

**ALASKA
Multi-Agency
Coordinating
Group**

**OPERATIONS HANDBOOK
2007-2010**

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INTRODUCTION

Multi-Agency Coordination between wildland fire protection agencies and land managers is an ongoing process in Alaska. As the complexity of incidents and involvement of agencies increases, it becomes necessary to expand the normal coordination system to ensure efficient use of critical personnel and equipment.

The typical situations requiring the Alaska Multi-Agency Coordinating (MAC) Group to convene are:

- Multiple incidents, or a complex single incident, requiring involvement of multiple agencies
- Competition for scarce resources
- Pre-defined preparedness levels are reached

The Alaska Preparedness Plan provides direction to the Alaska MAC Group when multi-agency coordination is to occur on a statewide basis. The Alaska Interagency Coordination Center (AICC) maintains the Alaska Preparedness Plan.

This operation handbook includes procedures to guide Multi-Agency Coordinating activities in situations where unusual or critical fire danger and/or mobilization of resources requires continuous, daily interaction amongst the suppression/land management agencies to ensure that decisions are responsive to the priority interests of Alaska.

MISSION

The Alaska MAC Group provides a forum to discuss actions to be taken to ensure that an adequate number of resources are available to meet anticipated needs and to allocate those resources most efficiently during periods of shortage.

In complex situations as described in the Alaska Preparedness Plan, the Alaska MAC Group along with a Multi-Agency Coordination support organization may be organized to facilitate collective agency administrator decision making.

The Alaska MAC Group forum will ensure coordinated:

- Incident prioritization
- Resource allocation and acquisition
- State and federal disaster response or coordination
- Political interfaces
- Information provided to media and agencies involved
- Anticipation of future needs
- Identification and resolution of issues common to all parties

AUTHORITY

Agency Administrators, by virtue of the executive positions they occupy in their respective agencies, have the authority to order the movement of personnel and equipment under their jurisdiction to maximize the presuppression and suppression capabilities of their agencies.

Fire Program Managers are authorized within constraints of available funding to plan repositioning activities and coordinate such with other agencies and to move resources between units to best serve the needs of their respective agencies.

Manager of the Alaska Interagency Coordination Center (AICC), through the Cooperative Fire Suppression Agreement #AK959-MU3-07, BLM/State of Alaska and 383-S1E-001, USFS/State of Alaska that established the AICC as the Geographic Area Coordination Center (GACC), has the authority to move resources across agency boundaries to meet repositioning and suppression needs of the participating agencies. Such movement is limited to actions specified in revisions to the annual operating plans between the agencies and the Alaska Preparedness Plan.

Alaska Multi-Agency Coordinating Group Agency Representatives are authorized through delegation from their respective agency administrators, to commit their agency to action agreed upon during the Alaska MAC Group deliberations. In the course of this document, agency representatives may be described as MAC Group Members or as the MAC Group Chair.

The Alaska MAC group will be comprised of representatives from the following agencies/entities.

State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources
National Park Service
Bureau of Land Management
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Indian Affairs
U.S. Forest Service
Native Lands

There may be a need for representation from other agencies or entities on a case-by-case basis during MAC Group activation. This will be determined by the MAC Group as the situation warrants. The MAC Chair will contact those respective agencies/entities to arrange for representation.

ORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

The Alaska MAC Group represents the agencies from which it is comprised. The Alaska Multi-Agency Coordination system will consist of the designated members and a MAC Group Coordinator. Support specialists will be requested by the MAC Group Coordinator as the situation dictates.

The flow of information produced by the Alaska Multi-Agency Coordinating (MAC) Group will be disseminated to appropriate state and federal agencies by the Alaska Interagency Coordination Center through the coordination system (dispatch channels).

The Alaska Multi-Agency Coordinating (MAC) Group does not operate directly with the Incident Command or Area Command Authority who have responsibility for the management of on-the-ground incident organizations.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Agency Administrators

Agency Administrators are typically directors or agency heads who have provided written delegated authority to their appointed representatives participating as MAC Group Members during activation periods of the Alaska MAC Group.

Agency Administrators may be requested to resolve disagreements between the Unit Administrators and the Alaska MAC Group.

Agency Representatives (MAC Group membership)

The Alaska MAC Group is made up of top management level personnel from those agencies which have jurisdictional responsibility. The members should be fully authorized by delegation of authority (see attachment #2) to represent their respective agency.

If an agency's designated representative is not available, he/she must work with their agency administrator to provide an alternate. If this has not been done at activation, the Alaska MAC Group Chair will make contact with the agency through the agency fire program manager and request that a MAC group member be provided. Alternate members must have the same delegation of authority as the representative they are replacing.

Responsibilities of the agency representatives are:

- Ensure that the collective situation status is provided and current by agency
- Establish priorities of ongoing incidents
- Determine specific resource requirements by agency
- Determine resource availability, by agency
- Allocation or reallocation of scarce or limited resources to incidents based on incident prioritization
- Anticipate future resource needs
- Identify and resolve issues common to all parties
- Review need for other agency involvement
- Critique and recommend improvements
- Identify fiscal issues or concerns

MAC Group Chair

The Alaska Wildland Fire Coordinating Group (AWFCG) Chair will also serve as MAC Group Chair provided that individual represents one of the core MAC Group agencies. If the AWFCG Chair is not a representative of one of the core MAC Group agencies, the MAC Group members will select a Chair. The Chair will serve for one calendar year and will perform the following duties:

- Identify alternate agency representatives to the MAC Group
- Ensure that the alternate has a signed delegation of authority
- Recommend de-activation of the MAC Group
- Provide evaluations of agency representatives
- Provide other duties not yet determined

MAC Group Coordinator

The Alaska MAC Group will be assigned a MAC Group Coordinator to serve as a facilitator in organizing and accomplishing the mission, goals, and direction of the MAC group. The AICC Manager will work in conjunction with the MAC Group Chair to identify and provide a coordinator. In some instances, the AICC Manager may serve as the MAC Coordinator.

The MAC Group Coordinator will provide expertise on the function of the MAC organization and on the relationship with the coordination system (dispatch channels).

Responsibilities of the coordinator are:

- Assign and supervise necessary support specialists
- Arrange for and manage facilities and equipment necessary to support the Alaska MAC Group
- Identify issues needing MAC group attention
- Obtain appropriate intelligence information necessary to brief the MAC group
- Facilitate the MAC decision process by ensuring the development and display of intelligence information necessary for astute priority setting and allocation of resources
- Provide for documentation of MAC decisions
- Distribute MAC decisions
- Ensure that MAC decisions are implemented
- Maintain a permanent record of MAC activities

MAC Support Personnel

Support personnel are activated depending on the complexity of the situation.

-Situation Unit-

At a minimum, a Situation Unit will be available to the MAC Group Coordinator. The unit will be responsible for the collection and organization of the incident status and situation information. Information to be provided by this unit will be evaluated for accuracy, analyzed, and displayed for use by the Alaska MAC Group.

Responsibilities of the unit are:

- Maintain incident situation status including name, location, acres, fuel type, significant losses, values threatened, control problems, and any other significant information
- Maintain information on current and predicted weather conditions in fire activity location and for areas with potential for fire activity
- Summarize data describing total number of fires, acreage burned, total losses, structures or improvements
- Obtain any highlights on aircraft accidents, personnel injuries, etc.
- Develop projections on fire behavior and potential activity
- Post information on displays for use by MAC Group and Information Unit
- Participate in MAC Group meeting as requested by the MAC Group Coordinator

-Resource Unit-

The MAC Group Coordinator will determine the need for establishing the Resource Unit. Duties may be delegated to the AICC Predictive Services office by the MAC Group Coordinator until a Resource Unit is activated.

The Resource Unit is to maintain and provide current information regarding the status of aircraft, crews, scarce critical items, equipment, and personnel committed and available in Alaska. This is done on a statewide basis.

Responsibilities of the unit are:

- Maintain current information on the status of aircraft, crews, scarce critical items, equipment, and personnel committed to incidents and/or available for assignments
- Identify both critical and excess resources
- Provide resource summary information to the Situations Unit
- Participate in MAC Group meeting as requested by the MAC Group Coordinator

-Information Unit-

The MAC Group Coordinator will determine the need for establishing a separate Information Unit. Duties identified are normally performed by the Alaska Joint Information Center (JIC) if established. Establishment of the JIC is directed by the Alaska Preparedness Plan.

The Information Unit establishes and operates an information center to service the public, media, and other governmental agencies. It will provide summary information from agency/incident public information officers and be able to identify to the media and other government agencies local sources for additional information.

Responsibilities of the unit are:

- Prepare and release summary information to the news media and participating agencies
- Assist in arranging news conferences, briefings, preparing informational materials as requested by the MAC Group Coordinator
- Coordinate matters related to public affairs

Geographic Area Coordination Center (AICC) Manager

The AICC Manager will notify the MAC Group Chair to discuss activation of the Alaska MAC Group as outlined in the Alaska Preparedness Plan.

Responsibilities of the AICC Manager are:

- Recommend MAC group activation
- Identify location
- Assign a MAC Group Coordinator
- Recommend issues needing MAC group action
- Assemble supporting personnel (in conjunction with MAC Coordinator) and provide intelligence reporting as required to adequately brief the MAC Group
- Provide annual review of the MAC Group Operations Handbook

Local Administrator of Units with Incidents

Local unit administrators may be land managers, area or regional foresters, fire management officials, land owners, park superintendents, etc., who have valid interests and responsibilities relating to incidents on or affecting their units.

Responsibilities of the local unit administrator are:

- Provides direct management and oversight of suppression activities and achievement of agency direction
- Monitors MAC decisions and may ask for reconsideration action through their respective agency administrator if there is concern over a MAC's interpretation of status or needs of the incident
- Maintains dialog with their respective agency MAC Group Representative

Coordination Centers, Local Dispatch Centers, and Expanded Dispatch Operations

These units play a significant role in the information flow relating to MAC decisions by retrieving critical intelligence information from incidents and supporting units, and forwarding this information to AICC and the MAC Group. Once MAC decisions are finalized, AICC will ensure that the information is disseminated through dispatch channels.

Responsibilities of the dispatch units are:

- Facilitates flow of intelligence information needed to support MAC activities
- Facilitates flow of MAC decisions to field units, incident management teams, and area command as appropriate
- Implements actions associated with MAC decisions

Incident Management Teams and Area Command

Incident management teams and area command organizations are to expedite the transfer of critical intelligence used in the MAC Group decision making process. This transfer of information is accommodated through established dispatch channels.

Responsibilities of incident management teams and area command:

- Provide accurate information relative to incident status, threats and projections of needs as requested to support MAC activities
- Implement actions associated with MAC decisions

GENERAL OPERATION GUIDELINES

MAC Activation Procedures

Activation will proceed as directed per the Alaska Preparedness Plan, or when the intensity of the situation significantly impacts or involves multiple agencies, or when issues regarding competition for resources amongst multiple agencies occur.

The Alaska MAC Group may also be activated at national preparedness level 5. This will allow Alaska to respond to requests or direction from the National MAC Group.

The decision to activate the Alaska MAC Group will be made by the AICC Manager and the MAC Group Chair. The MAC Group Chair will notify the other MAC representatives.

MAC Activities by Preparedness Levels

Preparedness Levels 1 & 2

The Alaska MAC Group will not be activated. Individual MAC group members will be responsible for review of the daily situation reports prepared by the AICC.

Preparedness Level 3

The Alaska MAC Group will be placed in “on-call status.”

This notification will be provided by the AICC Manager. MAC group members will continue to monitor activity in Alaska by reviewing the daily situation reports prepared by the AICC.

Preparedness Levels 4 & 5

The Alaska MAC Group and MAC Group Coordinator will be activated. This notification will be provided by the AICC Manager. MAC Group members will be assembled as directed by the MAC Group Chair or MAC Coordinator. Activation may involve daily conference calls or face-to-face meetings.

MAC Group Objectives:

- Information update – fire weather and fire situation
- Set incident priorities
- Allocate and re-allocate scarce resources
- Determine need for contingency plans
- Provide/recommend direction to local area administrators

The MAC Group Meeting

The Coordinator will provide a standard meeting agenda (see attachment #?). The Coordinator will follow the agenda and will keep unscheduled items/issues to a minimum.

That Alaska MAC Group will focus on identified issues, make decisions, and provide needed resolution to the issues. New issues may be added to the agenda by the MAC Group Coordinator as appropriate.

MAC Group Decision Model

Issues brought before the Alaska MAC Group will be acted on by consensus and will result in one of the following actions:

- Option 1 Make a collaborative decision and assign responsibility and expectation of implementation.
- Option 2 Delegate a decision with expectation of intended outcome(s) or results to a MAC group member or the MAC Group Coordinator.
- Option 3 Defer decision to a later date.
- Option 4 Determine that the issue is outside the scope of the Alaska MAC Group's responsibility. Defer the issue to the appropriate organization or individual.

MAC Group Meeting Outputs

At a minimum, the following should be achieved as a result of the Alaska MAC Group meeting:

- New issues are identified
- Individuals with special interests or concerns are identified
- Incidents have been prioritized
- Critical resources have been allocated
- Media concerns have been addressed
- A plan for implementing MAC Group decisions is identified

MAC Group Record Keeping and Documentation

Each briefing and meeting by the Alaska MAC Group will be assigned a recorder. Attendance, new issues, priorities, and decisions will be recorded and saved for the permanent record. In the event that a recorder is not assigned, the MAC Group Coordinator will provide/assign recorder duties.

Important decisions should be written on a separate decision page, signed and dated by the Alaska MAC Group members, and filed by the MAC Group Coordinator in the permanent record.

MAC Group De-activation

This will occur as the situation moderates and preparedness levels no longer warrant the MAC Group's role. The recommendation to de-activate can be made by any member of the MAC Group and voted on by all members.

The MAC Group Coordinator may remain activated with support personnel as needed to complete necessary documentation, secure records, and to reactivate if the situation warrants.

COMMUNICATING MAC DECISIONS

- All MAC decisions will be documented in writing and filed.
- The MAC Group Coordinator will ensure MAC decision documents are distributed to agency administrators, incident commanders, center managers, fire management officials, the National MAC Group, and other involved individuals/entities as necessary.

REQUESTING RECONSIDERATION OF MAC DECISIONS

Local Unit Administrators may ask for reconsideration of MAC group decisions. Requests for reconsideration must be in writing to the MAC Group Coordinator.

REVIEW & MODIFICATION OF THE MAC HANDBOOK

The Alaska MAC Group Standard Operating Procedures handbook will be reviewed annually by the AICC Manager and modified as needed.

APPENDICES:

The following appendices are attached and made part of this Operations Handbook:

- Appendix 1 -- Information Flow Diagram
- Appendix 2 -- Sample Delegation of Authority for MAC Group Members
- Appendix 3 -- Sample Delegation of Authority for MAC Group Coordinator
- Appendix 4 -- MAC Operational Support Needs List
- Appendix 5 -- MAC Incident Prioritization Criteria

The following MAC forms and templates are available on CD from the AICC Manager.

- Daily Priority Matrix
- MAC Support Activities Schedule
- IC Conference Call Template
- Aviation Conference Call Template
- Team Briefing Schedule Template
- Team and Crew Matrix Template

Alaska MAC Group Operations Handbook Approvals:

This operations handbook shall be effective the date of the last signature and will remain in effect until terminated or modified in writing by those agencies originally approving the document.

Alaska Division of Forestry:

By: Deann U. Form Date: 1.25.07

USDA Forest Service:

By: William B. Thompson Date: 01.25.07

USDI Bureau of Indian Affairs:

By: Steve Heppner Date: 1-26-7

USDI Bureau of Land Management:

By: Robert Williams Date: 1-25-07

USDI Fish & Wildlife Service:

By: Erin Long Date: 1-25-2007

USDI National Park Service:

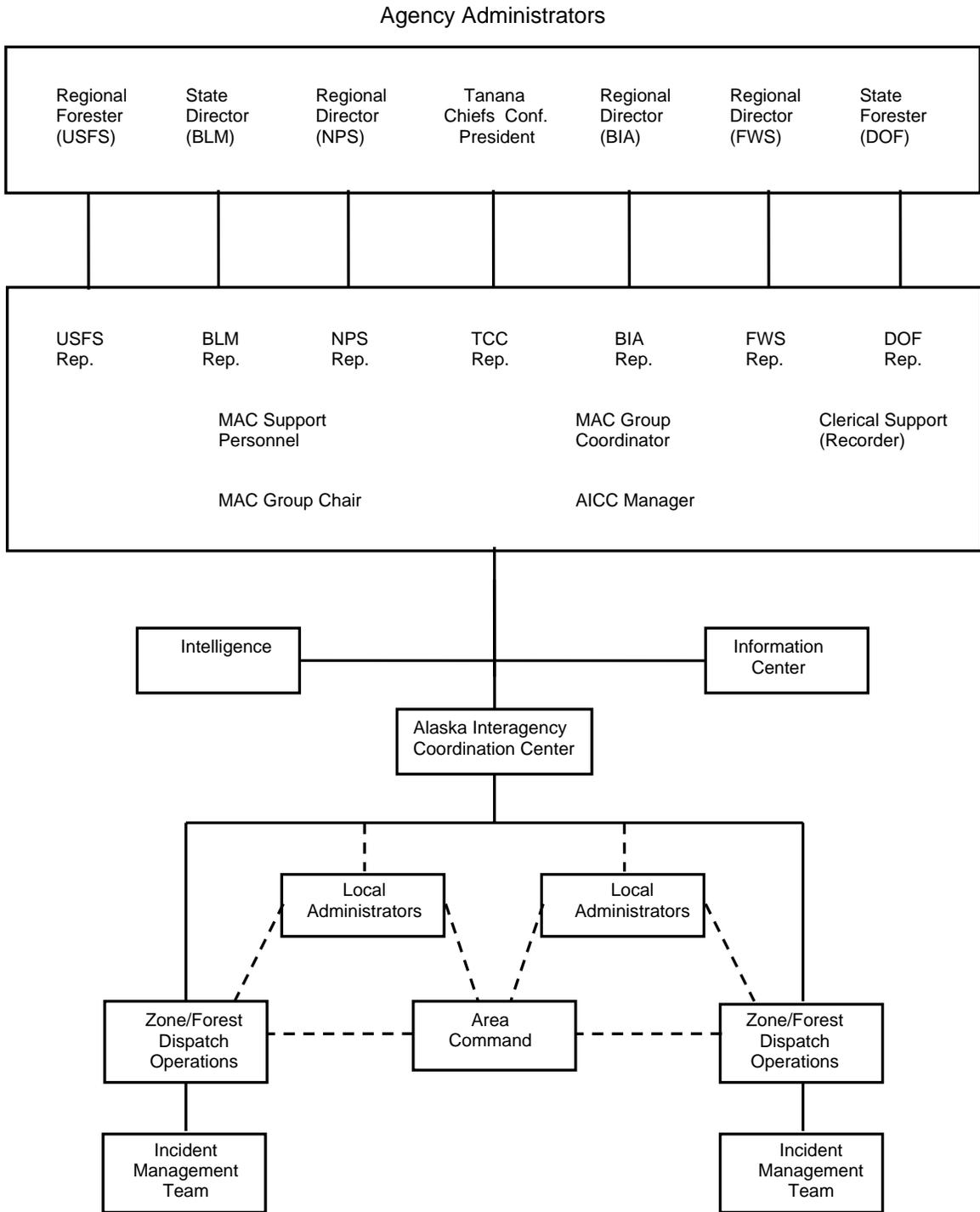
By: William B. Cella Date: Jan. 25, 2007

Tanana Chiefs Conference:

By: J. Pau Date: 1-27-07

APPENDIX 1

Information Flow Diagram



APPENDIX 2
Sample Letter of Delegation for MAC Group Members

(On Agency Letterhead)

Reply To: (file designation) Date:

Subject: Agency MAC Representative

To:

You are delegated to act for me as my representative on the Alaska Multi-Agency Coordinating (MAC) Group. In that capacity, you are authorized to represent the agency's interest in MAC group deliberations to:

1. Establish interagency pre-suppression and pre-positioning strategies for Alaska in anticipation of incident demands.
2. Set priorities and plans for allocation, re-allocation and demobilization of fire suppression resources.
3. Develop actions to respond to national MAC direction.
4. Communicate as necessary with other agency representatives and/or external parties (e.g. interested decision-makers; media; etc.).

This delegation shall become effective the date of this document and shall continue until relieved of your assignment.

I ask that you brief me or my deputy daily on the current fire situation.

XXX
Agency Administrator

APPENDIX 3
Delegation of Authority for MAC Group Coordinator

(On AWFCG Letterhead)

To: Alaska Coordinating Group Members

From: Chair, Alaska Coordinating Group

Subject: Delegation of Authority

This memorandum provides official delegated authority to the Great Basin MAC Group Coordinator, Mark Jones, to act on behalf of the Alaska Coordinating Group in the following areas:

- Operate/Function in accordance with the Alaska MAC Group Annual Operating Plan.
- Establish protection objectives.
- Develop criteria and set priorities for geographic area incidents and/or Area Commands in order to meet protection objectives.
- Direct, control, allocate and reallocate resources among or between Area Commands and Incident Management Teams to meet Geographic Area priorities.
- Implement decisions of the Geographic Area MAC Group.
- Signature Authority for direction/procedural correspondence as it relates to MAC Group decisions

Further, you are responsible for ensuring that agency policies and procedures are maintained, agency administrators are informed of decisions and actions, and operational decisions are implemented.

Chair, Alaska Coordinating Group

APPENDIX 4

MAC Operational Support Needs

The following should be assembled to support the Alaska MAC Group, which will typically use the Alaska Fire Service facility on Ft. Wainwright. Meetings conducted at other locations will require the same support. The MAC Coordinator will be responsible for ensuring adequate support.

Staffing:

Clerical support person (recorder) to provide typing, filing, note taking, and copying.

Conference Bridge:

The MAC Coordinator will arrange for and provide the bridge number prior to the meeting for all conference calls.

Hardware Support:

The following equipment is required: computer with Internet access, fax machine with preprogrammed phone numbers, copy machine, and a television with access to a VCR.

Miscellaneous:

Tables and/or desks to seat personnel for the briefing and MAC Group meeting

Easel board with paper

White board with dry erase markers

Alaska maps with locations of project fires identified

Paper, pens, pencils, paper clips, masking tape, file folders, markers, file boxes, and the current copy of the National Interagency Mobilization Guide.

APPENDIX 5

MAC Incident Prioritization Criteria

When competition for resources between Geographic Areas occurs, the National Multi-Agency Coordinating (MAC) Group located at the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) in Boise, Idaho will establish priorities.

When competition for scarce critical resources within Alaska occurs, the Alaska Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (MAC) will establish priorities.

In the development of incident and resource allocation priorities, the following agency policy will be considered and utilized. The Department of Interior and the Department of Agriculture, Forest Service are to adhere to the standard description contained within the 1997 National Interagency Mobilization Guide.

The standard criteria to be used in establishing priorities are as follows:

1. Potential to destroy:
 - Human life
 - Property and resource values (describe type and value)

Descriptions should include information that accurately measures the value, benefit, or significance of the property of resource. How is the property or resource used and by whom? Is there cultural, historical, or legislated significance?
2. Briefly describe social/political, economic consequences
3. Resistance to control:
 - Growth Potential
 - Difficulty of terrain
4. Describe the probability of meeting suppression objectives within the specified time frame documented in the Escaped Fire Situation Analysis (EFSA)

State of Alaska:

It is the intent of AS 41.15.010 – 41.15.170 to provide protection, commensurate with the value of the resources at risk, for the natural resources and watersheds on land that is owned privately, by the state, or by a municipality (Alaska Statutes – Title 41).