



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

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Burn Operations Planned on Military Training Lands in the Fairbanks North Star Borough to Reduce Wildfire Threat

FAIRBANKS, Alaska – Starting as early as May 3, the Bureau of Land Management Alaska Fire Service (BLM AFS), in cooperation with U.S. Army Alaska (USARAK), will implement prescribed fires on Fort Wainwright and the Yukon Training Area (YTA) to reduce the likelihood of a large wildfires occurring on military training lands this summer. The areas identified for the prescribed burns in the Small Arms Complex on Fort Wainwright are immediately southeast of Fairbanks on the south side of the Richardson Highway. The areas scheduled for burning in the YTA are five miles north and two to 20 miles east of Eielson Air Force Base. The prescribed burning may continue through May 31, as weather conditions allow.

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 fire-prone 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.

The BLM AFS and USARAK have been conducting these annual prescribed burns on Interior military training lands for the past several years. Taking these preventative measures now decreases the fire danger around military training targets used during the summer when conditions are hotter and drier, vegetation is more receptive to burning, and firefighting resources may be limited. Fires will be ignited only when favorable weather conditions are present and forecasted. An approved burn plan is in place that includes authorization from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) Division of Air Quality.

Smoke may be visible during burning operations from communities and roadways around the Fairbanks North Star Borough. The BLM AFS and USARAK are working with ADEC 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 monitor the prescribed fire areas until the fires are out.

In addressing this priority work, all agencies will limit 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. This includes potential smoke effects on people.

For more information contact AFS Fire Information at (907) 356-5510 or the Upper Yukon-Tanana Dispatch Center at (907) 356-5555.

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The Bureau of Land Management Alaska Fire Service (AFS) located at Fort Wainwright, Alaska, provides wildland fire suppression services for over 240 million acres of Department of the Interior and Native Corporation Lands in Alaska. In addition, AFS has other statewide responsibilities that include: interpretation of fire management policy; oversight of the BLM Alaska Aviation program; fuels management projects; and operating and maintaining advanced communication and computer systems such as the Alaska Lightning Detection System. AFS also maintains a National Incident Support Cache with a \$10 million inventory. The Alaska Fire Service provides wildland fire suppression services for America's "Last Frontier" on an interagency basis with the State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources, USDA Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Military in Alaska.