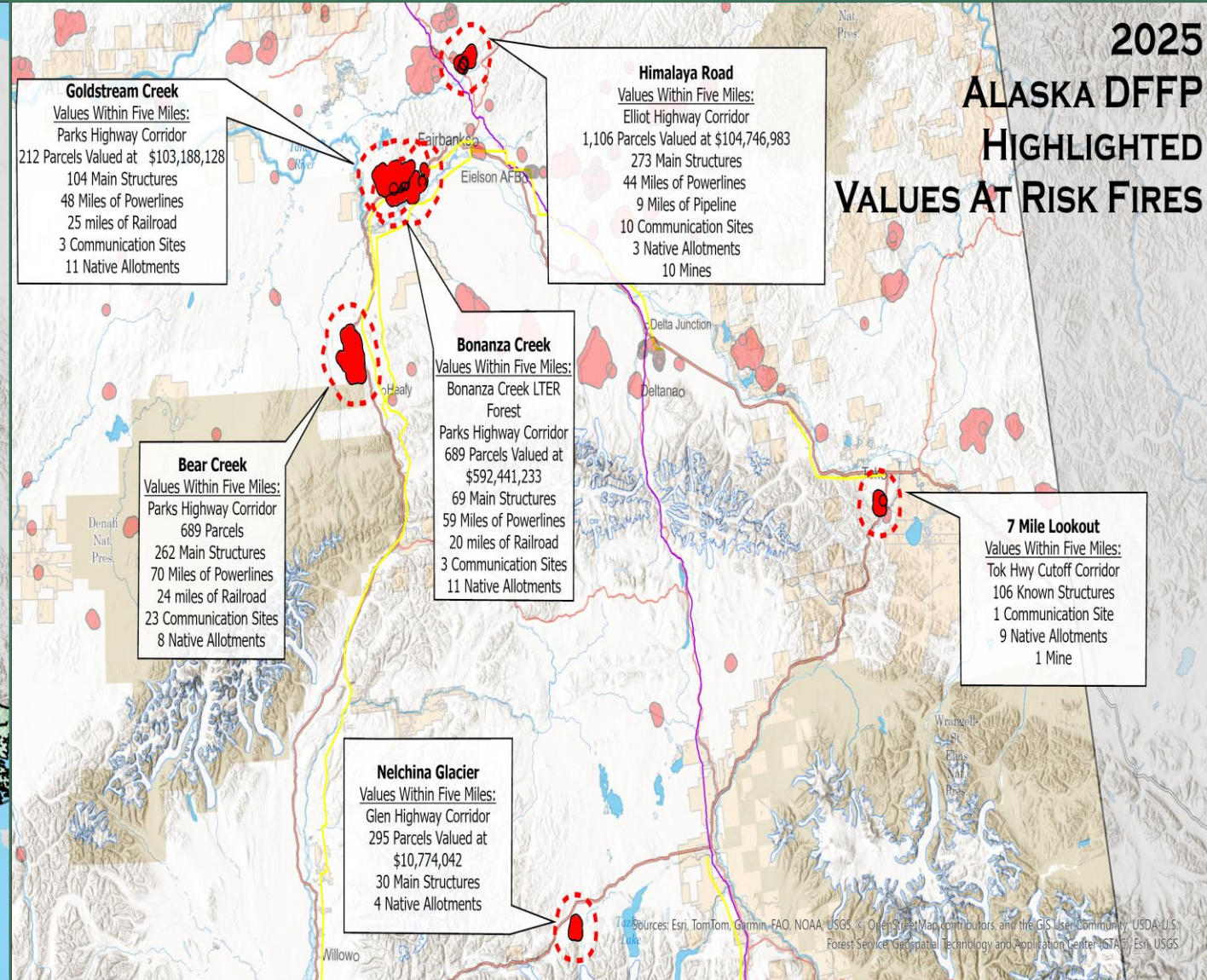
Statewide Fires in Alaska

(Figures are in whole dollars)

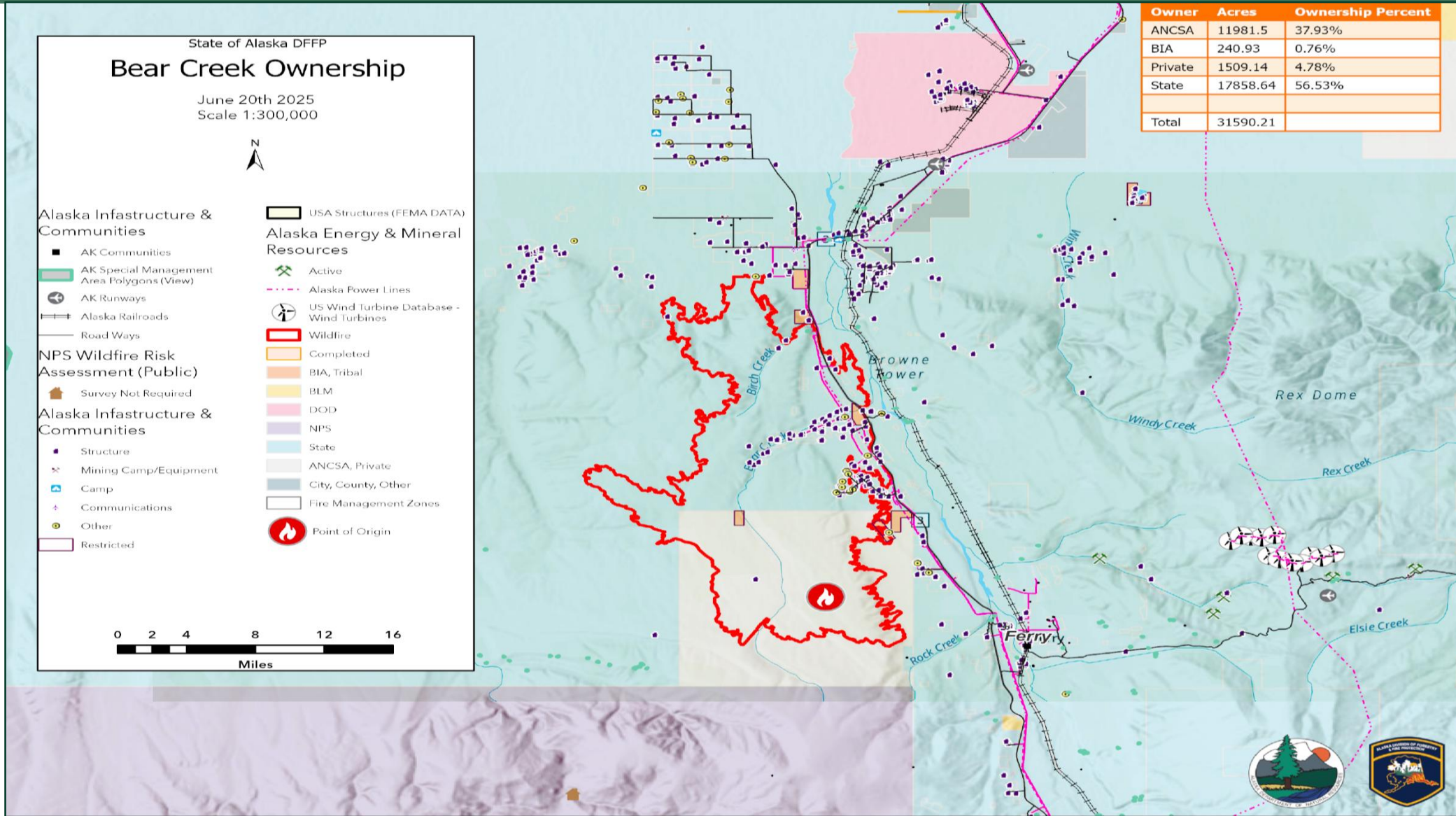
2025 ALASKA FIRE STARTS



2025 ALASKA DFFP HIGHLIGHTED VALUES AT RISK FIRES



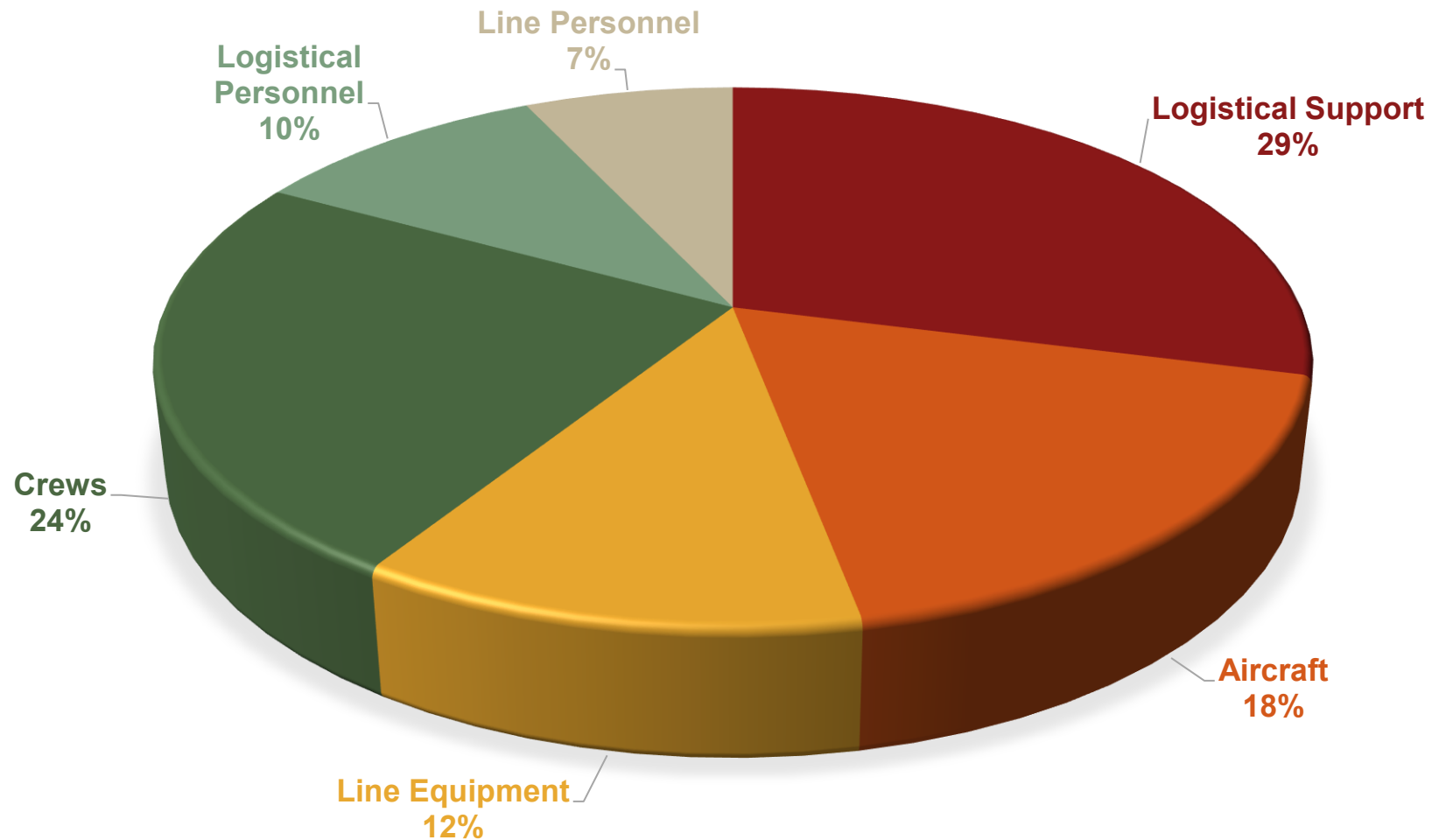
Bear Creek Fire



Fire Cost Categories



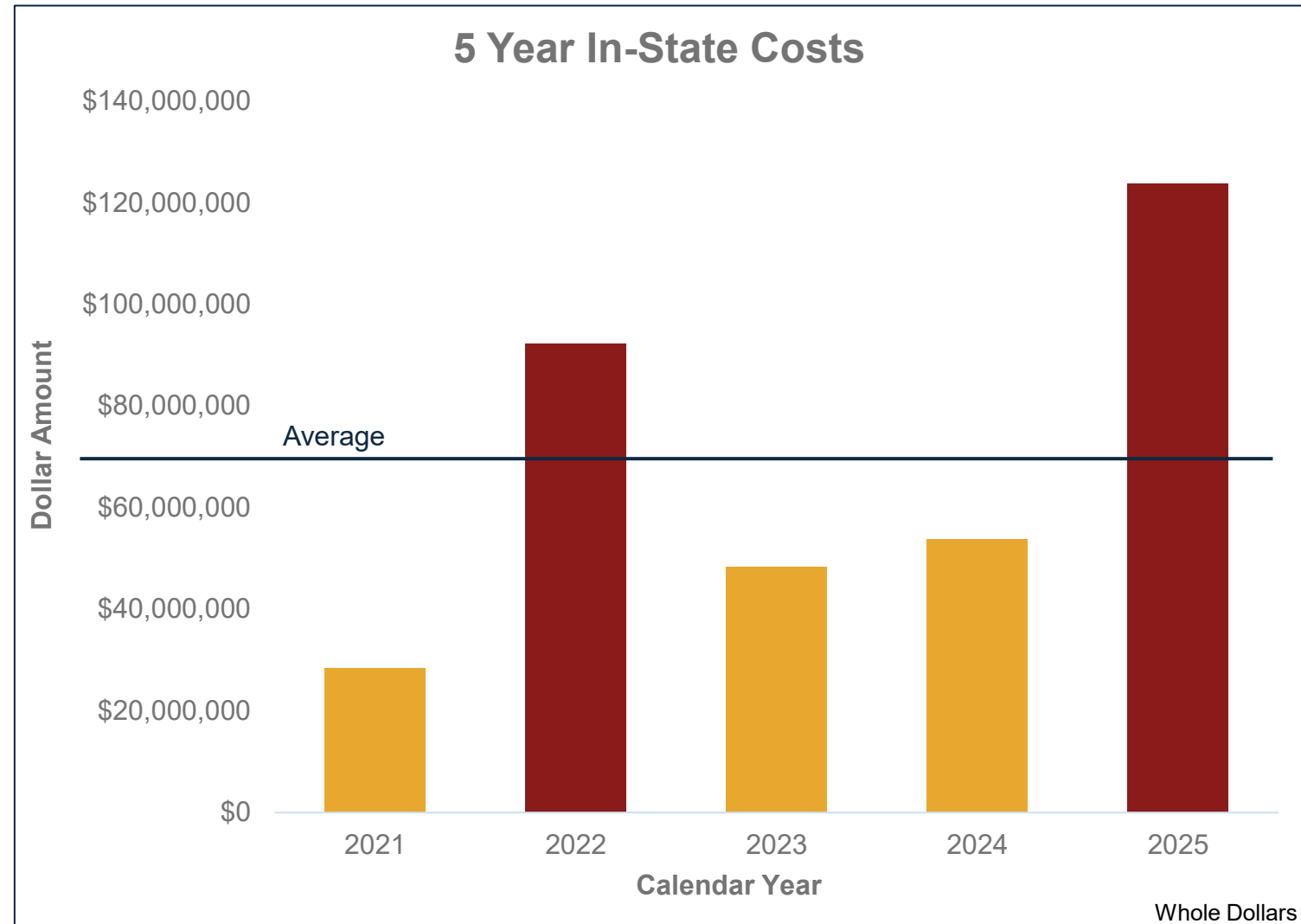
Standard Large Roadside Incident in Alaska





In-State Fire Costs

- In-state fire costs averaged \$68 million annually (2021-2025)
- Rising costs of firefighting:
 - Larger, longer and more intense wildland fire seasons
 - Expansion of the wildland urban interface. (more values at risk)
 - Aviation 128% increase 2015-25
 - Inflation and general operational costs increase of 36%
- Strategic investment in preparedness, prevention, and mitigation can reduce future suppression costs



All-Hazard Response



Typhoon Halong West Coast Alaska

Severe impacts from Typhoon Halong across 30 communities on Alaska's West Coast.

Assisted October – December 2025

DFFP was actively engaged in the response supporting the State Emergency Operations Center in stabilization, recovery, and winterization efforts.

DFFP

- Deployed resources including crews to assist with storm cleanup and village restoration efforts
- Assisted the Alaska Organized Militia with winterization and debris removal
- Assisted with cargo flights to bring supplies to affected region, largely off the road system
- Involved in search and rescue efforts, including the rescue of 18 dogs in Kwigillingok

Resources mobilized

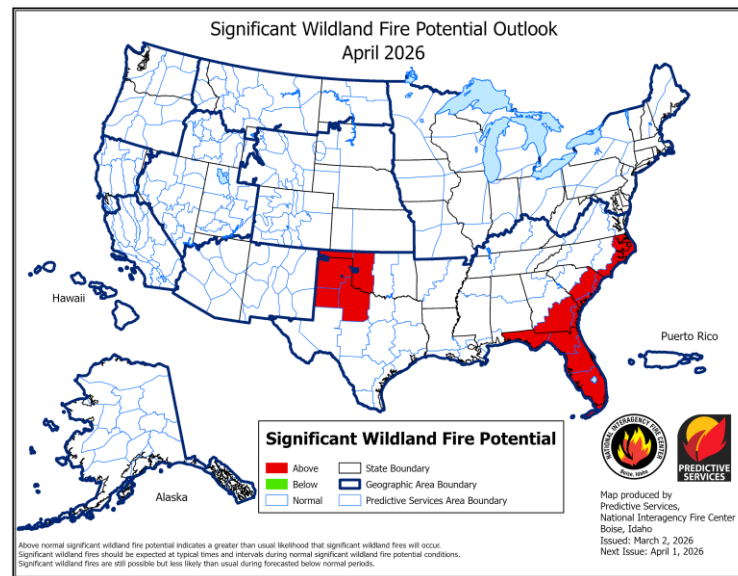
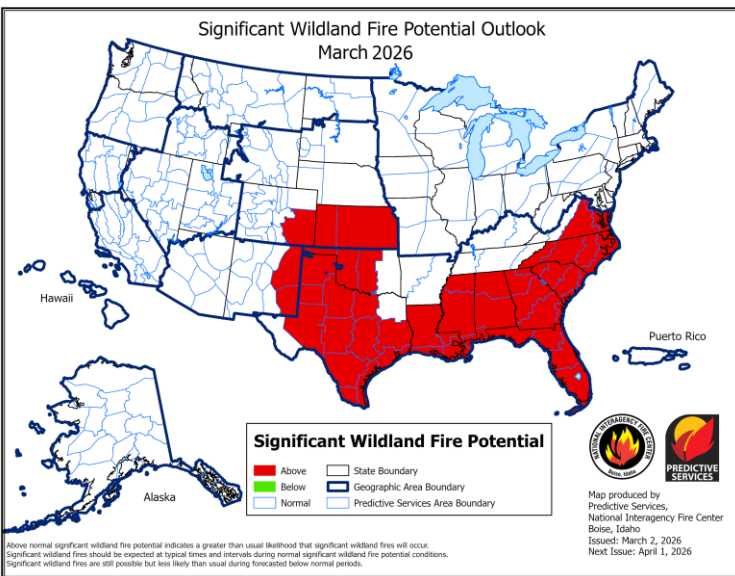
- 162 overhead (mobilized or supporting)
- five boats, three pieces of heavy equipment
- two mobile shower units
- eight fixed wing aircraft, two helicopters





2026 Fire Season Preview: Fire Potential Outlook

- **Alaska is expected to experience normal fire potential over the next four months, with winter precipitation and cold conditions keeping activity minimal into April**
- March is forecast to remain colder than normal, helping preserve the statewide snowpack into late spring
- El Nino – Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is expected to shift from weak La Nina to weak El Nino, a pattern loosely associated with smaller fire seasons but not determinative
- Fire potential will stay near zero through March, rise slightly with human-caused starts in late April, and gradually increase through May, peaking in late June, consistent with a typical Alaska fire season



Thank You



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