



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Yukon-Charley Rivers National
Preserve
P.O. Box 167
Eagle, AK 99738

(907) 547-2343 phone

Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve News Release

July 04, 2021

For Immediate Release

Contact: Kris Fister, kris_fister@nps.gov, (907) 455-0641

Smokejumpers Protect Cabins in Yukon-Charley Rivers

FAIRBANKS, ALASKA: On Saturday, July 03, four Alaska Fire Service (AFS) smokejumpers parachuted into Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve to clear brush and set up sprinkler systems around Ben Creek and Sam Creek cabins and the nearby Ben Creek Remote Area Weather Station (RAWS), due to their proximity to Fire #223, the Cultas Creek Fire. One AFS Fire Specialist was dropped on-site via helicopter to act as Incident Commander and a fifth firefighter.

AFS flew over the Cultas Creek Fire on Saturday afternoon and assessed it at 7,000 acres, up from the previous assessment of 3,000 acres. It is currently burning slowly, 300 feet and opposite the creek from the Sam Creek Cabin, one of the oldest log structures in the preserve.

When the growth of the fire reached established action points, AFS smokejumpers deployed and implemented full protection of structural sites in the limited response area. Smokejumpers are setting up a pump, hose, and sprinkler system at both Ben and Sam Creek cabins and are greatly aided by previous protective measures done in the area. In 2018, the AFS Midnight Sun Hotshots set up a fire break between the Andrew Creek Fire and the Sam Creek Cabin, saving it from destruction during extreme fire behavior and conditions.

The Ben Creek Cabin site is currently set up with a pump, hose, and sprinkler system, and smokejumpers are awaiting potential advancement of the fire to take further structural protective action. If a rapid increase in fire behavior or activity is experienced, efforts will continue to be upscaled to ensure confidence in the survival of these historic sites. Helicopter support and a 'boots on the ground' approach are the next expected actions.

The National Park Service (NPS) fuels reduction program and the Alaska Fire Service both deserve highlighted recognition in this incident. Alaska Fire Service's exemplary coordinated efforts and protection of our public lands' assets while allowing wildfire to remain as a natural condition of the landscape are crucial. Without AFS support, public lands agency resources and staff across Alaska would be quickly overwhelmed.

NPS fire staff have implemented years of fuel reduction projects around both cabin sites, ensuring the structural safety from wildfires. Multiple brushing and burn pile mitigations, including one in spring of this year, have greatly reduced the current and future demand for firefighter support and firefighting resources.

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.



Warmer temperatures are expected over the fire area today through Monday, when isolated thunderstorms are forecasted, bringing in a cooling trend throughout the week. Westerly winds pushing the fire eastward are causing smoky conditions in the town of Eagle, Alaska.

Visitors and pilots are cautioned to be aware of wildfire smoke and fire management aircraft.

Fire in Alaska's boreal forest is an essential process that restores ecosystem health and helps maintain species diversity. The National Park Service works with its interagency partners, neighboring communities, and other stakeholders to balance the risks and benefits of wildland fire when making decisions on fire management. Land owners can decrease the risk to their property by taking steps to make cabins and other structures more defensible against wildfire.

Additional park information is available on the web at <https://www.nps.gov/yuch/index.htm>, or by calling (907) 547-2343 or (907) 459-3730.

www.nps.gov

More than 20,000 National Park Service employees care for America's 423 national parks and work with communities across the nation to help preserve local history and create close-to-home recreational opportunities.