



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Wrangell-St. Elias  
National Park/Preserve

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## Wrangell-St. Elias National Park/Preserve

News Release

July 19, 2009

For Immediate Release

Contact: Fire Information Office (907) 529-0511

### Fire Activity Increases on Western and Southeastern Perimeters

**McCarthy, Alaska**— The Chakina Fire was mapped at 12:00 pm today and is now estimated to be 24,226 acres. The fire is showing a lot of activity in the southeastern and western portions. Smoke columns are visible over both areas and trees torching in the area of Steamboat Creek, on the western portion, may be seen by the general public, especially from areas like Long Lake.

A helicopter with a bucket is dropping water on the western portion that is showing the most activity. With the increase in activity, fixed wing aerial support has been ordered to evaluate the potential use of the CL215 water-scooping air tankers. The direction that the fire is growing to the west is still south of the Chitina River; however, fire personnel are going to use water to slow the spread toward the confluence of the Nizina and Chitina rivers. If the air tankers are unable to provide water-drop support, additional helicopters with buckets will be able to work to suppress some of the heat on the western portion. Situational assessment will continue throughout the day and operational decisions will be made accordingly.

The fire continues to move slowly on the northern perimeter toward the Chitina River. It still is roughly ¼ of a mile away from the river at its closest point and growing as fire personnel have predicted. As the fire progresses at a favorable rate toward the Chitina, personnel will work to continue the improvement of locations for the helicopters and boats to land with the firefighters.

Two power boats for river transportation have arrived. These boats will allow the firefighters greater mobility by removing the limitations of aircraft in smoky conditions. A total of 52 people, including a Hotshot crew, are assigned. The crew is established at Jake's Bar and will be of support today as needed. In addition to the Hotshot crew and boats, a Division of Forestry (DOF) helicopter and Canadian heli-rappel helicopter (on loan to the incident from DOF) are helping operations.

Air quality varies in the McCarthy-Kennicott vicinity, 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](http://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.

For additional information, visit [www.nps.gov/wrst/parkmgmt/firemanagement.htm](http://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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