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Burn closure lifted in most areas but still in effect in Southwest Alaska, Anchorage

NOTE: The burn closure is still in effect in Southwest Alaska and the Municipality of Anchorage. That includes Game Management Units 9, 17, 18, 19 and 21.

(Fairbanks, AK) – Due to recent rainfall and increased relative humidity that has reduced wildfire danger, the Alaska Division of Forestry is canceling a burn closure for most parts of the state effective at noon today.

The closure, which has been in effect for nearly two weeks, is being lifted on state, private and municipal lands in the Kenai, Matanuska-Susitna and Denali boroughs, the Tanana Valley north of the Alaska Range and the Copper River Valley. The closure will remain in effect in Southwest Alaska and the Municipality of Anchorage until further notice.

The areas that remain closed include Game Management Units 9, 17, 18, 19 and 21, which cover most of the area south and west of McGrath, as well as communities on the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers west of Tanana. A map of Alaska's game management units is available at:

www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/hunting/maps/gmumaps/jpg/ak_simple_950.jpg

While campfires and approved burn barrels will now be permitted, a burn suspension prohibiting open debris burning does remain in place in some areas the closure has been rescinded. Check with your local Division of Forestry office for burn suspensions.

The recent precipitation has dampened fire danger and wildfire activity has moderated in many areas but the fires currently burning around the state are not out. Conditions remain extremely dry in the deeper vegetative layers and it will take significant rain to extinguish fires. With that in mind, it is imperative that caution be used with regard to anything that could result in a wildfire this holiday weekend.

Here are some guidelines to keep in mind as you head outdoors this weekend and for the rest of the summer:

- Know where you will be recreating and what the rules are before you head out. There are still burn restrictions in effect on many federal lands.
- If you do choose to have a campfire, keep it small and make sure it is in a spot where the fire cannot spread. If possible, use a gas camp stove rather than an open fire for cooking.
- Never leave a fire of any kind unattended.
- To properly extinguish a campfire, pour large amounts of water or soil on the fire and stir it with a stick or shovel until the entire fire area is cool to the touch.
- Dispose of charcoal ashes in a metal, fireproof container; never dump them in the woods or in a burnable container.
- Obtain a burn permit for any open debris burning and be sure to call the local forestry office or check online (forestry.alaska.gov/burn/) to ensure burning is allowed the day you plan to burn.
- The use of fireworks is prohibited in many municipalities and boroughs. Be sure to check local regulations regarding the use of fireworks in your area.
- Remember, you are responsible for any fire you may start and individuals may be held accountable for suppression costs involved with responses to human-caused fires.

Firefighters in Alaska already have their hands full with the high number of fires currently burning in the state and do not need new fires to contend with, especially when resources are spread as thin as they are right now.

Forecasters are predicting warmer, drier temperatures to return starting this weekend, which could result in the burn closure being put in place again in the future. We are not out of the woods yet when it comes to wildfire danger so don't let your guard down.

Please do your part to make this a safe holiday weekend.

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