



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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National Park/Preserve

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Wrangell-St. Elias National Park/Preserve

News Release

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For Immediate Release
Contact: Fire Information Office (907) 529-0511

CHAKINA FIRE MAKES THREE MILE RUN ON SUNDAY

McCarthy, Alaska— The Chakina Fire was very active on the west/northwest, and southeast perimeters Sunday. The fire made a three mile run toward the northwest and started fires ahead of itself for up to a ½ mile, due to hot embers. Late in the day as the fire approached the confluence of the Nizina and Chitina rivers, favorable winds pushed the fire back onto itself slowing its advancement. The western perimeter is approximately ¾ of a mile at the closest point from the Chitina and Nizina River confluence. The northern perimeter remained largely stationary with no movement toward the Chitina River. It is now approximately 30,000 acres. Smoke conditions did not allow for fire mapping yesterday and fire personnel will attempt once again today.

Five helicopters with water buckets were assigned to the fire yesterday afternoon to dampen the fires movement on the western/northwestern perimeters and provide aerial support. A burn-out effort in the area was attempted, using aerial firing, to try to bring the fire to the river's edge under firefighter control instead of rapid natural advancement. However, the effort was unsuccessful due to high humidity and precipitation. Situational assessment will continue throughout the day today and operational decisions will be made accordingly.

Six Alaska Division of Forestry fire engines and staff will be arriving later today to provide fire awareness and presence throughout the local community.

The fire received .05 inches of rain over night and the McCarthy/Kennecott area received .09 inches, improving air quality; however, conditions vary based on local wind patterns and fire activity. The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation website serves as a resource for air quality information and how you can protect yourself from smoke: www.dec.state.ak.us/air/am/smoke.htm

The road from Chitina to McCarthy is open. When driving in heavy smoke conditions and low visibility please use caution and keep headlights on. Pilots should check NOTAMs and Temporary Flight Restrictions. For those who fly in the vicinity, be aware of fire related helicopter and fixed-wing traffic and the possibility of sudden decreased visibility. The local victor frequency is 122.9.

The Boreal Forest within Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve is a fire-dependent eco-system. The Chakina fire is consuming lots of dead and down beetle killed white spruce, reducing the intensity of future fires in this same area.

For additional information, visit www.nps.gov/wrst/parkmgmt/firemanagement.htm or contact the local Fire Information Office at (907) 529-0511 or Morgan Warthin, NPS contact in Anchorage for interviews: (907) 644-3418.

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