



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

Fire Update

BLM Alaska Fire Service

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BLM AFS Aircraft, Smokejumpers Working on New Fire Northwest of Circle

(Fairbanks, Alaska) – Smokejumpers and aircraft are working on a new fire near Birch Creek 17 miles northwest of Circle in the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge. The **Birch Creek Fire (#346)** is burning in a limited management option area, which gives the latitude for the fire to function in its natural ecological role as long as it isn't immediately threatening any nearby resources or structures. However, because it is within a mile of the full protection area border and 2.5 miles southwest of a Native allotment, the Refuge Manager and fire staff decided to launch an aggressive initial attack in order to catch the fire while it was small. The lightning-caused fire is roughly estimated to be 10 acres in size and burning in black spruce, tundra and brush about 50 miles southeast of Fort Yukon. Eight BLM Alaska Fire Service smokejumpers first focused on the heel of the fire, which does not have easy access to a water source. However, four water-scooping Fire Boss airplanes and a BLM AFS helicopter are helping provide water from the air. This helicopter was at a nearby Remote Automated Weather Station in support of maintenance work when the fire was reported by personnel aboard another BLM AFS helicopter in the area shortly before noon today.

Meanwhile, firefighters have finished work on two other lightning-caused fires burning in the refuge. Smokejumpers suppressed the 1-acre **Big Marsh Fire (#344)** located 40 miles southeast of Fort Yukon and demobilized today. Personnel aboard a helicopter shuttling smokejumpers from the Big Marsh Fire to Fort Yukon spotted the Birch Creek Fire. The Midnight Sun Interagency Hotshot Crew is demobilizing after spending days constructing fuel breaks to protect a Native allotment from the 5,505-acre **Sheenjek River Fire (#296)** burning 46 miles north of Fort Yukon. Both the Hotshot Crew and smokejumpers will preposition at the BLM AFS fire station in Fort Yukon for faster response to new ignitions.

As of Monday, there were an estimated 176,758 acres burned in 305 fires across Alaska. The BLM AFS Upper Yukon Zone has had 32 fires burn 22,283 acres within its boundaries that stretch from the Canadian boundary to the Dalton Highway from the Arctic Ocean south to Fortymile Country.

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