



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

News Release

BLM Alaska Fire Service
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Wildfire Threat Reduced on More than 68,000 acres of Military Training Lands in Interior Alaska

(Fairbanks, Alaska) – Prescribed burning to reduce the threat of wildfire on military training lands in Interior Alaska was completed with approximately 30,000 acres burned to treat more than 68,000 acres. The burn operations were completed on Donnelly Training Area (DTA) located south of Delta Junction; the Fort Wainwright Small Arms Complex immediately west of Fairbanks; and the Yukon Training Area (YTA) east of Eielson Air Force Base. This annual effort is a collaboration between the BLM Fire Service (BLM AFS) and the U.S. Army Alaska (USARAK).

Prescribed burns are fires that are intentionally set under controlled conditions to remove dry and dead grass and lower the risk of wildfires that could impact nearby communities. Removing the hazardous vegetation in the spring under more moderate conditions allows for the greatest degree of control and the lowest risk of negative impacts, such as smoke. It's one of the numerous preventative steps Alaska wildfire agencies are taking to reduce the likelihood of a larger wildfires later in the summer when the conditions are hotter and drier and firefighting resources may be limited.

In order to consider a military training area treated and calling the prescribed burn operation successful, the threat of wildfire is effectively reduced. This is typically accomplished by burning a thick enough swath along the edges of the area's perimeter that if a wildfire is ignited, it is unable to burn outside the training area.

Prescribed burning was conducted in April and May in the following locations:

- Approximately 1,210 acres were burned with 3,164 acres treated in several locations within the Donnelly Training Area located 15 miles south of Delta Junction on the east side of the Delta River.
- Approximately 518 acres of the Fort Wainwright Small Arms Complex east of Fairbanks were burned on May 2 and May 17 to treat 2,228 acres.
- Approximately 25,028 acres were burned to treat the 40,670 acres of the Oklahoma Impact Area in the Donnelly Training Area west of the Delta River located about 25 miles west of Delta Junction.
- Approximately 3,660 acres burned to treat 23,099 acres within several locations of the YTA between 5 miles north and 20 miles east of Eielson Air Force Base.

The BLM AFS and USARAK worked with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and the National Weather Service to monitor smoke conditions and to ensure compliance with local, state, and federal air quality regulations. There are also procedures in place to halt ignitions if conditions become unfavorable. Trained personnel will continue monitoring the prescribed burn areas for the next couple of weeks to ensure the fires are out.

In addressing this priority work, all agencies successfully limited COVID-19 and other health and safety risks to firefighters and the public using established Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, state, and local guidelines, and prescribed fire procedures.

Please note, this burning did not fall under the Alaska Division of Forestry's burn permit suspension because these are federal lands. The state's burn permit suspension applied to state, municipal and private lands.

For more information contact BLM Alaska Fire Service Public Affairs Specialist Beth Ipsen at (907)388-2159 or eipsen@blm.gov.

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