

Wildland Fire Protection Program Overview

House Resources Committee



Presented by:

Norm McDonald, Deputy Director, Division of Forestry and Fire Protection

Alaska Department of Natural Resources

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Mission and Vision



Alaska's Fire Protection Program Mission:

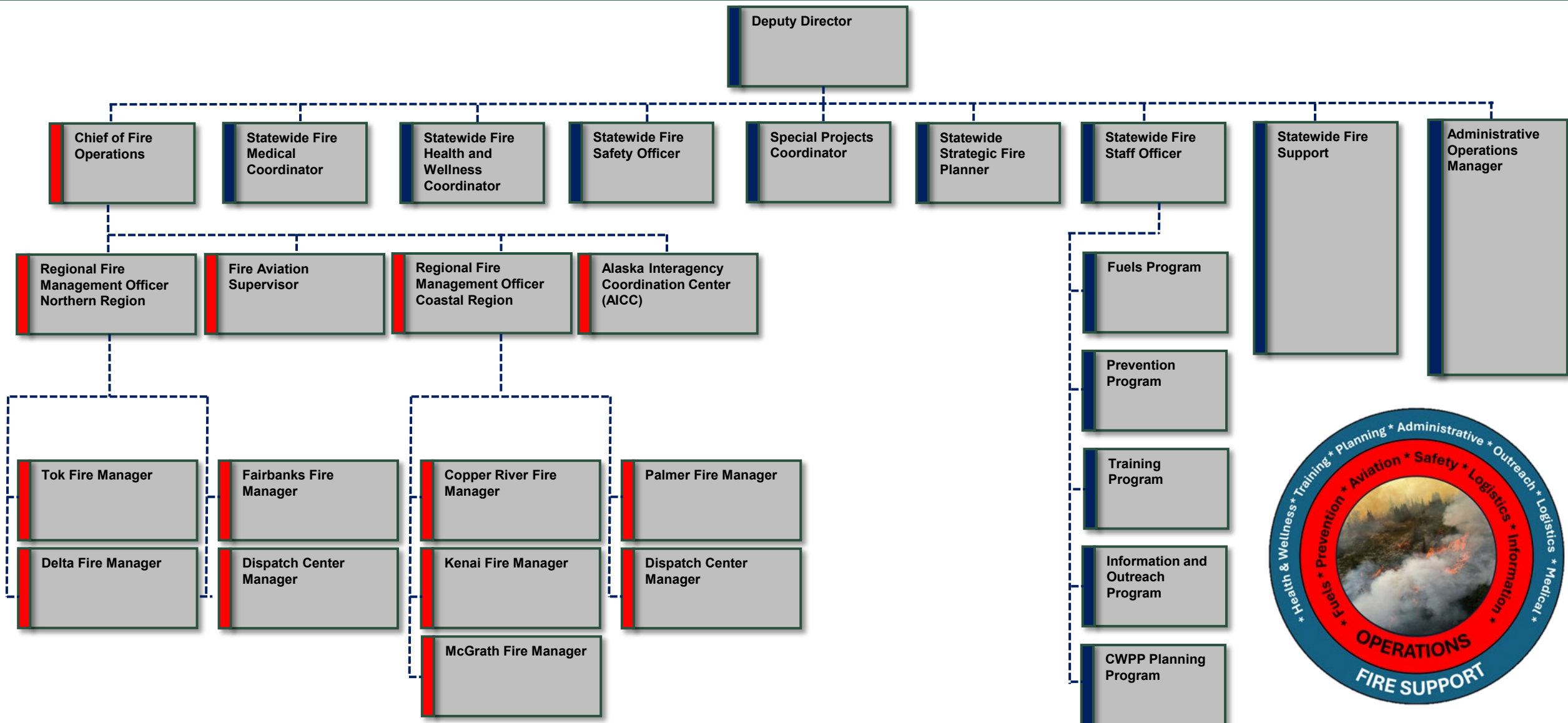
- Safely manage wildland fires that pose a threat to life, property, and critical infrastructure on 150 million acres of land throughout the State of Alaska

Alaska's Fire Protection Program Essential Functions:

- Investments in the program's employees, equipment, facilities, and partnerships are the top priorities
 - **Preparedness:** Well trained, well-equipped, and available workforce
 - **Prevention:** Public education, enforcement, and community outreach
 - **Mitigation:** Resilient landscapes and fire-adapted communities
 - **Suppression:** Safe and effective wildfire response



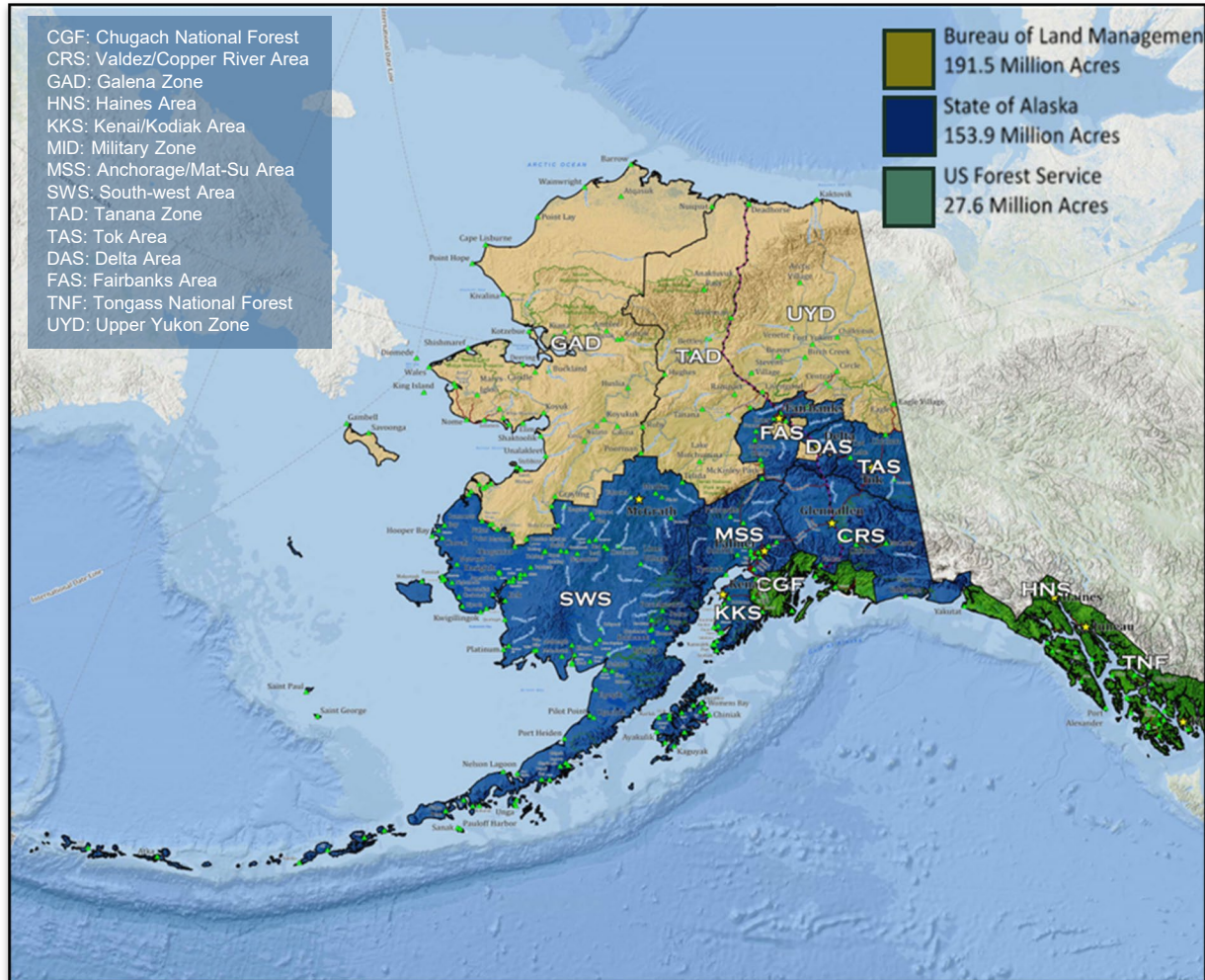
Fire Program: Organizational Structure



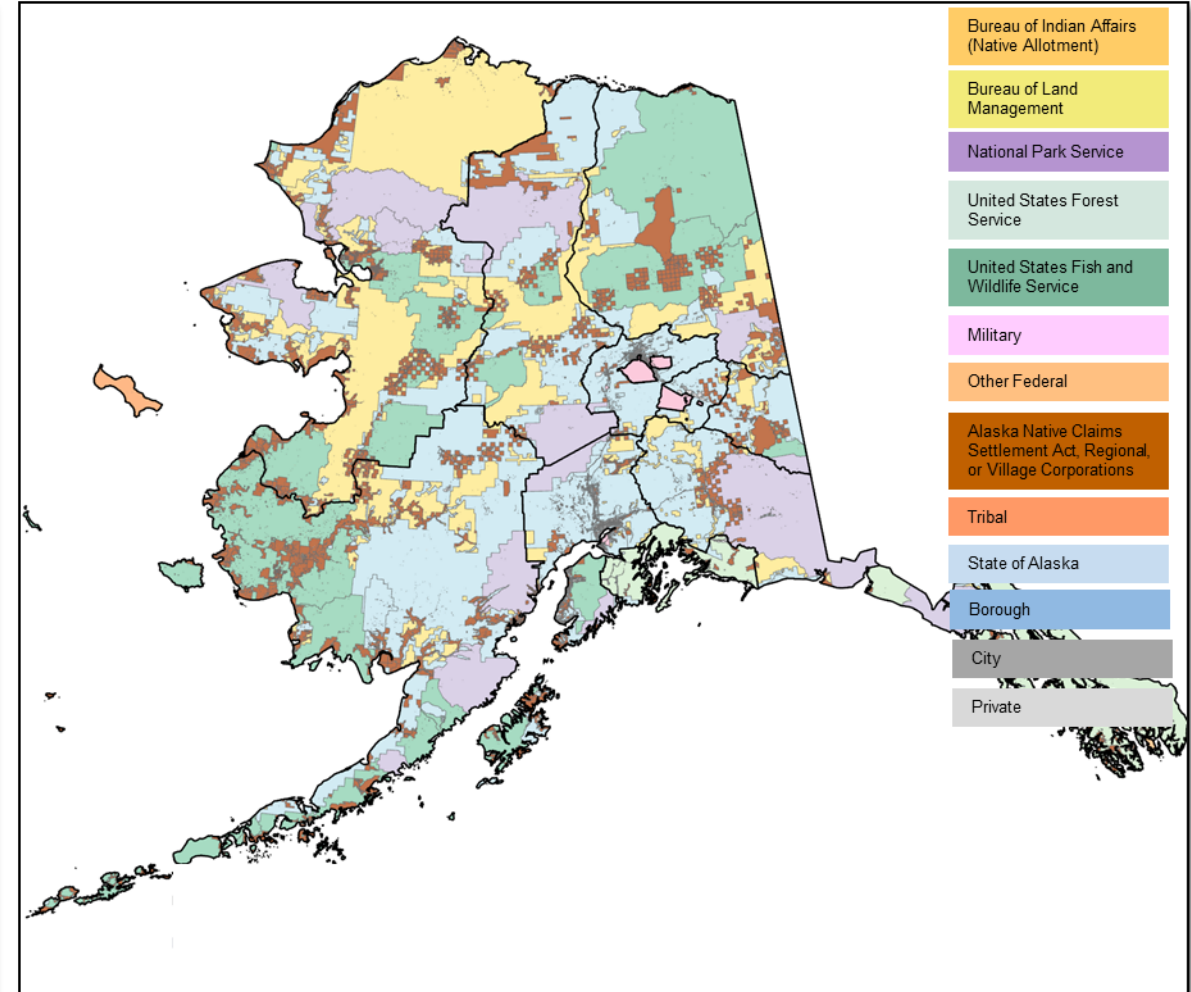
Interagency Cooperation



Protection Agencies



Jurisdictional Agencies

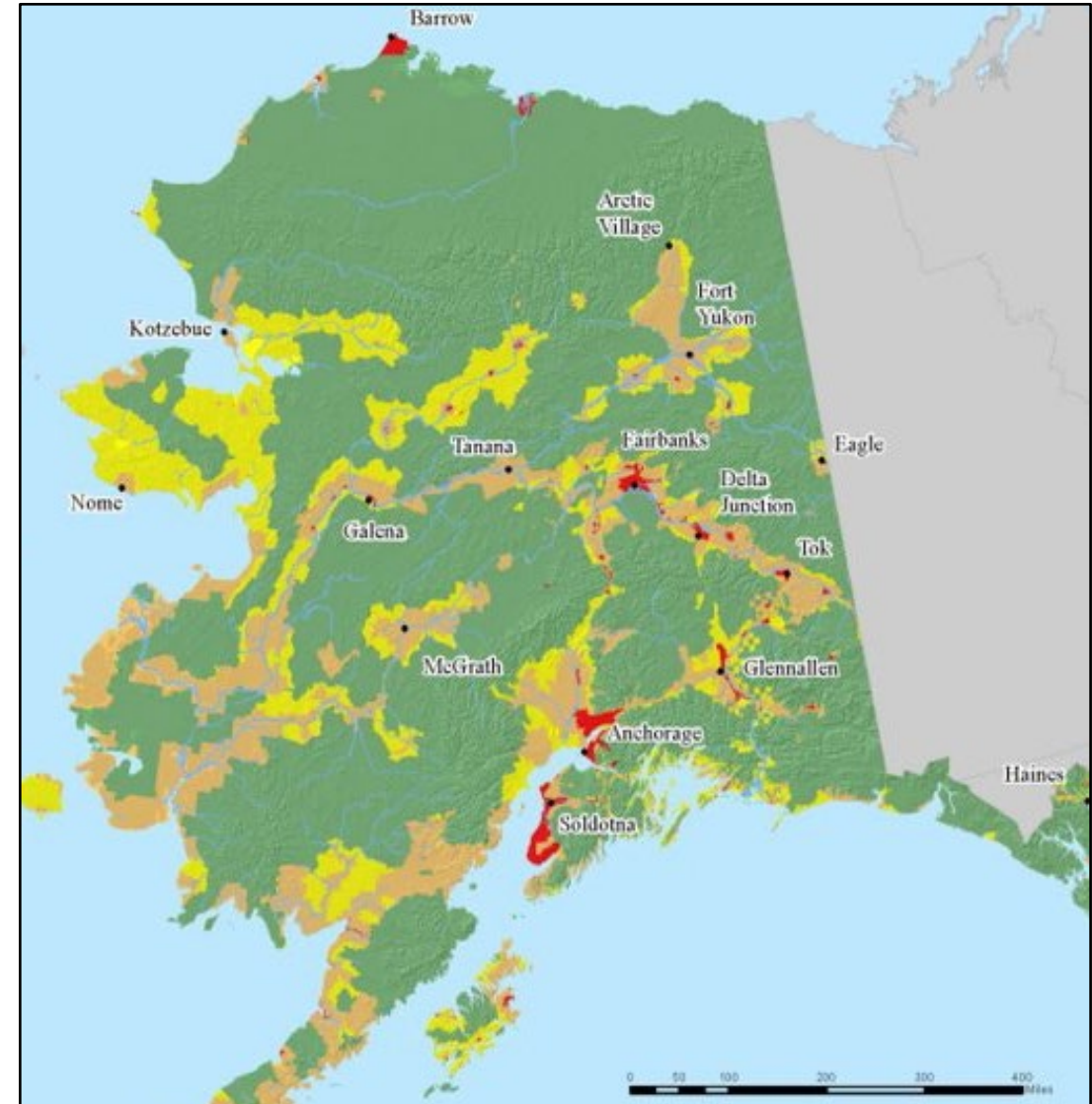


Division of Forestry and Fire Protection (DOF) protects 154 million acres – includes almost all the roadside areas of the state (where most Alaskans live)

Alaska Interagency Fire Management Plan



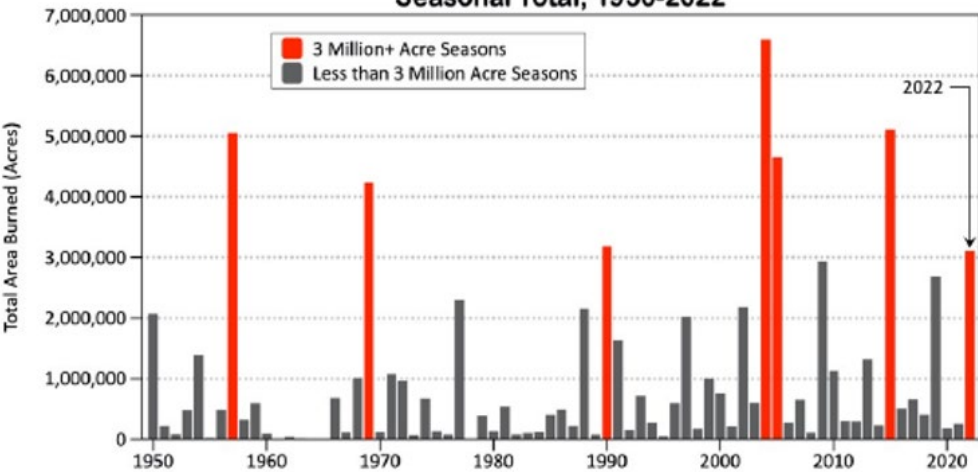
- **Critical:** The highest priority for suppression actions; includes Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas and other locations where there is an immediate threat to human life, primary residences, and critical infrastructure
- **Full:** High priority, but below critical; encompasses cultural sites,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



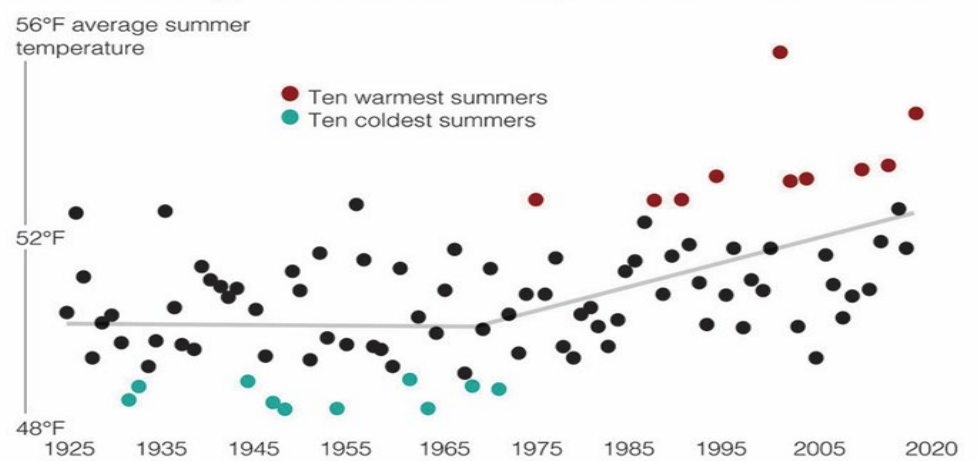


Alaska's Changing Wildfire Environment

Alaska Wildfire Acreage
Seasonal Total, 1950-2022



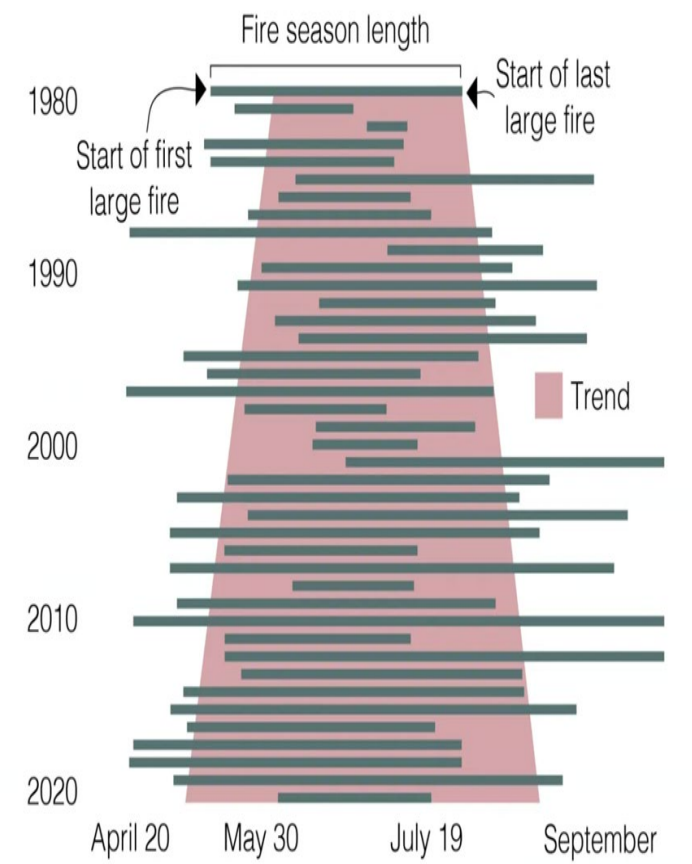
Increasing summer temperature in Alaska



Credit: Thoman, R. (2020). Summer's getting hotter. *Alaska's Changing Wildfire Environment*, Grabinski, Z. and H. R. McFarland, www.frames.gov/afsc/acwe.
Data source: NOAA/National Snow and Ice Data Center & National Weather Service



Alaska's lengthening fire season



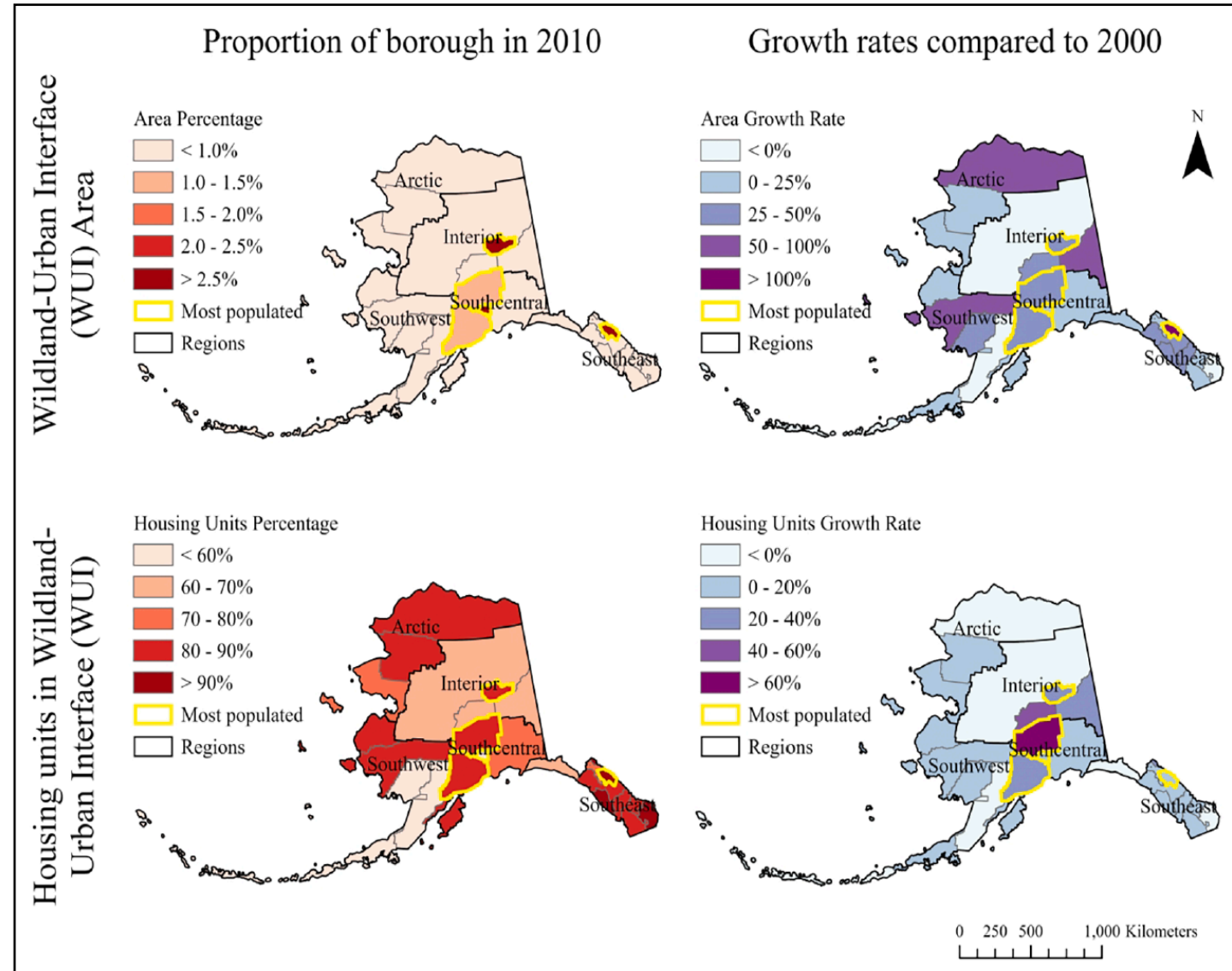
Credit: Grabinski, Z. (2020). Longer fire season. *Alaska's Changing Wildfire Environment*, Grabinski, Z. and H. R. McFarland, www.frames.gov/afsc/acwe.
Data source: Alaska Interagency Coordination Center



Alaska's Growing Wildland Urban Interface



- **73.5%** of Alaska's total housing units located in WUI zones
- **85%** of newly constructed housing units are being built in WUI zones
- **16.4%:** Alaska's population increase from 2000 (627,963) to 2020 (731,158)
- **5th:** Alaska ranks fifth nationally for state with highest percentage of housing units in WUI zones

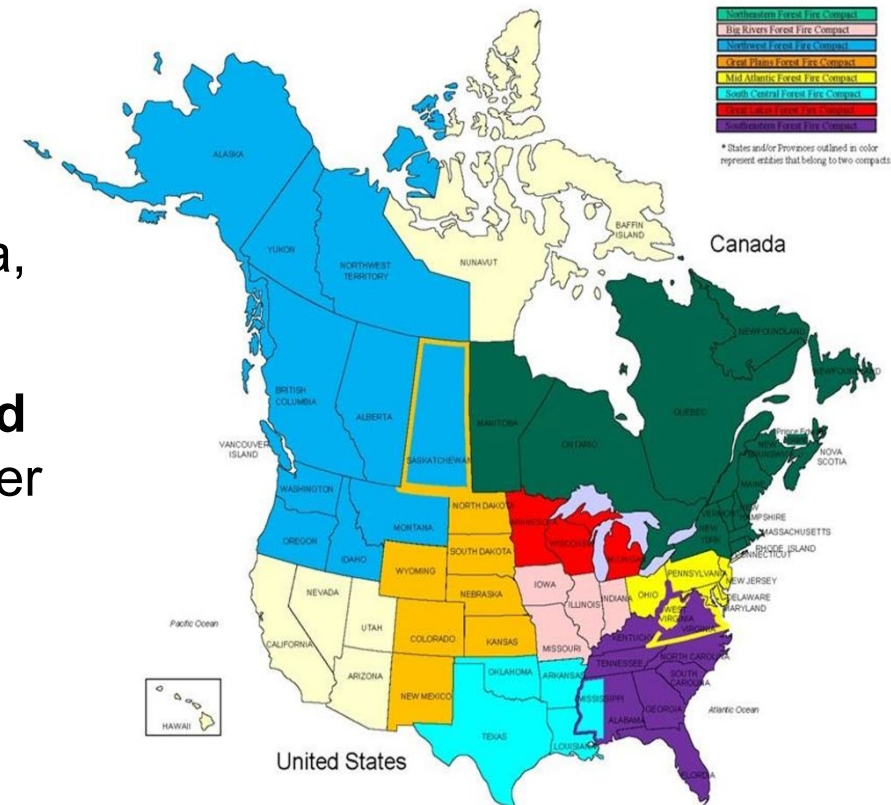


Agreements and Compacts



When importing firefighting resources, the State can utilize three different agreements/compacts 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 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 and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Indian Affairs



Cost of Using Lower-48 Resources

\$ in whole dollars



The cost to import firefighters and support staff far exceeds using Alaska resources.

Alaska DOF-Staffed Type 3 Incident Management Team

Seven-day Total Wages Only: \$430,893

Staffed with Outside Resources Type 3 Incident Management Team

Seven-day Total Wages Only: \$1,198,297 / With Travel: \$1,731,151

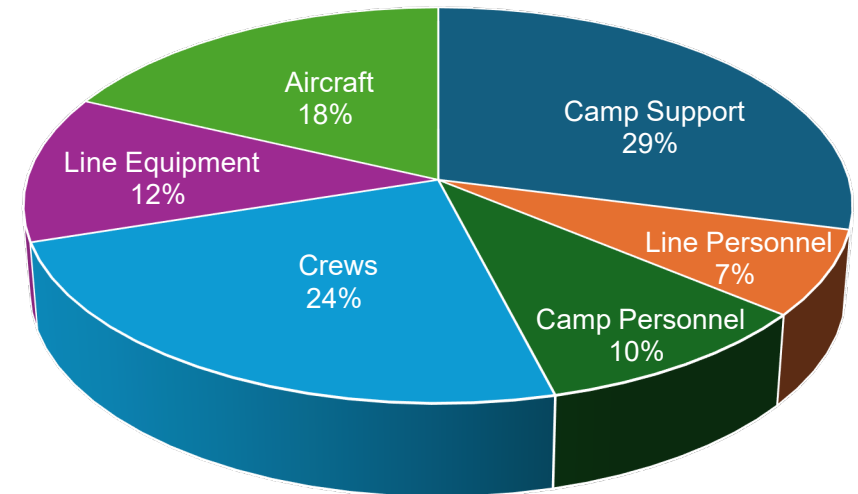
Alaska-Staffed 22-Person Wildfire Crew

Daily Rate Total: \$7,000

Staffed with Outside Resources 22-Person Wildfire Crew

Daily Rate Total: \$13,500

Average Incident Cost Breakout

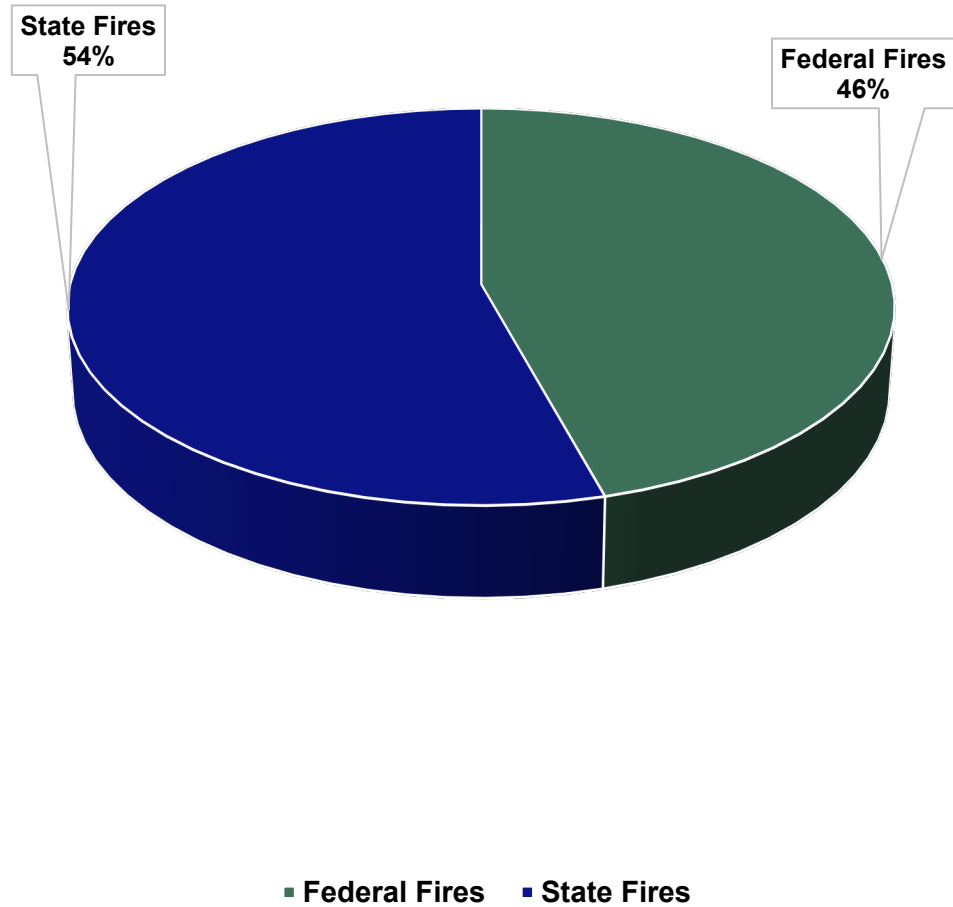




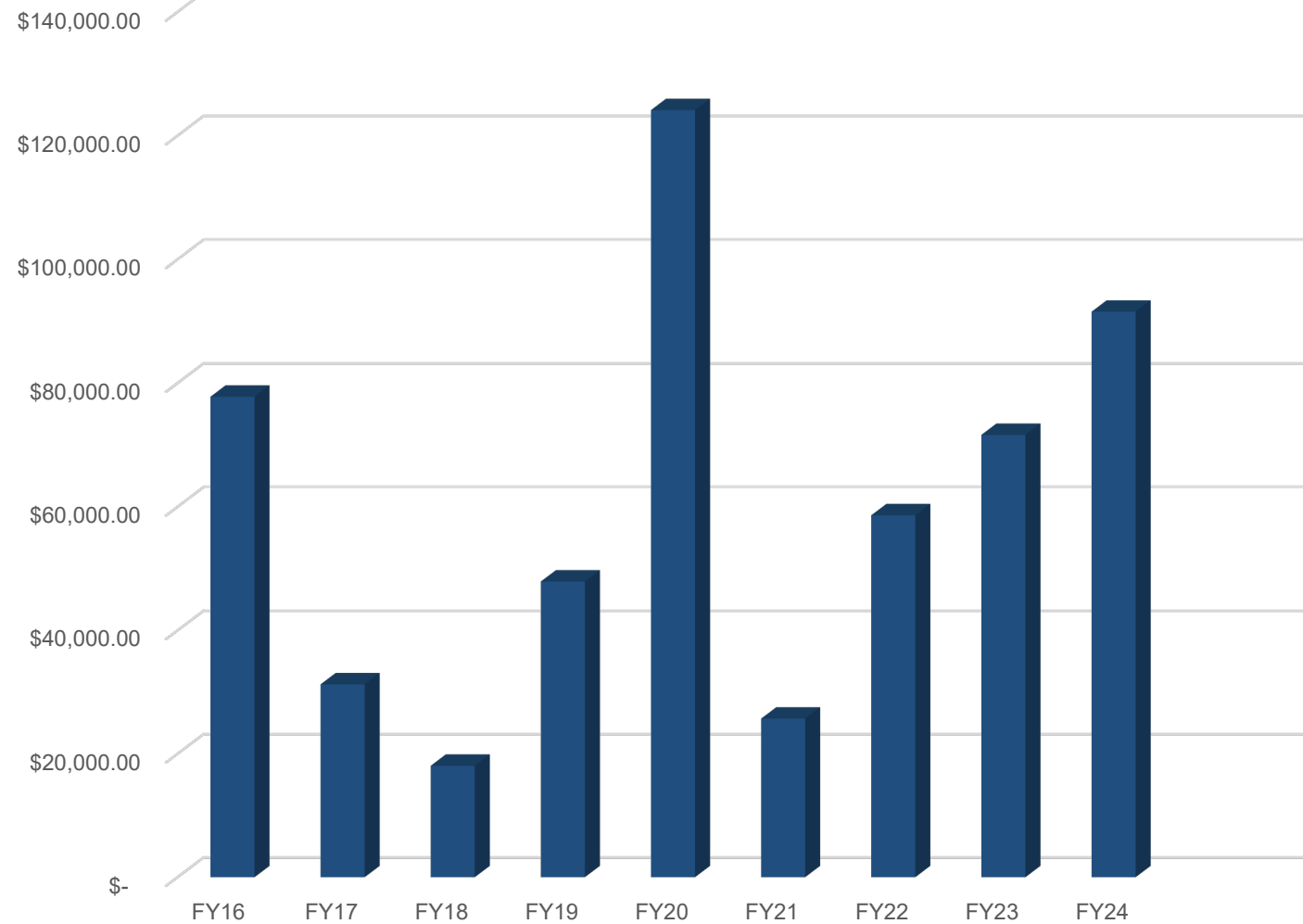
State vs. Federal Fiscal Responsibility

\$ in whole dollars

Five-Year Average Fiscal Responsibility



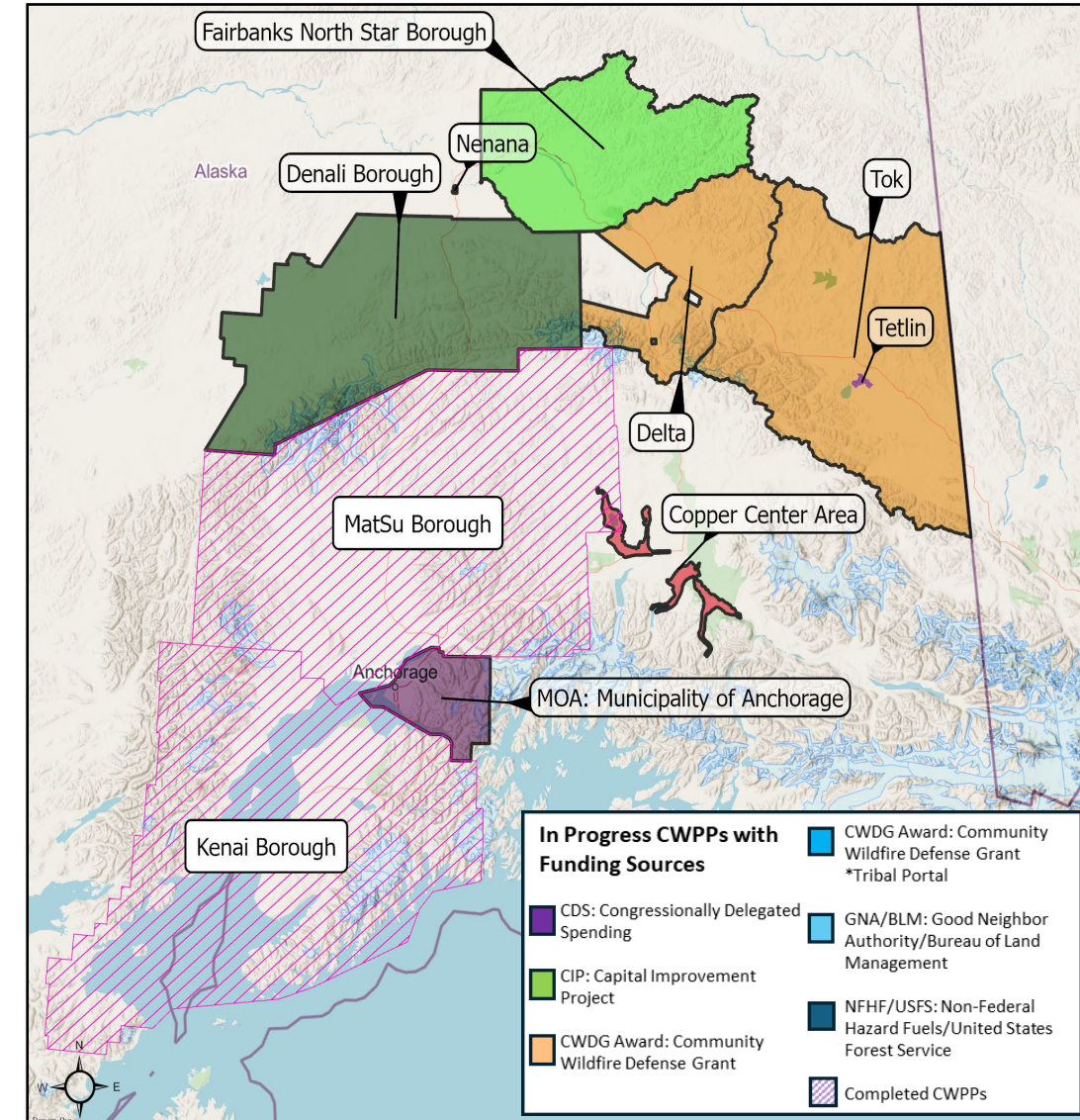
Nine-Year Fire and Prepositioning Costs



Preparedness: Planning

- Alaska Interagency Fire Management Plan
- Master Agreement, Stafford Act
- Fire department agreements, annual operating plans
- Evacuation planning
- Division strategic planning
- Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP)

Area	Project Stage	Timeline
Copper Center Area	In progress	06.30.2025
Delta	In progress	12.31.2025
Denali Borough	In progress	12.31.2024
Fairbanks NorthStar Borough	In progress	06.30.2025
Municipality of Anchorage	In progress	03.31.2025
Nenana	In progress	TBD, CY2027
Tetlin	In progress	TBD, CY2027
Tok	In progress	12.31.2025
Kenai Peninsula Borough	Completed	2022
Matanuska Susitna Borough	Completed	2021



Preparedness: Grants

Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG)

2025 Project Awardees

Golden Valley Electric Association	Matanuska Electric Association	Chugach Electric Association
Kenai Peninsula Borough	Matanuska Susitna Borough	Municipality of Anchorage
Dillingham	Aleknagik	Nenana
Tetlin		

Volunteer Fire Capacity Grant

2025 Awardees

Bayside VFD	Sutton VFD	Saint Paul Department of Public Safety
Homer VFD	Houston Fire Department	Native Village of Eagle
Talkeetna VFD	Chickaloon Fire Service, Inc.	Tok VFD
Caswell Lakes FSA #135	Haines VFD	Valdez Fire Department
Willow VFD	Sitka Fire Department	Gakona VFD
Kennicott/McCarthy VFD	Tri-Valley VFD	McKinley VFD
Glenn-Rich Fire Rescue	North Pole Fire Department	Ester VFD
Kenny Lake VFD	Chena-Goldstream Fire and Rescue	Western Emergency Services Area
Delta Junction VFD	Steese Area VFD	Moose Pass Volunteer Fire Company
Lowell Point VFD	Central Emergency Services	Seward Fire Department
Cooper Landing VFD	Bear Creek Fire/EMS Fire Department	Nikiski Fire Department

VFD: Volunteer Fire Department
EMS: Emergency Medical Services
FSA: Fire Service Area



Preparedness: Training

- DOF conducted interagency wildland fire classes across a range of subjects and disciplines training over 900 local, state, tribal, and federal fire fighters
- DOF hosted six academies and a statewide basic firefighter course in 2024, with 118 cadets graduating

2024 Academies

Chugiak – 2 Basic & Intermediate
 Fairbanks – 1 Initial Attack
 Palmer – 1 Prevention
 Virtual – 2 Basic Firefighter

2024 Statewide

Fairbanks – 5 courses
 Palmer – 8 courses
 Palmer – 1 Prevention
 Virtual – 2 Basic Firefighter

2024 Area Courses

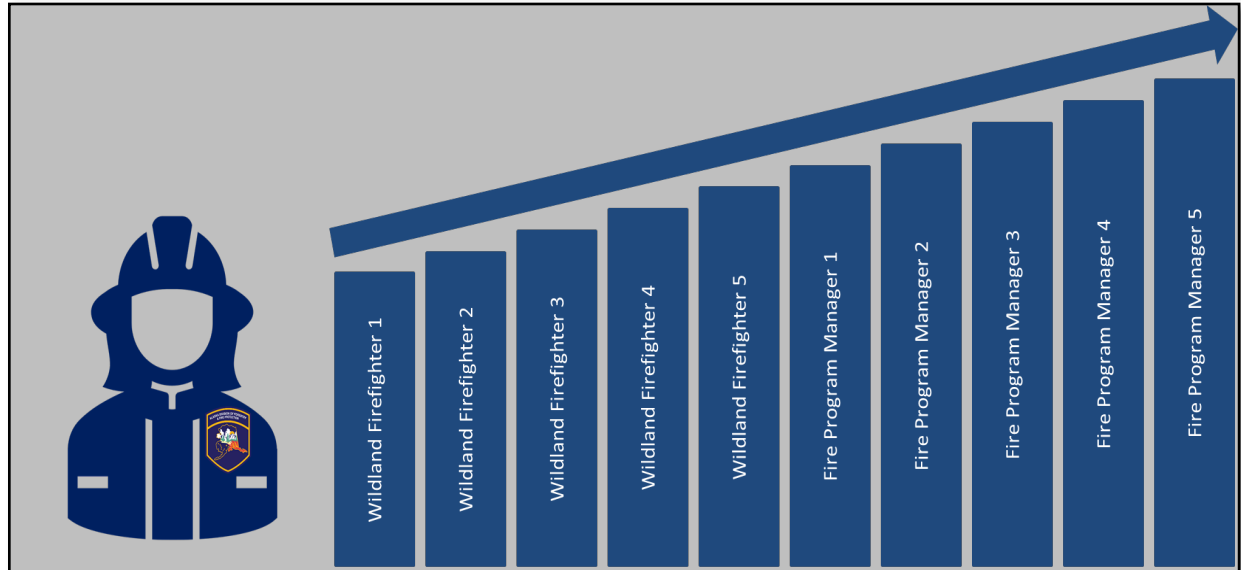
Fairbanks – 29 courses	Kenai – 22 courses
Delta – 5 courses	Palmer – 35 courses
Tok – 3 courses	Glennallen – 5 courses
Southwest – 12 courses total (McGrath, Chevak, Hooper Bay, Nikolai-, Kalskag, Quinhagak)	



Preparedness: Workforce Development



- Mission critical incentive pay
- Classification study
 - Create a classification series for wildland firefighters and fire program managers that identifies a clear line of progression and establishes a pattern of upward movement
- University of Alaska, Fairbanks (UAF) continuing education program to include certificates and associate and bachelor degrees
- UAF training fire crew



Prevention: Reducing Human Caused Fires

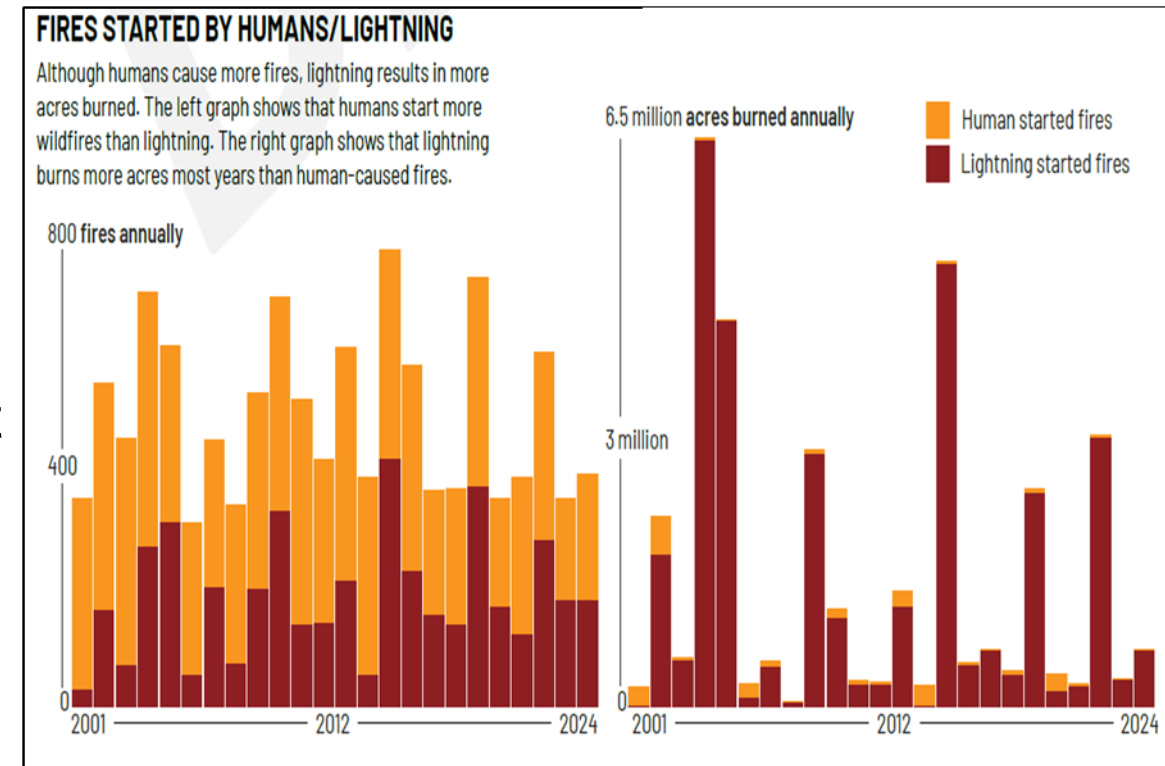


Enforcement

- In 2024, 98 percent of the 122 fires in “critical protection” were human caused and preventable
- 55 enforcement actions
- 127 documented warnings

Community Outreach and Education

- Staffed over 80 events in 2024; engagement with 196,390 people
- Developed Alaska-specific wildland prevention comic book to educate young Alaskans
- Produced two public service announcements featuring Spruce the Moose, focusing on Firewise practices and campfire safety



Graphic source: Alaska Fire Science Consortium

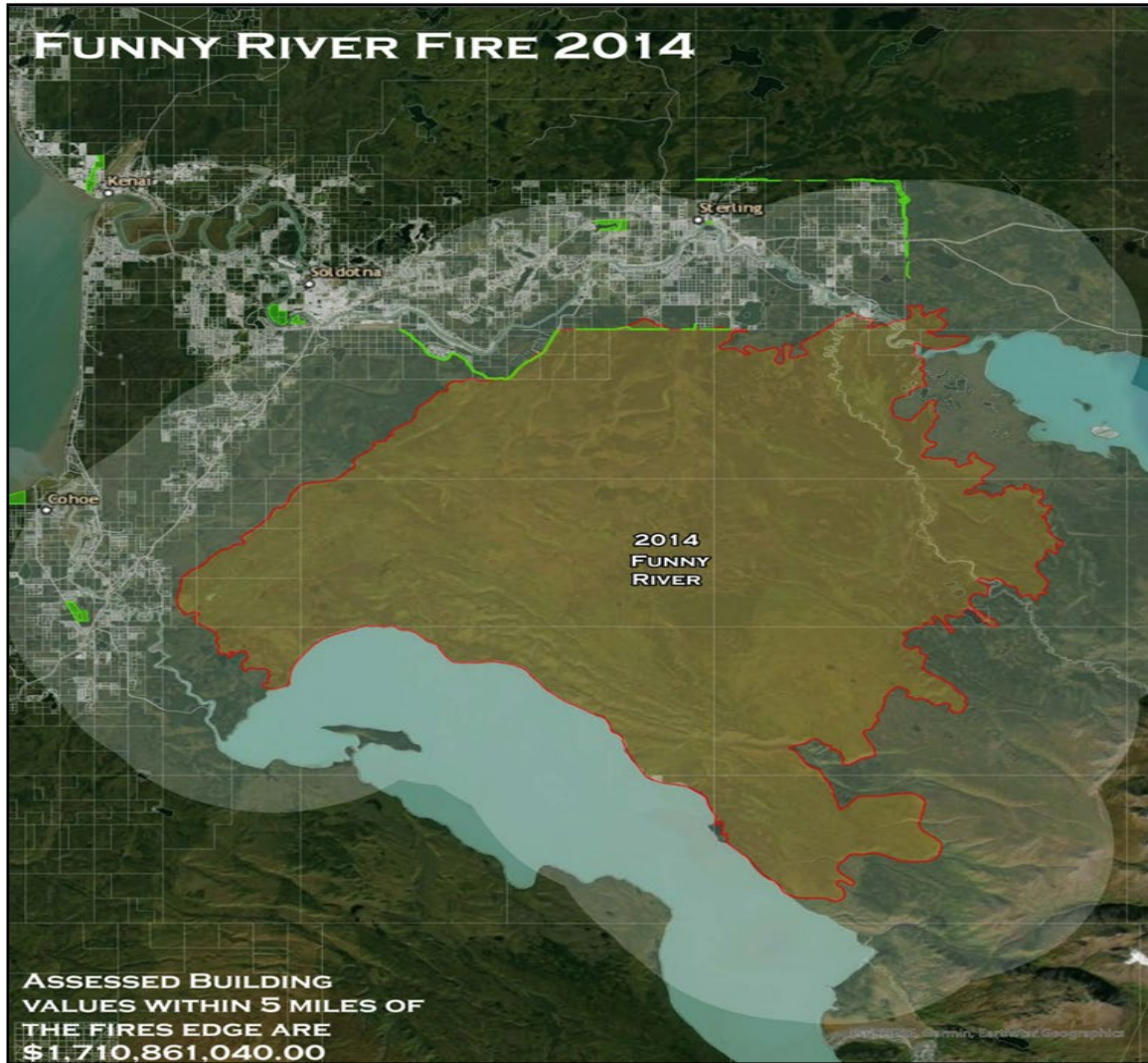


Mitigation: Resilient Landscapes

Status	Project Name	DOF Area
Active	Harding Lake	Fairbanks
Active	Washington Creek	Fairbanks
Active	Eagle Subdivision	Tok
Active	Delta River West	Delta
Active	Glennallen	Copper River
Active	Southwest / MTNT Management Services	Southwest
Active	Lynx Lake	Mat-Su
Active	Sunset Fuel Break Phase 2	Mat-Su
Active	Morgans Landing	Kenai
Active	Wharf Avenue	Kenai
Active	Alut Avenue	Homer
Active	Matanuska-Susitna Borough Crew	Mat-Su
Active	City of Soldotna	Kenai
Active	City of Kenai	Kenai
Active	Denali Borough	Fairbanks
Active	Tok Community Disposal	Tok
Active	Delta Community Disposal	Delta
Active	Matanuska-Susitna Borough Disposal	Mat-Su
Active	City of Kenai Disposal	Kenai
Active	Kenai Peninsula Borough Disposal	Kenai
Planning	Girdwood Disposal	Mat-Su
Planning	City of Nenana	Fairbanks
Planning	Freeman Road	Fairbanks
Planning	Quartz Lake	Delta
Planning	North Susitna (Trapper Creek)	Mat-Su
Planning	Tetlin Refuge	Tok
Planning	Red Fox	Tok
Completed	Anderson WUI	Fairbanks
Completed	Tok WUI	Tok
Completed	Caswell Phase 2	Mat-Su
Completed	Denali Borough CWPP	Fairbanks



Mitigation: Fire Adapted Communities





2024 Wildfires Across Alaska

Aviation

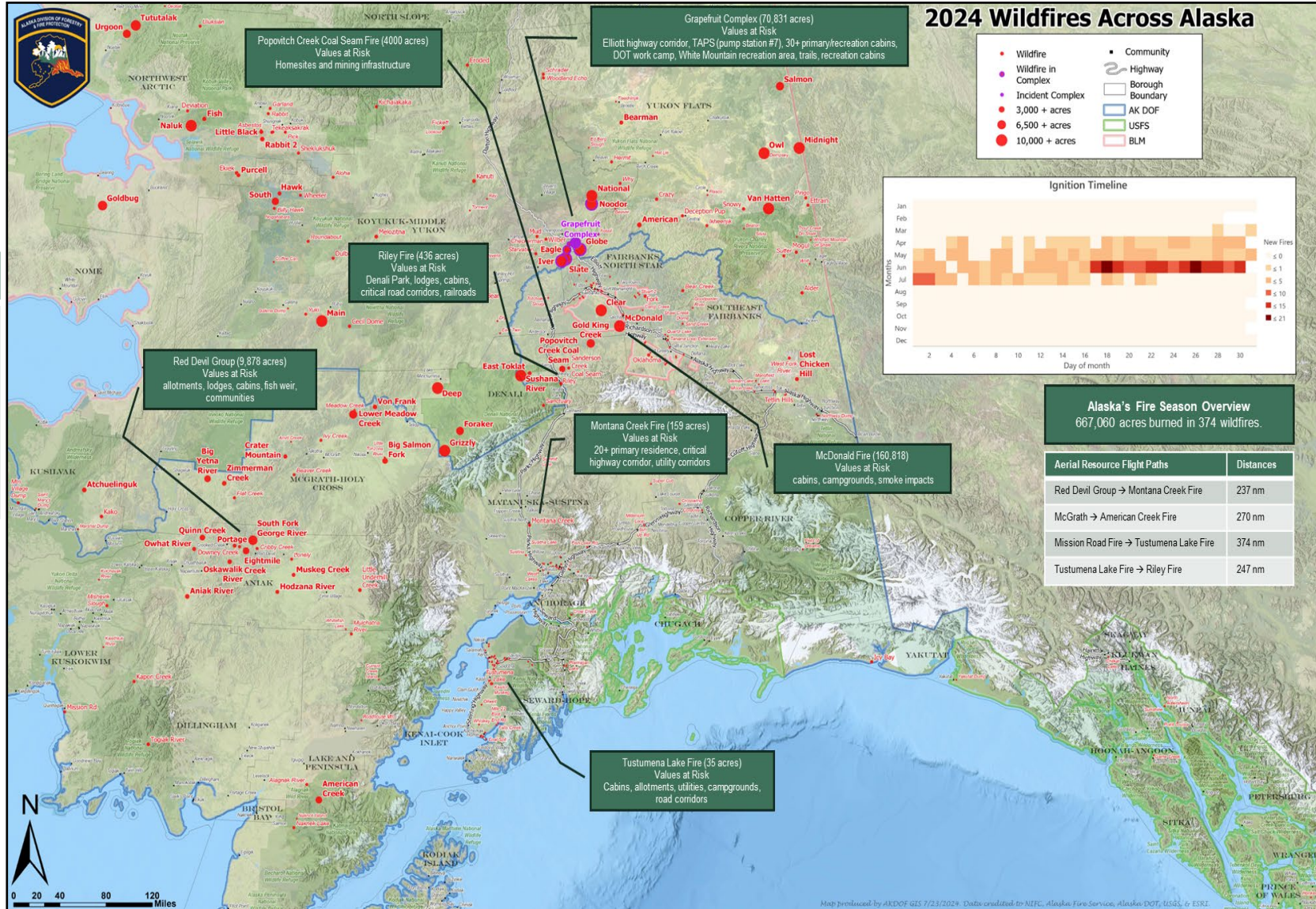
64 rotor wing orders
142 fixed wing orders
32 temporary flight restrictions
Tankers:
103 loads
214,664-gallons retardant
36,353 gallons of water

Crews

44 crew orders on Alaska fires:
Type 1 crew - 28 orders
Type 2 Initial Attack - 17 orders
Type 2 crew - 25 orders
5 jet loads of L48 crews:
Interagency Hotshots - 14 crews
Type 2 Initial Attack - 4 crews
Alaska crews to L48 — 54 orders

Northwest Compact (NWC)

Alaska resources provided to NWC:
2 Interagency Hotshot Crew orders
48 overhead orders
2 aircraft orders
Resources provided from NWC:
80 overhead orders



Complex Incident Management Teams (CIMTs)

CIMT orders in Alaska:
CIMT - 3 (Alaska teams)
IMT3 - 3 (L48 teams)
Alaska CIMTs to L48:
4 CIMT orders

Smokeyjumpers (SMKJ)

57 SMKJ loads deployed in Alaska
475 SMKJ orders in Alaska
125 SMKJ boosters from L48
38 PC missions + (51 Para-Cargo Initial Attack missions)

Equipment

262 engine orders
7 dozer orders
6 masticator orders
1 excavator order

Overhead (OH)

3,745 total OH orders
1,927 OH orders in Alaska
1,021 filled by Alaskans
906 filled by L48
1,818 OH orders to L48
5 SMODS orders in Alaska
13 SMOD orders in Alaska

2024 Montana Creek Fire



\$ in whole dollars

Fire	Values at Risk
Montana Creek Fire	20-plus primary residences, critical highway corridor, utility lines, cellular towers, and natural resource values including timber and agriculture lands

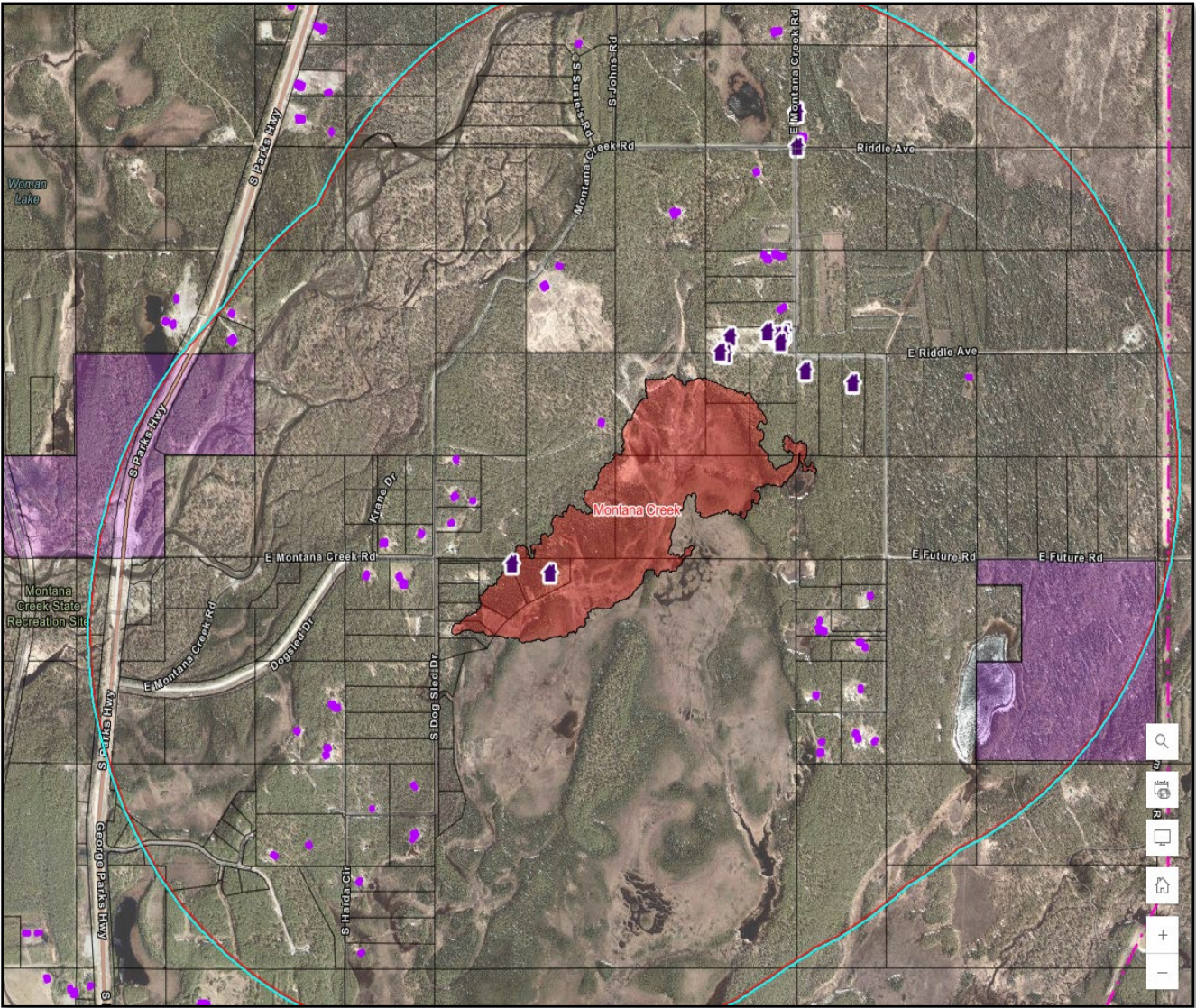
Public Safety Concerns

Evacuation, multi-agency response, included cooperator fire departments, Alaska State Troopers

Initial Resources Deployed

2 large air tankers, 2 scoopers, 3 helicopters, 13 engines, 3 hand crews, Type 3 Incident Management Team

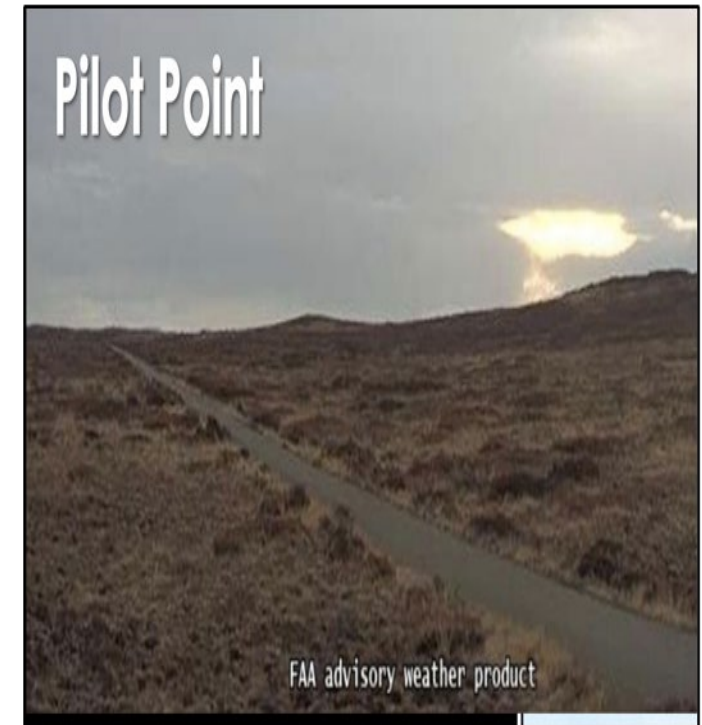
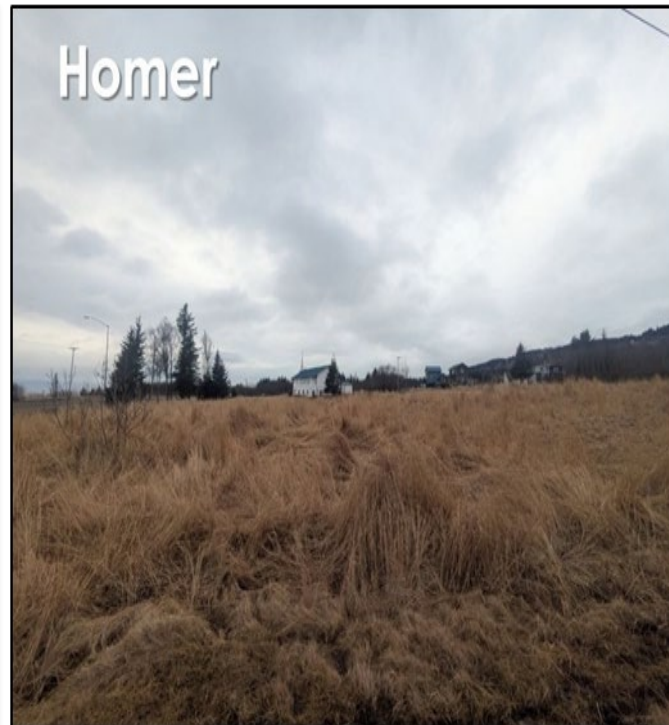
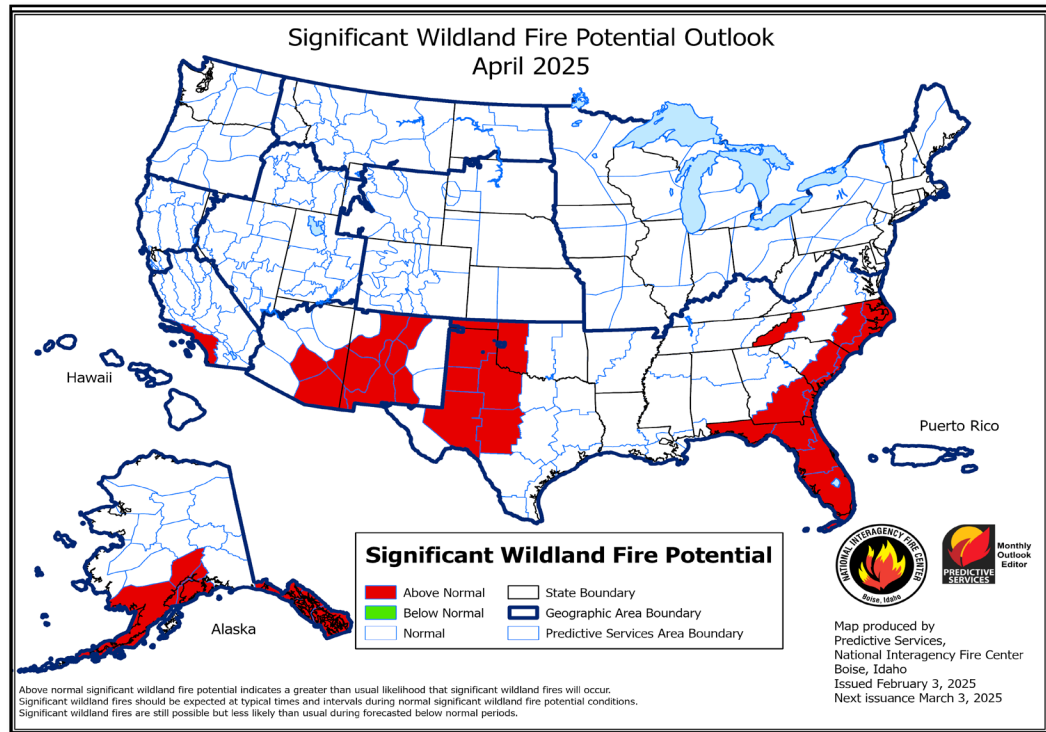
Fire Buffer	Parcel Values
1 mile	Parcel Building Value: \$4,833,588
3 mile	Parcel Building Value:\$58,634,088
5 mile	Parcel Building Value: \$95,666,801





2025 Seasonal Projections

- Above average wildland fire potential predicted for Coastal Region in April and May
- Engaging with boroughs, municipalities, and local fire departments on preparedness and planning; focus on recruitment, hiring, and training of wildland fire staff in the winter and early spring
- Early fire season declaration – public order issued, effective March 17, 2025



FAA advisory weather product

Thank You



Rena Miller
Acting Legislative Liaison
Department of Natural Resources
907-317-6887
Rena.Miller@alaska.gov

