



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

For Immediate Release – July 18, 2016
Jamie Hart – 217-549-4392

Fires Being Monitored in the Copper River Basin

COPPER CENTER, AK – In the last week dry weather and lightning storms have caused a series of wildfires across the Copper River Basin. Multiple agencies are working to aggressively fight fires safely, as well as manage these fires for their natural benefits. These fires will be monitored closely by fire managers to determine if more actions are necessary. Fire is a natural process in Alaskan ecosystems. Fires reduce dead vegetation and debris, stimulate new growth and improve habitat for wildlife. The following fires are within or near Wrangell-St. Elias at this time:

Steamboat Creek Fire – This lightning caused fire was reported on July 15th, 2016 within Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve, about 14 miles south east of McCarthy in the 2009 Chakina Fire perimeter. Smoke has been visible from Kennecott and McCarthy and is estimated to be 275 acres in size. It was burning actively when checked by air on Sunday. Fire personnel from the Alaska Division of Forestry personnel will continue to monitor closely.

Klawasi Fire – This small lightning caused fire was also reported on July 15th, 2016 within Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve, about 7 miles north east of Copper Center, AK. It was last estimated at 0.2 acres in size and has since received rainfall. Personnel will be monitoring this fire, but little activity has been observed.

Cutoff Fire – The fire was ignited by lightning and reported on July 13th, 2016 on Ahtna Incorporated land and grew into Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve lands to reach 57 acres as of Saturday, July 16. It's located less than a mile from the Tok Cutoff highway, the 125-mile scenic highway that connects the Alaska and the Richardson highways between Tok and Glennallen. Fire crews worked with air tankers and helicopters to suppress the fire. Thirty-three total personnel were able to use Saturday's rainfall to their advantage and brought the fire to 100% containment. Firefighter crews have been working within 25 feet of the perimeter and will extend that to the interior until all fire is out. Over the next few days, smoke may be visible from the interior of the fire as crews work to extinguish all smoldering embers.

Yokneda Lake Fire – The fire was detected on July 14th, 2016, ignited by lightning, and spread to an estimated 2,000 acres on both Ahtna Incorporated and Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve lands, near Mile 30 of the Tok Cutoff Highway, southwest of the community of Chistochina. Smoke was thick in this area on Friday, July 15th, but has since dissipated. Use caution driving and slow down if you experience thick smoke on the highway in this area.

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Fire activity was reduced on Saturday with rain, cooler temperatures and higher humidities. This fire lies within a limited protection area, which means it will be monitored by fire managers to determine if more actions are necessary.

Copper River Fire – This lightning caused fire was reported on July 15th, 2016 east-southeast of Copper Center, across the Copper River on Ahtna Incorporated lands. The half-acre fire was observed creeping and smoldering, but in the last few days smoke was visible from Copper Center and Kenny Lake areas. On Sunday, fire personnel used a helicopter to drop 15 buckets of water to suppress the fire. Today firefighters will be transported to the fire to work on containing the fire.

A Fire Weather Watch will be in effect from Monday, July 18th at 2pm, ending at 10pm for areas within the Copper River Basin. Which means the forecast is calling for hot and dry conditions with high winds in the Basin. Please be mindful of these conditions and completely extinguish all fires. If you see a new fire, please report to your nearest Alaska Division of Forestry office or the nearest park office.

For more fire information please visit www.akfireinfo.com or www.nps.gov/wrst for updates. For inquiries please call Jamie Hart, Fire Information Officer at 217-549-4392.

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