2016

Fire 235 Kuyukutuk River

Fire 235 Kuyukutuk River was reported to McGrath dispatch by Kenai Flight Services the morning of June 3, the result of lightning the prior evening. Air attack, J-66, J-17, FB 208 and FB 209 responded. Initial size up at 11:11 was 15 acres and 60% active. The fire was burning and torching in black spruce and open tundra with 1-5 foot flame lengths. It plotted in a Full suppression area on BLM lands. Tanker 52 responded to the fire along with an additional load of jumpers. Personnel on the ground performed a burn out operation off of a natural barrier in an attempt to keep the fire from moving south onto Calista Native Corporation lands. At the end of shift, the fire was approximately 900 acres. On the morning of June 4 the Midnight Suns IHC arrived on the fire and suppression efforts continued to focus on securing the fire's southern edge; however, strong northeast winds and continuous fuels pushed the fire southwest on to Calista lands.

Communications with Calista Native Corporation indicate that their primary concern is a camp several miles up a trail along the west edge of Kako Creek approximately 11 miles southwest of the fire. In addition, there are twelve Native Allotments between 8 and 15 miles south and east of the fire along the north bank of the Yukon River. Calista confirms that there are no values requiring protection at the mine site east of the fire. The BLM Anchorage Field Office has not identified any BLM values that may be threatened by the fire. Based on current fire size, activity, and resistance to control, as well as the location of identified values we have decided that the initial full containment strategy is no longer the best course of action for managing this incident.

The primary incident objectives of protecting the camp and Native Allotments can be achieved with fewer resources, less time, less risk, and lower cost by focusing on site preparation around the camp and Native Allotments instead of on direct containment of the fire. Whereas continued direct attack with a containment objective would require: 2 Type 1 Crews, 14 days 10 Type 2 Crews, 20 days $8 Million\* Crews would work and be spiked remotely in difficult mountainous terrain Probability of success would be highly dependent on weather conditions over the next 14 days. \*High costs associated with very long flying distances from established logistics bases to support firefighters off the river corridor. Point protection at the camp and Native Allotments can be implemented with: 1 Type 1 Crew, 7 days 3 Type 2 Crews, 7 days $1 Million Crews would work and be spiked in the river corridor Probability of success will be high independent of weather conditions. Once preparations have been completed, sites can be minimally staffed until the fire threatens them.

This decision to provide point protection to identified values instead of continuing efforts to contain the fire has been jointly reached by: BLM, Anchorage Field Office BLM, Alaska Fire Service, Galena Zone Calista Village Corporation BIA, Alaska Region The decision may be reconsidered if additional values and/or jurisdictions become threatened or if it becomes likely that costs will greatly exceed the $1 million estimate.