

Helen Phillips

From: Joan Brown
Sent: Thursday, February 12, 2015 1:24 PM
To: Helen Phillips
Subject: FW: DNR response to questions from House Finance 2-6-15
Attachments: Summary One-Pager FY2016 Gov Amended Budget.pdf

For distribution, please.

From: Davis, Jeanmarie H (DNR) [mailto:jean.davis@alaska.gov]
Sent: Thursday, February 12, 2015 1:04 PM
To: Joan Brown; Peter Ecklund
Cc: Peterson, Darwin R (GOV); Wilcox, Lacy J (GOV); Ibias, Raquel M (DNR); Peter-Contesse, Fabienne (DNR); Sanborn, Courtney L (DNR); Fogels, Edmund J (DNR); Maisch, John C (DNR); Brown, Dean N (DNR); Davis, Jeanmarie H (DNR)
Subject: DNR response to questions from House Finance 2-6-15

Greetings,

At DNR's budget overview presented to House Finance last Friday (February 6), a request was made to provide a one-page summary of DNR's FY16 Governor's Amended budget (similar to what was in our presentation), walking through from FY15 Management Plan to FY16 Adjusted Base to FY16 Governor Amended, including the proposed budget decrements. A copy of that is attached.

In addition, Representative Wilson asked a couple of specific questions related to wildland fire fighting.

- 1. Question - Does the state gets paid back for fire suppression costs when fault is determined, and how? (For example, the Clear AFB fire was started by a military training exercise.)**

Answer: When the state is able to recover expenditures, that recovery is deposited into the general fund, but the original expenditures are not offset because normally the fiscal year books are closed at the point we receive a recovery. Between FY2005 and FY2014 the state recovered approximately \$162.6 (not including Clear AFB fire).

Regarding the Clear AFB fire, the state is in the process of getting reimbursed for this fire from FEMA. There's disagreement about the eligible costs, which the state puts at \$1,070.8, and FEMA believes is \$853.1; Department of Law assistance with an appeal and discussions are ongoing. The fire occurred in calendar year 2013 and the recovery will return to the unrestricted general fund when received.

- 2. Is air quality a factor in determining when we fight a fire?** Air quality can be a consideration in determining when we fight a fire. However, it should be recognized that it is one of our least controllable factors as fire fighters have limited effect on air quality with a large, well establish fire. Smoke dispersion is at the whim of the weather. Wind direction, air pressure, and stability will contribute to either poor or good air quality. We generally figure about 21 tons of organic material per acre is available for consumption during a wildland fire. This tends to produce a lot of smoke when multiplied times the number of acres.

One consideration we do control is the initial attack strategy. During the start of our season, fire managers are asked to evaluate potential for smoke from early season fires. This means we may provide initial attack in areas of limited fire protection in May or June when our burning periods are extremely long and fires can linger. If unchecked, these fires can compromise air quality each time the burning conditions improve throughout the summer.

Also, in the course of fire suppression we may burn out fuels to eliminate the source of the smoke. If we can, it is done in an attempt to eliminate the fuel source as quickly as possible. Ideally, this is done in one large event that builds a singular column to hasten dispersion. Finally, one of the main problems of Alaskan fires is a deep duff layer that harbors fire,

smolders for long period, and reappears when conditions warrant. This can contribute to a reoccurring reduction in air quality that often we have limited control.

Please let me know if you have additional questions.

Thank you,

Jean Davis

Director, Support Services Division

Department of Natural Resources

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