Sockeye Fire
AK-MSS-501282
Incident Summary

Nulato Crew, Sockeye Fire 6/24/2015

June 14 – June 27, 2015

Alaska Type 1 IMT

Tom Kurth, Incident Commander

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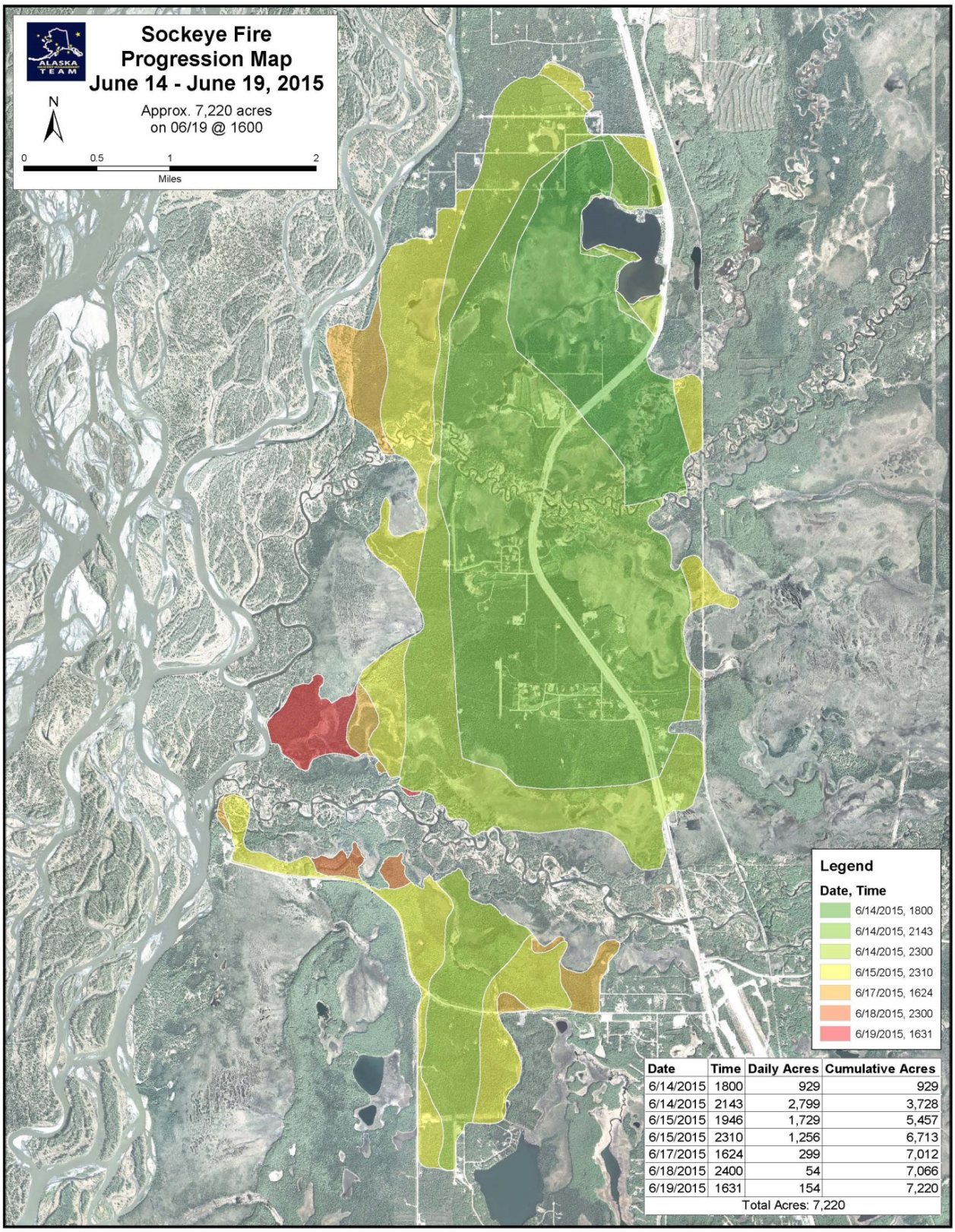
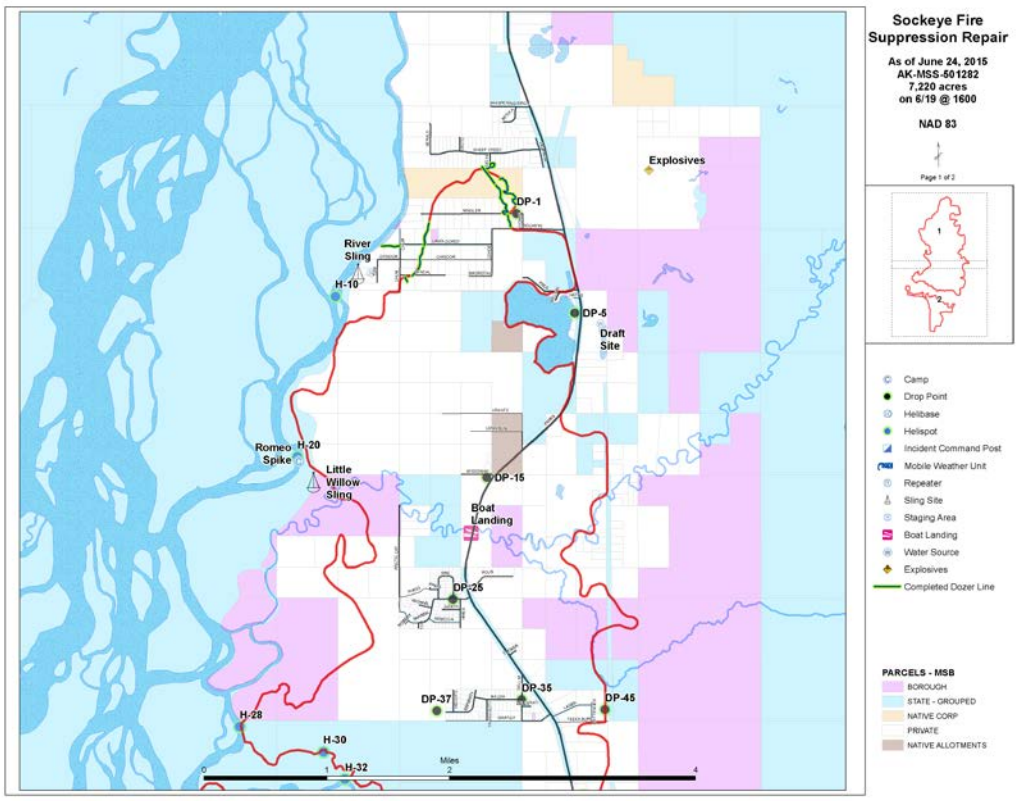


Date	Time	Daily Acres	Cumulative Acres
6/14/2015	1800	929	929
6/14/2015	2143	2,799	3,728
6/15/2015	1946	1,729	5,457
6/15/2015	2310	1,256	6,713
6/17/2015	1624	299	7,012
6/18/2015	2400	54	7,066
6/19/2015	1631	154	7,220
Total Acres: 7,220			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As of June 24, 2015
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7,220 acres
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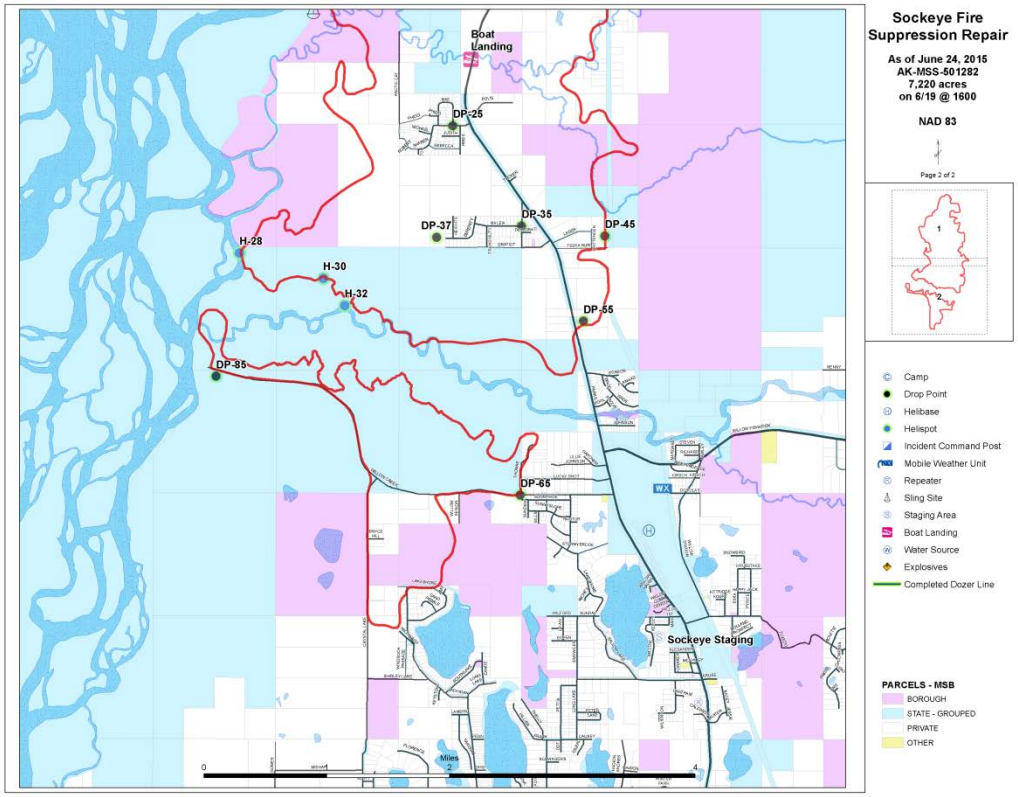
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PARCELS - MSB
BOROUGH
STATE - GROUPED
PRIVATE
OTHER

Incident Ownership

Land Status Type	Unit	Protection Level	Size	Primary
Private	Private	Full	4178	X
State	Alaska DNR Other	Full	2197	
BIA	Native Allotments	Full	117	
County	Matanuska-Susitna Borough	Full	671	
Tribal	Cook Inlet Region, Incorporated	Full	57	
		Total Acres:	**7220**	

Incident Objectives (6/26)

1. Ensure structures and allotments within fire perimeter remain protected.
2. Complete line containment according to Mat-Su Area turn-back standards.
3. Prepare and disseminate timely information to the public, stakeholders, media, and agency personnel.
4. Support initial attack efforts at the request of Mat-Su Area Forestry.
5. Complete suppression repair plan in cooperation with Mat-Su Area Forestry and the Borough.
6. Prepare for transfer of command to a Type 3 organization managed by Mat-Su Area.

Operational Emphasis (6/26)

Firefighter and public safety will be enhanced through the use of sound risk management and hazard mitigation.

During the next 24 hours, monitor structures within fire perimeter for fire encroachment, maintain 100% resource accountability including personnel and equipment, advance line containment. Continue to make resources available for other incidents. Consolidate suppression repair information for plan finalization. Facilitate close-out with Mat-Su Area at 14:00.

After completion of the 300' mop up standard, mop up to the degree necessary to make the probability of escape low based on experience, terrain, fuel type, and predicted weather.

Incident Overview

Sunday, June 14

Helitack 973 and one Forestry engine first responded to this fire early afternoon on 6/14 with Air Attack and Retardant ordered. The fire was initially sized up at 2 acres in mixed spruce/hardwoods and growing rapidly. Numerous residences were immediately threatened and evacuations were in progress within the first hour of initial attack. Multiple apparatus responded from Lakes FD and Central FD as well as helicopter 212TH from Kenai, Pioneer Peak IHC, Midnight Sun IHC, Yukon T2IA crew, White Mountain T2IA crew, as well as tankers T-55, T-260, T-10, and firebosses T-849, T-851, and T-853.

The fire continued to grow and jumped the Parks Highway to the east. Evacuation notices were completed from milepost 63 to milepost 78 of the Parks Highway and the highway was closed for most of the day due to the amount of fire apparatus in the area as well as the overall fire behavior. Numerous primary residences and secondary structures were impacted. Firefighters focused on ensuring the safety of residents in the area as well as structure triage and protection. The Alaska Type 2 Black IMT was ordered and a jet-load of five hotshot crews was ordered from the Lower 48. The fire size was estimated at 6,500 acres.

Monday, June 15

Extreme fire behavior with crowning and running was observed. IA resources again focused on structure triage and protection with aerial support. Residents continued to be evacuated in the affected communities of Willow, Willow Fishhook, and Sheep Creek. The Parks Highway was periodically closed due to fire activity. The Alaska Type 2 Black IMT received an in-briefing in Palmer and quickly scaled up to a Type 1 organization due to manage the complexity associated with the urban interface and numerous cooperators. The IMT set up an ICP at Houston High School and shadowed the initial attack organization. The fire grew in size by 288 acres.

Tuesday, June 16

The Alaska Type 1 IMT assumed command of the fire at 0700. The fire remained active in the interior and in various places along the perimeter, exhibiting short runs in the spruce and short range spotting from group torching. There was no major growth in the perimeter today. Fire personnel continued to secure the perimeter on all flanks as well as properties within the interior. Evacuation of affected communities remained in place. Small burnouts were conducted in advantageous terrain to defend structures from uncontrolled fire. All burnouts were successful. Six more crews and additional water handling apparatus were expected to arrive the following day.

Wednesday, June 17

Even with continued hot and dry weather, there was minimal growth in the fire perimeter. The fire exhibited some group torching and isolated short crown runs in the interior. Fire personnel continued to defend structures and advanced fire line around the north, east and south flanks. Water handling equipment and hose-lays were deployed, and mop-up efforts continued to secure structures. The IMT held a public meeting to inform local residents of the fire status. The estimated burned acreage decreased due to more accurate mapping.

Thursday, June 18

Temperatures into the upper 80s and low RH values again tested firefighters, who were able to hold the fire with minimal perimeter growth. The fire smoldered with occasional flames in black spruce and spruce/hardwood mixes. Isolated torching and group torching was observed in the interior and along the perimeter in some areas. Crews and engines continued to work towards a 300' mop-up standard around structures within the perimeter. Progress was made securing the north, east and southern edges of the fire for a total of 5% containment.

Friday, June 19

The fire backed in black spruce on the west edge near the Susitna River under south winds, for an increase of 195 acres. Isolated torching and group torching in spruce was observed elsewhere. Crews and engines continued to secure the perimeter, for a total of 15% containment of the fire edge. The sizes of the TFR and evacuation area were reduced.

Sunday, June 21

Crews continued to make progress toward turn-back standards in all divisions and achieved 79% perimeter containment. High Rh aided mop-up efforts. The Mat-Su Borough continued to assess structure damage One Hotshot and one Type 2 IA crew were reassigned to the Stetson Creek Fire. The National Guard Blackhawks were released.

Monday, June 22

Crews continued to mop up in all Divisions, aided by continued cool, moist weather. Resource Advisors from DNR and the Borough began their assessment of suppression repair needs in Division C. The Borough released revised estimates of structure damage and loss. Crews and overhead continue to be released and reassigned to other incidents.

Tuesday, June 23

Crews continued to mop-up and grid. Resource Advisors assessed suppression damage in Division G. The Mat-Su Borough completed their preliminary damage assessment today, estimating 55 lost homes, 44 damaged, and 338 affected properties. An open-house was held at the Willow Community Center allowing interaction between firefighters, cooperators, and the public. Resources continue to demobilize. Six crews are scheduled to be released on 6/24. A transition back to a local Type 3 organization is being planned for 6/27.

Wednesday, June 24

Crews and engines continued to mop-up, grid, and patrol subdivisions. Resources including crews, overhead, and helicopters continued to be reassigned to higher priority fires. Suppression repair planning continues.

Thursday, June 25

Firefighters continued to mop-up and patrol all divisions. A final draft of the incident suppression repair plan was completed and was distributed for review and approval.

Friday, June 26

Additional crews, overhead, and engines are released in preparation for a 6/27 transfer of command to a Type 3 organization. Type 3 organization resources shadow the IMT during this operational period. The IMT/Agency Administrator Close-out Meeting is held at Houston ICP. The FEMA FMAG Window closes at 24:00 6/26.

Saturday, June 27

Transfer of command to Mike Smith's Type 3 organization takes place at 07:00. ICP is re-located to the Willow Community Center and the IMT closes out Houston ICP and demobilizes.

Fire Weather

Summary

In the days leading up to the Sockeye Fire, a strong ridge of high pressure had built over Alaska bringing hot and dry conditions. The temperature and relative humidity at 1330 on Sunday June 14, 2015 were 84oF and 27% at Willow RAWS located 5 miles to the southeast. A Red Flag Warning for strong winds and low relative humidity was issued by NWS Anchorage at 1448 Sunday in effect through 2200 Monday. Later that day, the high temperature reached 88oF with a minimum relative humidity of 18%. Winds were from the north at speeds up to 13 mph at the somewhat wind sheltered Willow RAWS. Relative humidity recovered to over 80% on the night of the 14th but quickly dropped into the teens on the afternoon of the 15th as winds gusted to over 15 mph on the Willow RAWS.

At 1625 on Monday the 15th the Red Flag Warning was extend until 1 am on Wednesday the 17th for scattered dry thunderstorms on Tuesday the 16th in addition to the continued winds and low relative humidities. On the afternoon and evening of the 16th, dry thunderstorms developed throughout the area but mostly missed the fire. Nearby cumulus buildups as well as an outflow boundary from thunderstorms over the Talkeetna Mountains produced winds of 15-20 mph at the fire. Red flag Warnings were extended to include Wednesday the 17th and then additionally issued for Thursday the 18th.

On Friday a significant pattern shift occurred with the flow becoming southerly and bringing cool and generally cloudy marine influenced conditions to the area which persisted into Monday June 22nd. During this period, high temperatures ranged from the lower 70s on Friday to the upper 60s Saturday through Monday. Minimum relative humidity values trended upward considerably from the 45 to 50 percent range to a very moist 60 to 65 percent range on the 20th and 21st with very good nighttime recovery throughout. As the onshore flow weakened on Tuesday the 23rd more sunshine returned to the area bringing a brief warming and drying trend.

Notable Successes

In order to mitigate the lack radio communications from the Houston ICP to the fire, the IMET was allowed to set up in the Mat-Su mobile command center which was located at the fire station in Willow on the big dry thunderstorm day on Tuesday the 16th. This allowed for both radio communications to the fire and cell communications to the Anchorage NWS as well as fast internet for radar (via mobile hotspot) which allowed for great communication/coordination and ability to issue fast updates when need be. Additionally the Mat-su personnel working in the command center were super helpful and friendly and also distributed updates to the Borough via their communications network.

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

No radio coverage from ICP to fire initially. See resolution above in success for the 16th…then repeaters got established to fix this the next day although radios still did not work in the building. The communication unit set up a Larson whip antenna outside situation so that my radio would work there which was very much appreciated.

Verizon cell phones do not work inside Houston High School.

Fire Behavior

Topography

The Sockeye Fire was located in the wide north/south oriented glacial Susitna Valley on glacial landforms and alluvial deposits from the Susitna River. The fire area was relatively flat with a slight south facing aspect. Elevation on the fire was from 102 feet at the southwest end of the fire to 248 feet on the north end near the point of origin. The Alaska Range to the west and north and the Talkeetna Range to the east hindered storm systems from moving to the north generally resulting in considerable precipitation to the area.

The fire area was crossed east to west by Willow Creek, Little Willow Creek and Roger's Creek which all drain into the Susitna River near the Fire's West Edge. Kashwitna Lake was located in the northeast portion of the fire area and the Susitna River forms the western extent of the fire. To the south of the fire there were multiple small lakes.

In general, the fire burned down valley. Lakes, Creeks, and roads did not hinder spread on June 14 due to spot fires up to ½ mile ahead of the main fire.

Fuels

The primary fuels carrying the fire were black and white spruce (C2) and mixed hardwoods (M2, 75% hardwoods and 25% conifer). Black spruce was the primary carrier of the fire with the fire exhibiting sustained crown fire activity and spotting ahead of itself. Fire was primarily characterized as a ground fire through the hardwood dominant stands transitioning to group torching where the fire intersected with islands of black spruce. Riparian areas acted as a barrier to ground fire spread although spot fires associated with spruce torching did allow the fire to spread south of Little Willow Creek, Roger's Creek and then the larger Willow Creek. There were a number of roads in the fire area as well as small clearings and structures.

The primary concern for continued fire activity after the suppression forces halted the initial spread was the duff layer which continued to dry out after the last significant rainfall on June 05. DMC levels rose from 43.2 on the first day of the fire to 71.1 on Friday June 19 when smoldering activity became more prevalent throughout the interior of the fire. The major run of the fire on Sunday, June 14 was a surface/crown fire which did not involve a significant part of the duff layer until the 19th. Although surface fuels recovered moisture levels due to sustained cloud cover and elevated humidity values, the duff retained significant heat and therefore the potential to rekindle and torch remaining spruce trees likely remained in the interior of the fire throughout the summer.

Mixed hardwood/spruce stands were difficult for firefighters to ignite when attempting to burn fingers on June 16-18. Boggy areas were generally unavailable to support ground fire during the initial spread of the main fire and in subsequent days.

Berms and piles were additional fuels concern in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas immediately surrounding private homes and structures. Many of the structures were built on land cleared using heavy equipment. The cleared vegetation was often piled in berms at the edge of the cleared land or

buried adjacent to the properties. Vegetative material within the berms or buried as well as the surrounding duff layers continued smolder in the absence of wetting rain or mop-up from suppression resources. Trees in these areas likely continued to fall throughout the fire due to weakened root systems providing a mechanism for interior torching if fire spread if a tree with remaining foliage fell into a hot spot.

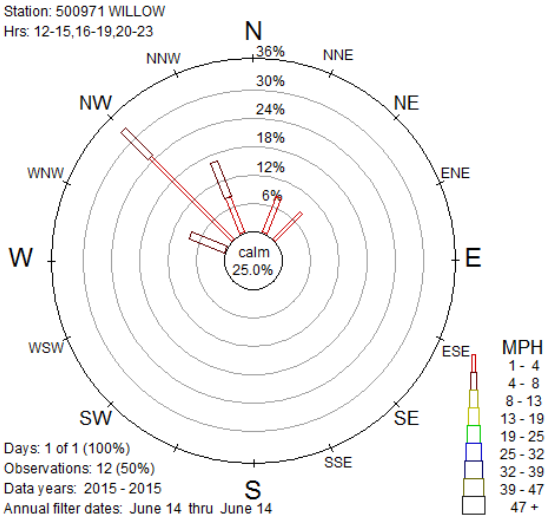
Fire Weather Indices and Spread

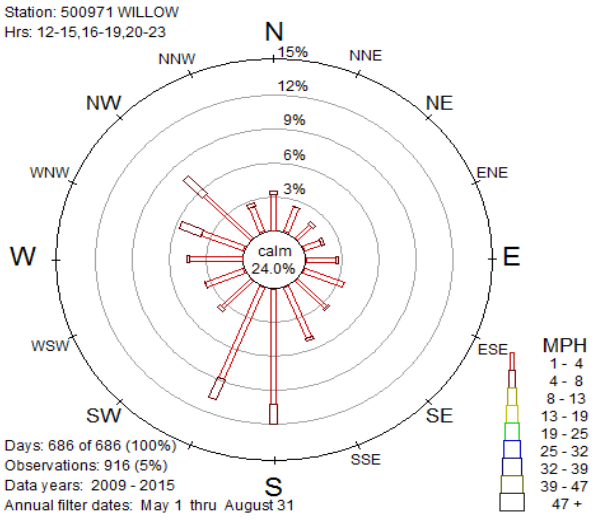
The incident was reported on Sunday, June 14 originating on private property. The fire was driven by strong northerly winds towards the town of Willow. Measured spread distance on June 14 from 1315-1800 was 2.5 miles, from 1800-2143 was 2.0 miles, and from 2143-2300 was 2.7 miles.

The table below lists hourly fire danger indices from the Willow RAWS (1 mile east of the fire) from 0600 the day of the largest spread (14 June) to 0100 on 15 June when major fire activity diminished.

Date	Hour	ATF	RHP	WSM	SOLR	PREC	HFFMC	HISI	HFWI
2015-06-15	1	57	51	0	1	0	92	5.7	16.1
2015-06-15	0	60	47	0	2	0	92.3	5.9	16.7
2015-06-14	23	63	37	0	7	0	92.5	6.2	17.1
2015-06-14	22	71	25	0	17	0	92.7	6.2	17.3
2015-06-14	21	77	18	1	28	0	92.7	6.8	18.5
2015-06-14	20	78	16	2	41	0	92.4	7.1	19
2015-06-14	19	80	17	4	133	0	91.9	7.7	20.3
2015-06-14	18	81	17	4	210	0	91.1	7.5	19.9
2015-06-14	17	81	18	3	261	0	90.2	5.6	16
2015-06-14	16	82	20	3	448	0	89.1	4.8	14.2
2015-06-14	12	75	35	0	398	0	87.9	3.2	9.5
2015-06-14	11	73	35	1	501	0	87.6	3.3	9.8
2015-06-14	10	71	40	3	529	0	87.1	3.6	10.6
2015-06-14	9	68	47	1	425	0	86.8	2.9	8.9
2015-06-14	8	61	64	0	197	0	86.7	2.7	8.1
2015-06-14	7	57	73	0	158	0	86.7	2.7	8.2
2015-06-14	6	48	89	0	50	0	87	2.8	8.4

The wind roses below display first the winds during the large fire growth (14 June from 1200-2300) and the average summer winds experienced at the fire site from May to September 2009-2014). Northerly winds at the speeds experienced over the fire are more uncommon than typical southerly winds.





The table below highlights index values from the closest remote weather station (Willow RAWS/WOWA2/500971) located one (1) mile east of the fire. The values listed are daily 1400 observations with the large fire spread day highlighted.

Date	Hour	ATF	RHP	WSM	PREC	FFMC	DMC	DC	ISI	BUI	FWI
2015-06-21	14	65	64	4	0	86.9	75.4	297.9	3.8	92.4	15.2
2015-06-20	14	68	55	2	0	88.9	73.6	291.2	4.3	90.2	16.4
2015-06-19	14	72	50	3	0	90.7	71.1	284.2	6	87.5	20.7
2015-06-18	14	83	28	3	0	94.7	68	276.8	10.6	84.3	30.1
2015-06-17	14	86	24	2	0	95.3	62.4	268.3	10.7	78.9	29.3
2015-06-16	14	86	25	3	0	95.3	56.2	259.5	11.5	72.9	29.6
2015-06-15	14	88	19	1	0	95.2	50.1	250.7	9.7	66.8	25.2
2015-06-14	14	83	21	4	0	94.2	43.2	241.7	10.7	59.7	25.5
2015-06-13	14	75	27	3	0	91.9	37.1	233.2	7.1	53.1	17.9
2015-06-12	14	66	37	3	0	88.9	32.2	225.4	4.6	47.5	12.1
2015-06-11	14	57	57	1	0.01	86.9	29	218.6	3	43.6	8
2015-06-10	14	60	47	4	0	87.1	27.3	212.7	3.9	41.4	9.8
2015-06-09	14	62	33	4	0	87.1	25	206.5	3.9	38.4	9.3
2015-06-08	14	57	55	3	0.01	79.8	22	200.1	1.4	34.5	3.2
2015-06-07	14	64	44	3	0.04	71.6	20.3	194.2	0.8	32.2	1.2
2015-06-06	14	60	45	1	0.03	50.6	17.5	187.6	0.2	28.4	0.2
2015-06-05	14	51	82	0	0.13	20.3	15.2	181.5	0	25.1	0
2015-06-04	14	54	82	0	0.17	23.4	20	180.8	0	31.4	0
2015-06-03	14	55	78	2	0.24	35.6	28.8	182.3	0	41.3	0
2015-06-02	14	54	87	1	0.11	55.1	45.8	188.4	0.3	57	0.6

Notable Successes

The use of trainees allowed personnel to share tasks and spend time in the field analyzing fuels and fire effects while still attending information sharing meetings. Early fire behavior information from the GACC was very helpful in early predictions of fire behavior during the initial stages of the fire. Analyzing

the Willow RAWS data and crosschecking it with on-site weather readings allowed personnel to discover discrepancies in wind speeds measured by the RAWS.

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

Traffic closures/evacuations made traveling throughout the fire area challenging. This issue was unable to be mitigated until firefighters made significant mop-up progress. The Willow RAWS's erroneous wind speed readings made understanding the initial fire behavior difficult. This was mitigated by setting up an additional portable RAWS. The Willow RAWS site is sheltered from the wind by adjacent trees reducing the measured wind speeds by the RAWS. A portable RAWS (AP5) was ordered and set up 5 miles south of the fire in an area more representative of the fire area. Winds measured by fire personnel and the portable RAWS were roughly twice those measured by the Willow RAWS.

Highlighting the importance of duff moisture levels and how the moisture content effects fire behavior helped resources from out of state that were unfamiliar with Alaska fuels. Posting additional information, adding explanatory pictures in the IAP, and explaining the role duff plays with fire in the ecosystem enhanced the fire intelligence of the personnel assigned to the incident.

One FBAN was unable to link to the I:Drive and therefore was unable to save documents, print forecasts, etc. Use of portable drives and requesting linked computer users to print/save documents was a viable workaround, but less than desirable as the practice opens up possible virus sharing/security risks.

WILLOW RAWS (WOWA2) – 1 mile east

Time(AKD)	Temperature °F	Dew Point °F	Relative Humidity %	Wind Speed mph	Wind Gust mph	Wind Direction
6:58	48.0	44.9	89	0	2	
5:58	45.0	42.0	89	0	1	
4:58	46.0	43.2	90	0	2	
3:58	47.0	41.5	81	0	2	
2:58	50.0	42.4	75	0	2	
1:58	54.0	42.5	65	0	2	
0:58	58.0	42.9	57	0	4	
23:58	65.0	40.1	40	1	7	WNW
22:58	69.0	40.2	35	1	9	WNW
21:58	74.0	41.4	31	1	11	NW
20:58	75.0	39.7	28	3	11	NW
19:58	77.0	38.5	25	2	16	NW
18:58	78.0	40.3	26	6	18	WNW
17:58	78.0	40.3	26	6	17	WNW
16:58	77.0	39.5	26	5	16	WNW
15:58	76.0	38.6	26	4	12	NW
14:58	76.0	39.6	27	3	16	NW
13:58	72.0	37.1	28	5	14	WNW
12:58	72.0	41.3	33	4	11	NNW
11:58	69.0	41.6	37	3	9	NW
10:58	65.0	44.3	47	2	8	NNW
9:58	62.0	44.7	53	3	7	WNW
8:58	59.0	45.6	61	0	4	
7:58	53.0	43.9	71	0	3	
6:58	45.0	42.2	90	0	2	

PT MAC RAWS (PMZAZ) – 21 miles south

Time(AKD)	Temperature °F	Dew Point °F	Relative Humidity %	Wind Speed mph	Wind Gust mph	Wind Direction
6:50	59.0	43.8	57	6	12	NNW
5:50	54.0	42.1	64	6	9	NW
4:50	50.0	39.9	68	3	5	NNW
3:50	53.0	39.1	59	1	7	WSW
2:50	57.0	40.5	54	3	6	N
1:50	61.0	41.2	48	5	6	NW
0:50	63.0	40.1	43	5	9	NW
23:50	67.0	39.9	37	6	11	NW
22:50	71.0	38.8	31	8	15	NW
21:50	74.0	38.8	28	9	17	NW
20:50	75.0	38.7	27	7	20	NW
19:50	76.0	38.6	26	8	19	NNW
18:50	76.0	38.6	26	10	21	NW
17:50	76.0	38.6	26	9	20	NW
16:50	76.0	38.6	26	9	19	NNW
15:50	75.0	38.7	27	3	21	NW
14:50	73.0	38.9	29	5	20	N
13:50	73.0	39.7	30	5	22	N
12:50	70.0	41.1	35	12	21	NW
11:50	67.0	43.1	42	12	17	N
10:50	65.0	46.4	51	6	14	WNW
9:50	61.0	46.6	59	9	11	NW
8:50	58.0	47.5	68	7	11	NW
7:50	54.0	47.3	78	5	7	NW
6:50	51.0	48.8	92	4	6	NW

Command

Incident Commander

Mobilization

The Alaska Interagency Type 1 Incident Management Team was mobilized to the Sockeye Incident on Sunday, 6/14. The team was a combination of both Green and Black Type 2 Teams which served to fill a fifty seven person roster on a critical urban interface incident. The team then moved to the Willow ICP on Monday, 6/14 for direction from the Division of Forestry's Anchorage Mat-Su Area. Operational focus was primarily limited to structure loss during the transition. Values at risk were estimated to be seven subdivisions with a fire perimeter surrounding an estimated 200 residences and 1100 outbuildings. Team members were in place at the in-brief with the exception of the Finance section which arrived on Tuesday, 6/15. Transfer of command was with initial attack personnel at the AMSA in-brief and finalized at the Willow Fire Department.

Delegation/Transfer of Command

Delegation from the Anchorage Mat/Su Area (AMSA) Forester was received prior to deployment and focused management on:

- Protection of values at risk, utilities, and related infrastructure

Values at risk consisted of 200 single residences, 1100 outbuildings, 50 commercial properties, and 100 mixed commercial/residential buildings, and related utilities and infrastructure. The area was evacuated of an estimated 800 residents of which 200 were move to temporary shelters. The area also had a substantial sled dog and animal populations which were moved to shelters. Utilities to the affected area were shut off until the evacuation order was lifted.

- Keeping highways, roads, and railroad corridors moving

The Parks Highway, the most traveled highway in the state, was limited to one lane, piloted traffic from Milepost 64 to 88 for the initial five days of the fire before being moved to Milepost 70 – 74 on day. All road restrictions were lifted on June 23rd along with the evacuation order.

The IMT was in close communication with Alaska RR officials to facilitate safe train passage. Passenger travel was initially restricted until fire officials coordinated safe, escorted travel through the fire area. Haz-mat transportation restrictions were continued until the fire area was deemed safe. Escorted, slow trained travel remained in effect the entire incident while fire fighters operated within the corridor.

- Public information dissemination,

The Mat-Su Borough maintained a call center initially at their EOC which allowed the public to get prompt, timely information until the IMT established an information process. Press conferences were held a 2:00 pm for the first five days while Inciweb, Facebook, bulletin boards, and media contacts were built to pick up the need for public information. Cooperator meetings provided information updates on a daily basis. Issues were brought forward and a process was developed for their resolution.

- Cost efficiency,

The IMT was under the initial $ 8.0 million target at $7.5 million. At the time of this writing, the target will be reevaluated to see if additional funds are needed to complete the Type 3 mission.

- Initial attack support.

The IMT supported AMSA on two occasions with initial attack support. All resources were returned to the fire upon completion of assignment.

WFDSS

Incident course of action was directed towards minimizing Fire Spread using aggressive and appropriate suppression actions. This was due to the large amount of values at risk and private property. Private property accounted for 60% of the affected area.

Location and history:

The Sockeye Fire was due north the Miller's Reach fire, a large urban interface fire from 1996 which destroyed 300 homes. The response to the Miller's Reach Fire from the Division of Forestry was contentious and eventually ended in court. The AMSA has since been building relationships with local government since then and this is evident in the field. However, residents and government often reminded the team of this history. The Sockeye Fire was a positive opportunity for the AMSA to demonstrate the improved communications and strong partnerships since then.

Key Decisions

- Early release of resources specifically crews and helicopters to supplement emerging incidents
- Initiated FMAG (Fire Management Assistance Grant) from onset of suppression
- Providing liaison (LOFR) early on to support stakeholder issue
- Road corridors, railroad, highway, and evacuation area were reopened at early opportunity
- TFR was minimized to allow private aircraft into airport
- Integrated Fire Management (IFM) was kept up at incident expediting fire report
- Security and Recovery Group developed for Operations
- Maintained Blackhawk helicopter liaisons and administrative oversight at Sockeye Air Ops
- Public meeting conducted on day 3 and Open House for community

Notable Successes

- Mobilization was timely enough to relieve initial attack forces.
- Vehicles were available from start of incident
- Expanded dispatch in AMSA expedited logistics and supplies for incident
- Borough and government included providing liaisons to team and running evacuation centers
- Law enforcement was available and responsive to incident needs including leading evacuation, piloting cars, patrolling evacuated areas, welfare checks, and limiting confrontations

- Local fire departments were involved from start
- Known sites data from Borough for roads, structures, and subdivisions
- Cooperator meeting alleviated information deficit and facilitated issue resolution
- 209 included acreage breakdown
- Night operations reduced rekindles and ignitions in structures, and provided security to evacuated residences
- Military facilitated Blackhawk participation
- Red Cross coordinated donations
- Residents were appreciative and let fire fighters know
- Press conferences, Facebook, Inciweb, public meeting and various media outlets met information distribution
- ADF&G delivered salmon smolt and buffalo moved through fire area
- Borough handled structure assessments and losses
- Aviation support, including Air Attack platforms, was timely and ordered early.
- Caterer arrived at 5:00 am, set up and delivered breakfast and lunches by 7:00
- Medical unit treated numerous minor injuries and ailments and returned fire fighters to the field
- Local fire departments were engaged with wildland fire effort
- Area directives were clear and consistent

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

Issue: Carding of aircraft by Office of Aircraft Services (OAS) is disruptive, slow, expensive, and of questionable service. For example, Blackhawks operated by the US Army (National Guard) are not approved for federal use.

Resolution: Continue to search for a meaningful use of OAS

Issue: Mobilization for Alaska teams is coordinated by ICs or section chiefs

Resolution: Utilize Alaska Interagency Coordination Center for interagency team coordination

Issue: ICP was in proximity to Evacuation Shelter

Resolution: Worked well here but can develop into more serious problems

Issue: Staging Area during transition was vacated before communicating to line personnel

Resolution: Should have been maintained with Borough rep and Ops section

Issue: Fire departments have operating guidelines contrary to wildland operations, e.g. 12 hour shifts, red card and fitness requirements differ

Resolution: Assigned work is dictated by Operational needs and expectations

Issue: Crew reassignments were delayed at a time when there were critical shortages

Resolutions: Reduce layers of coordination and managment

Safety

Summary

Initially a Type 2 organization was ordered and quickly evolved into a Type 1 Incident Management Team. Assigned under the Alaska IMT were One SOF1 (T), SOF2 (T), and three SOF2 assigned to divisions. Significant hazards included structures, railway traffic, explosives caches, and extreme fire behavior. A Risk Management Analysis was completed and updated as needed. One crew reported an exposure to hazardous materials while performing operations in the urban interface.

There was one reportable injury with lost time. There were 21 visits to clinics/hospitals, and 500 visits to medics and the ICP medical unit. There were no vehicle accidents.

Key Decisions

The first key decision made was to immediately transition from an IMT2 to an IMT1. Safety responded to this key decision by ordering SOF2's instead of SOFR's to manage the complexity anticipated on the Sockeye Fire. It was also decided 3 days into the incident to order a SOF1 to act as mentor and evauluate the SOF1(t). The local Initial Attack resources located and identified 2 explosive caches near the fire. It was decided that if the fire hit certain trigger points the affected divisions would be evacuated for a 2 mile radius of the caches.

Notable Successes

Safety and Ops were collocated at the ICP and formed a good relationship early in the incident. A new briefing format was implemented on this incident. Instead of Safety giving a stand alone message during the briefing, it was decided that the OPSC would give division assignments and SOF would state a safety concern for that division. This format was well received by Incident personnel.

Safety completed a 215-A that was reviewed by the IMT and small format copies were sent to the field for ground truthing. This was well received also and additional mitigations were put into effect on the next revision.

There were two trainees in the Safety shop. One SOF2 (off National Priority Trainee List) and one SOF1(off Alaska Priority Trainee List) . Both individuals were able to make significant progress in their PTB's.

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

This incident presented some unique challenges. The heavy urban interface, major travel corridors for both rail and highway, and abundant Hazmat were all present. The Parks Highway presented a major challenge as it is the only road between Anchorage and Fairbanks. It has heavy commercial and recreational use. The road was closed intermittently during the early stages of the incident. The closure was managed by the Alaska State Troopers who were in close contact with the IMT. A pilot car system was implemented with Trooper escort for most of the Incident, so one lane was open for travel. This enhanced safety for fire personnel and the public.

Another challenge was the Alaska Rail Road. A liaison with the Rail Road was assigned who coordinated with DIV G and I and the Team Safety Officer. The liaison would contact the DIV's and a scout car was sent through to make sure the track was clear and safe. Fire personnel were then warned the train would be coming through. This cooperative effort reduced impact to the Rail Road and provided a safer environment for fire suppression resources.

Fire fighters had a significant amount of Haz Mat due to the WUI and homesteader nature of the community. These hazards were mitigated through awareness, mop up, and see and avoid strategies.

Liaison

Key Decisions

Filling the Liaison position allowed many tasks and duties to be accomplished by the Liaison Officer. This unburdens the IC, Deputy IC, Information Officer, and others members of the Command and General Staff, who can then put their efforts into leadership, strategic planning and management of the incident.

Initiating the Cooperators Meeting at the earliest opportunity developed camaraderie with cooperators, shared information, solved issues, improved efficiency and fire fighter and public safety.

Notable Successes

One of the prominent issues brought forward at the first Cooperators Meeting call was the need of fire information for cooperators and external partners. This meeting immediately resolved this issue. This meeting was held a short time (28 hours) after the IC assumed command, and the team took over management of the fire. By this time the Fire Information Officer and staff had also provided information via social media.

There were many personal contacts, emails and phone calls and messages to reach out to Local Fire Chiefs, Mayors, local government officials, Borough Department of Emergency Service Managers, Red Cross, Alaska Railroad, Alaska State Troopers, Department of Homeland Security for the State of Alaska, Community Emergency Response Team, Matanuska Electric Association, Alaska Misions, Mat Su Youth Housing,local politicians, and local citizens. This has improved relationships, improved efficiency on the fire and helps enhance fire fighter and public safety.

Issues that were brought forward included, need for fire information, road restrictions, evacuation orders, fireworks ban, burning closures, and access to areas affected by the fire closure, .disposal of

spoiled food, State Park closures, various, property assessments, air traffic volume, humanitarian relief, assessment of damaged property, rumors, and proper signing of traffic issues on the Parks Highway. Issues were resolved during the team's tenure.

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

Keep utilizing local borough liaison to work with Incident Management Teams (IMT) would potentially improve efficiencies for the future incidents. Preseason planning meetings with local emergency responders and Public Service organizations will be helpful in the future. This would also help local cooperators, external partners, and grass root groups understand Incident management policy and become part of the solution.

A dynamic list of important cooperators to be given to IMT's at inbrief would certainly improve IMT Liaison efforts on future incidents.

Ordering a Liaison with the initial IMT mobilization would help the IMT to quickly establish relationships on an emerging incident.

Information

Key Decisions

Local Public Information Officers were able to travel to the fire during initial attack and prior to being officially ordered. This allowed them to get a handle on media and public concerns fairly quickly.

We functioned with limited vehicles throughout the incident due to rental shortages in the state and were able to coordinate well between Information staff and still complete field duties.

We were fully staffed and able to release four PIOs to fires in the north when they were needed. The two days of full staff helped us get organized and catch up on needed paperwork prior to them leaving.

Notable Successes

The Division of Forestry and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough both had Public Information Officers embedded with the Incident Management Team Information Section. This helped keep communications seamless and ensured a unified message.

It was helpful to have the ICs located nearby [in the next room] early in the incident when media interest was high. Daily updates and social media messaging were approved quickly.

Facebook was used during this incident and was very effective. Many posts reached 10,000+ views in the first operational period. Community members were able to interact and ask questions.

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

Security officers at checkpoints did not receive organized information packets until the third day of the incident. We set up a process for their representative to pick up packets each morning after that. This worked and was well received by the guards as well as community members.

Conference calls with cooperating PIOs would have been helpful throughout the incident.

Operations

Key Decisions

June 15, 2015 Alaska Type 1 IMT was mobilized to the Sockeye Fire 282. A Mat-Su Area Forestry Type 3 team organization was in charge of the Sockeye fire at approximately 6,000+ acres burning though multiple subdivisions burning toward town of Willow, Alaska. On June 16, 2015 the Alaska Type 1 IMT team, at 0700 taking over the Sockeye fire. The Mat-Su Type 3 team had already established sound tactics with five divisions created.. The IMT division supervisors adopted several overhead from the initial attack organization and assumed supervision of suppression activities. .

As soon as fire spread was stopped and gains toward containment were being made aircraft were released to reduce aviation cost. Crews and overhead were also made available to other incidents.

Notable Successes

The Alaska IMT adopted and continued current tactics from type 3 organization. Minimal acreage gains occurred on perimeter with ability to increase line supervision and respond to priorities. Additional structures were saved on perimeter and within because of increase in line supervision, aircraft, and firefighters.

Relationship with Mat-Su Borough cooperators, local fire departments, and public has remained positive. Notable coordination occurred to incorporate local resources within IMT and out of area resources.

Alaska IMT organized a Recovery and Security Group at the onset. This group design was to support all efforts associated with infra-structure, evacuations, and utilities. This assisted in successful implementation of returning landowners to their properties reducing evacuation area, allowing traffic flow on the Parks Highway and continued railroad use.

IMT worked closely with local unit to supply Mat-Su FMO with Baker River and Pioneer peak for local initial attacks fires, along with aviation assets, four helicopters

On Friday 6/19 Alaska IMT was requested to release two crews to Stetson Creek fire. IMT quickly responded with one IHC and one T2IA to supply them with resources.

On Saturday 6/20 Alaska IMT released on request to FAF, Baker River IHC and followed with White Mountain T2IA to new fires near Healy. Several aviation assets, air attack and helicopters have been released to ongoing incidents.

Willow Fire Department staff assisted in much more than fire suppression. They provided personnel for the Borough ambulance service requested for the fire line. Provied meals and fluids to firefighters prior to the IMT establishing full logistical support.

The Operations Section was responsive in making accommodations to reduce evacuation area and a plan to have residents back in their homes within the perimeter while firefighting efforts continued around structures to reach the 300’ safe mop-up standard and achieve containment

Borough staff were provided to the incident on request to assit with cooperator engine and manage agreements correctly.

The Parks Highway was closed for very short periods due to the efforts of the Alaska State Troopers and contract road control.

The tourist industry had minimal impact from road closures and railroad stops, due to very good coordination with IMT staff.

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

Constant coordination was required to maintain knowledge of cooperator fire department engine staffing and availability. Daily changes in crews and switch-outs were confusing. The operations group recommends that a local fire department liaison be identified pre-season that can manage crew swaps and maintain staffing. A single point of contact to manage the local resources committed to the incident and available to the IMT Operations Section Chief will save time and confusion in managing the engines. The incident management team organized the engines in a Structure Protection Group. All cooperator engines were put in this group with a Structure Group Supervisor to manage the coordination. The Division Group Supervisors then made requests to Structure Group Supervisor for engines as needed.

Finding contractors at the local level was successful, when local contacts were made. The OLAS System and buying team personnel need to do a little more research when looking for equipment, not just looking at OLAS. This resulted in multiple UTF's for backhoes, UTV's and ATV's, in this area?

Air Operations

Summary

The type 3 team had established a very functional helibase located at Willow airport. While understaffed, it was overseen by a very competent helibase manager from Mat Su. The helibase manager did an outstanding job meeting the operational needs of the fire while being very conscientious of the safety concerns at and around the helibase. Refueling was established immediately at the airport and remained sufficient throughout the incident. Dust was an inherent problem and was mitigated on day one the team took over with local water tender.

At peak 5 helicopters and two fixed-wings were assigned to the fire. Two of the five helicopters were National Guard helicopters that operated from Bryant field on JBER in Anchorage. The guard aircraft remained attached to the Sockeye fire but were shared with other incidents including the Juneau Lake and Card Street fire on the Kenai Peninsula.

Two air attack aircraft were assigned to the incident, the primary was 909AK the secondary 4CP came later in the week and provided relief. The second aircraft (4CP) was also shared with other adjacent fires upon request.

The density of general aviation is very high in this area. And early in the incident, especially during initial attack it was, and remained a serious hazard despite a large TFR. To mitigate this hazard a temporary

FAA tower was brought in and established at the Willow airport. The tower was very successful and added a layer of safety for both civilian in the area, and tactical aircraft on the fire.

Notable Successes

- IA personnel responsible for identifying and establishing the necessary aerial resources for a successful extended attack and team transition.
- State air attack pilot Randy Weber and ATGS Rich Webster for their outstanding performance in the de-confliction of private aircraft and state tactical aircraft during Initial attack and throughout the incident.
- Helicopter operations: 291 passengers flown, 56,029 lbs. of cargo hauled, 105 hours of helicopter time and 24 hours of fix time, all without incident.
- FAA Tower. From 6/17 to 6/24 there were 421 (52.6/day) takeoff and landings from Willow Airport and 190 takeoffs and landings from local lakes (23.7/day). All these occurred within a 4 mile radius of the airport including portions of the TFR.
- New TFR, NOT including the Willow airport and adjacent lakes where part 135 operators were working. The TFR was an operational period TFR that was active from 0that
- Mat-Sue expanded dispatcher's Becky Metcalf and April Cook; in working with air support on TFR's and expediting anything and all things aircraft.

- Trainees where utilized in a many positions from HECM to the HEB1

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

- Use of the National Guard helicopter resources. Resolution: Have air support personnel involved in the development and administration of the National Guard agreement
- Not sufficient amount of carded MHEG to support National Guard deployments. Resolution: Train more personnel
- Having a charted airport in the TFR. Resolution: Don't do it.

Planning

Key Decisions

- An 0800-2400 operational period was implemented in order to allow for the late evening burning period typical in Alaska during mid-June.
- The Planning Meeting was moved from 1700 to 1800 to allow Operations personnel to formulate the next day's plan later during the burning period.
- ICS 215s were not used in the tactical meeting. Operational updates were noted directly on blown-up copies of the ICS 204s.
- The IMT ordered the former eISuite Project Manager as a RESL to help the Team transition to the new program.

Situation Unit

Notable Successes

- The Borough EOC took charge of structure/damage assessment and provided this data back to the team in a timely manner. This greatly facilitated accurate reporting.
- Resource Advisers (READs) provided and guidance from State Forester that enabled the crews to focus on just the work necessary to complete suppression rehab requirements without wasted effort.
- Two Alaska GISS trainees were assigned. One completed his GISS taskbook and was signed off as fully qualified.

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

- One of the two IMT SITLs also served as a Training Specialist. When one SITL demobilized, the extra workload had to be shared out among other Plans staff.
- The IMT did not order FOBS as the fire was relatively static and Borough was responsible for collecting damaged structure data. GPS dozer line tracklogs were collected by operational personnel.

Resources Unit

Notable Successes

The IAP process each night was slower than normal due to the implementation of e-isuite as the new database for Incident Management Teams. The greatest success was the 3rd RESL was the project manager for the building of e-isuite. This helped immensely in figuring out the work around in order to achieve a high quality product in an efficient time frame when glitches were found. Coordination through this RESL was and will continue to be vital in order to ensure corrections to the database are made throughout the season to be more user friendly.

On day 4, the OSC1 switched from the ICS 215 form to enlarged 204's as the method to communicate the information to the Resources Unit for the next day's IAP. This was a new change for this team. The other sections and units were very supportive to trying a new way and seeing if this was a change they would like to implement in the future. The interaction and open communication between the Planning Operation Section Chief (t) and his trainer, with the RESL's was vital. This helped solidify a clear and concise IAP daily.

The Resources Unit was able to coordinate within other Units in the Plans Section to support trainees working on various task books. The trainer/trainee experience was very active and all trainees progressed toward their goal.

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

EISuite implementation was problematic, but with patience and the help of a subject-matter expert was ultimately successful.

Demobilization Unit

Notable Successes

[identify any notable successes (what went really good, maybe it was a partnership with someone, or an agreement that was in place…)]

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

Coordination of released resources and outstanding orders was not well coordinated by dispatch – largely due to unprecedented fire activity and layers of prioritization.

Documentation Unit

Notable Successes

Able to provide the Area with a clean package.

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

PII embedded in check-in forms and other documents continues to be a problem with final package.

Computer Technical Specialist

Notable Successes

Initial setup went really well by utilizing Houston High's in place infrastructure. Houston High had a fully functional network infrastructure and internet circuit that the IMT utilized.

Another significant success on this incident was testing e-Isuite program in a real-time incident scenario and providing feedback. The IMT discovered, documented, and provided feedback to the developers about issues with the new release of e-Isuite. This will help improve the product for future incidents.

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

A significant challenge was implementing the new e-Isuite on this incident. There are still multiple issues and glitches with the new release. Program issues combined with the learning curve of a new system proved to be problematic for meeting deadlines. To overcome this challenge, the issues that were found were documented with workarounds to increase productivity.

Logistics

Key Decisions

Mobilization of the team logistics section was a little confusing as to which team T2 or T1 was being mobilized. In the end many of the members from both teams fill positions and the team received some excellent personnel.

The ICP was located at the Houston High School and this facility was excellent as it provided plenty of office space, parking areas and crew camping space. The kitchen area was invaluable to the caterer for preparing and serving meals.

The state contract caterer, Chocolate Gypsy was utilized to provide meals at the school for all incident personnel. With no crews spiking out the caterer was asked to provide meals for 700 plus incident personnel. This was a big challenge as they had never prepared meals for this many people prior to this incident.

We had day & night security in camp and this contributed to NOT having any crew infractions. We also employed some students from the local Job Corp security program to assist. This was a volunteer program and something the division could develop for future use.

The local road construction company QAP, Quality Asphalt Paving was hire with a service agreement for traffic control and security check point personnel.

Summary

Overall the logistics function worked well on this incident. We were staffed appropriately, the issues were as follows:

- Equipment was in very short supply. We waited up to two days for vehicle orders to be filled and at times longer, due to a shortage of available vehicles.
- There were numerous errors in the equipment packets which took a lot of time and effort to correct.
- The school was an excellent facility for the ICP. We had plenty of room for office space, vehicle parking, crew and overhead camping. We also used their phone and internet.
- We also were able to install a potable water hook up so we could supply our shower and hand wash stations with water which was a large cost saving measure.

Communications Unit

Notable Successes

A bridge line was used to transmit Operational Briefings to the Borough EOC via a cell phone mounted in front of the speaker system.

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

A UHF antenna mistakenly installed instead of a VHF antenna initially caused some communications issues on the command channels. Once the correct antenna was installed the issue was resolved.

Supply Unit

Notable Successes

The supply unit set up the type 2 cache trailer at the Houston High School on June 15th 2015 @ 1400 we were fully operational at 2100 10 hours before the team transition. This quick deployment of supplies was due to the excellent response by the Palmer warehouse and staff who were able to place the trailer as soon as we confirmed a location. We received a forklift only a few hours after the trailer arrived facilitating the setup of supply. We also were able to hire labors from the Palmer call up list which

helped us set up supply in the first 24hr We established communication protocol between ordering and dispatch by leaving ordering manager at the dispatch office several hours.

Direct communication with the Palmer cache manager allowed us to help free up excess supplies that were not being used by the fire. We able to establish an expedited backhaul protocol that helped lessen the load for the cache. Examples of this include rolling returned hose, separating RFI from refurbish, disposing of 815 items. Condensing 5 gals waste fuel into 55 gal drums.

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

Our biggest problem was with equipment E numbers. It was difficult to establish what was on the incident, and to reconcile the numbers. We also had problems with dispatch folks not following the team SOP which gives us control of the resource numbers. Supply orders were delayed due to competing fires. However, all critical items were filled.

Medical Unit

The Sockeye Medical Unit was established at the Houston High School, staffed with a Lead Medic, 2 Medics and a trainee on the first day of the incident. I recommend ordering a full medic kit, Lead Medic, Medic and Trainee as minimum initial staffing. Two IMS Managers and 3 IMS medics were ordered from the lower 48 to fill the needs on the divisions. Mat Su Borough EMS was contracted and an ambulance was staged at the north and south ends of the fire. Fire contracted with the Borough. Total number of visits to the Unit was 500. Total number of medical transports was 11 as of 6/24/15. Equipment was staged at the helibase. The first few days we had no radio communication between the fire and the ICP. Cell phones were used with no problems. We did have challenges dealing with civilians in the Wildland/Urban Interface and Fire EMTs cared for civilians until 911 EMS arrived. We appreciate the good working relationship with the Fire Medic Program as well as the Borough. Fire Medic Program provided EMTs from Alaska as well as from the lower 48, along with equipment and supplies. The Borough provided an ambulance and crew as needed to cover all shifts.

Facilities Unit

Notable Successes

The Houston High School was used as the ICP for the Sockeye Fire. The school was an excellent location for the ICP. We had adequate space for camping 27 crews and overhead. The parking lot was large enough to handle the parking requirements and the supply area. Potable water was on site to supply the potable water truck that supported a Mobile Shower Unit and a Mobile Hand Wash Station.

Security personnel were ordered allowing the facilities unit to focus on facility issues.

Three BCMG and one trainee was adequate to support the ICP and operations

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

[what were the significant challenges and what were the resolutions (if there was not resolution to a challenge before the team demobed note that)]

Food Unit

Notable Successes & Significant Challenges and Resolutions

The food for the Sockeye Fire was provided by the Chocolate Gypsy catering service. They were set up in the Houston High School Kitchen and all personnel ate their meals in the school cafeteria unless they were spiked out in the field. It was difficult for the caterer to get organized at first because part of their equipment was located at another event that they were catering. Once they were able to rent some equipment and find additional workers their operations run better. They are not a national caterer, but are required to meet most of the requirements of the national caterer. They did a fairly good job with a few problems occurring with the sack lunch ingredients and not having all the proper serving equipment. They were able to improve their service and add additional equipment as required. The caterer also requested advance payment as the amount food they needed to purchase for 700 quickly depleted their line of credit. The buying team provided payment however for future assignments the contract should be amended from a payment every 30 days to a weekly payment.

The quality of the breakfast and dinner meals was above average once they got organized. Lunches were sub-standard at first but were finally brought up to meet requirements. It was difficult to keep proper numbers for lunches and meals because of rapid increases, changes and decreases in personnel.

Ground Support Unit

Notable Successes

The Houston High School provided plenty of space for buses, engines and rental fleet vehicles. Having the buses stay assigned to the crews helped with transportation coordination.

Using QAP construction for traffic control helped to relieve the need for additional ground support personnel to support this function. The construction company had a union relationship adding in their ability to get additional resources when needed.

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

The E#'s and corresponding paperwork in the vehicles was a challenge. Many of the equipment hire packets had the wrong information and in turn the wrong E# was placed on the vehicle.

Finance

Summary

The Finance Section utilized the new eISuite database application to manage the incident resources. All known resource information was tracked and reported daily to the Incident Agency via the 209 report.

Interaction between the IMT and the local unit was predominately through the Incident Business Advisor, Darlene Langill, who was assigned to the incident at the same time as the IMT. However, as she was providing support for more than one incident, there was some direct interaction with the Mat-Su Area Administrative Assistant, Lisa Vietmeier

A buying team (BUYT) was brought in to assist with contracting and purchasing support functions. They were stationed in Palmer which allowed for easy access to local purchases (in the Palmer, Wasilla, and Anchorage areas). They provided a cost accounting spreadsheet daily to the IMT Cost Unit Leader.

With two contracting officers assigned to the BUYT they were able to establish land use agreements (LUA) for various sites utilized by the IMT during suppression efforts. The LUAs included:

- Willow Airport – S-5114 - utilized as the Sockeye Helibase
- Willow Community Center – S-5115 – utilized as the initial Incident Command Post (ICP) for the Type 3 team and then for community meetings
- Willow Fire Department/Community Parking Lot – S-5164 – utilized as an equipment staging area
- Mat-Su School District – S-5068 – utilized as T1/T2 ICP, crew/overhead camping, supply, and support functions for the incident

Additionally, there was an amendment to the LUA established for the Willow Fire Department. During the incident this facility was utilized by incident responders for a variety of reasons (restrooms, water to fill engines, trash disposal, food (from donations)).

There was only 1 reportable injury (back strain) at the time this report was written. Additionally, 11 transports were completed by the Compensation/Claims Unit Leader; all of which were non-reportable.

There were 9 claims submitted and completed. The costs to date are at $7,335,850

Key Decisions

FEMA Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) – Requesting the FMAG early on and getting it to start from the beginning of the fire (initial attack) allowed the Finance team to focus on catching up on the resource tracking, rather than changing accounting codes back and forth to comply with the FEMA window.

Time Unit

Notable Successes

At the height of the incident there were 27 T1, T2IA and T2 crews assigned to the fire, smokejumpers and a large variety of miscellaneous personnel (at the highest point there were 730 people). Other than a couple nights, with a couple crews being spiked out, all the other crews were returned to the ICP each night.

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

Utilization of the eISuite application (newly released application upgrade from the I-Suite application used in previous seasons) introduced significant challenges due to application “glitches”. Several of the features previously available were not functioning in this initial release production version. The IMT were able to find work around, however it did cause delays in the time processing.

Cost Unit

Notable Successes

Costs were kept current and reported in the 209 report and also provided to the IBA.

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

Lack of information on how the IA cost information was formulated provided a significant issue initially for the Cost Unit Leader. No information was provided documenting how the information was calculated. It caused a ripple effect on the cost calculations for several days until the eISuite database was populated and information could be gathered.

Aircraft costs were difficult to gather, especially for the Air Tankers and retardant. This information was documented by the tanker base, however it took several days before they provided the information. This caused a significant jump in cost reporting information. The IMT COST and ASGS both continued daily to get this information prior to when it was finally provided.

The State of Alaska Cost Calculation spreadsheet was attempted to be utilized per direction presented through the IBA from the State of Alaska representative Sue Brown Clark. The spreadsheet seemed to provide no significant benefit to the cost accounting process and/or reporting in the Integrated Fire Management (IFM) system. The Planning Section Chief (PSC) and COST utilize the eISuite cost information and input that into the IFM system for processing.

Procurement Unit

Notable Successes

The early decision to bring in a Buying Team was critical in the success of the IMT financial mission. They were able to establish land use agreements (LUAs) and special agreements (specifically for fuel local vendors). They were extremely responsive to the requests of the IMT.

Obtaining the LUA for the Houston High School for the ICP was a good move on the local unit. The location was central to the coordination efforts and allowed for the IMT to be up and functioning quickly and the land was appropriately sized for the size of the ICP and fire organization located at the site.

The decision by the local unit to utilize the eISuite program was a good move. Albeit there were issues with the new application, however making the decision up front enabled the team to learn the new application and assist the subject matter expert (Gina Bald) to gather “issues” to improve the application in the future.

Upon arrival, the IBA provided to the FSC a block of agreement numbers to be utilized for LUAs and Incident Only EERAs. This was extremely helpful to the IMT, as they did not have to contact the local administrative office or dispatch office to get an agreement number. This process should continue in the future.

Significant Challenges and Resolutions

The Initial Attack (IA) resources were, as normal, a significant issue to gather information on. The cooperators (fire departments) had no idea of how to go through the process or how to complete the

required documentation. The Finance Section continually attempted to obtain information from these resources, however until they arrived for demob nothing was submitted. Due to the lack of information, incorrect information, and personnel assigned to the resource moving around to different pieces of equipment, the process was extremely dysfunctional. It is recommended that in the future the Forestry office work with the fire departments to provide annual training (1-2 hours) on the process of working with an IMT (check-in, paperwork, resource rotation, demobilization). This will likely prevent this type of issue from happening in the future.

The agreement with the First Student bus company did not include a rate that included a double shifted vehicle. Seven of the busses were requested to be available on a 24 hour basis due to 24 hour staffing of the fire. The IMT derived the hourly rate based on the information provided for the "daily" rate (which is based on a 12-16 hour shift). The additional 8 hours was multiplied by this amount and added as a "special" rate. A notation on a General Message (ICS213) captured this process and was approved by the IBA.

In addition to the pay rate issue the bus personnel were completely unaware of how to do the process of mob/demob on an incident. At no point did they check in until it was 1-2 days before their demob. As with the Fire Department suggestion, it might be in the best interest of the Agency to compile some type of training (1-2 hours) that can be provided to contractors identifying how to go through the process of mobilizing and demobilizing on an incident. The GSUL brought the bus representative into ICP as the shift tickets on the buses that were double-shifted had to be corrected and several invoices reposted.

The Chocolate Gypsie has done a great job as a caterer for the incident. However, consideration needs to be made in setting up an expedited payment process (potentially weekly) as part of her contract. As a small company it is unrealistic to expect her to feed the large number of resources for an extended period of time without getting any income returned. An example from this incident; she was feeding over 700 fire fighters 3 meals a day. By the time the 6th day was started she had already mounted a $162k invoice. She was out of personal funds to purchase food or pay her employees. The Buying Team was able to work with her to pay her for this initial set of invoices. It is recommended that the State of Alaska, in their development of the agreement with her in the future, realize that she is not a large scale company and her agreement should be written to allow for payments (preferably every 7 days maximum) to be processed for payment (check or credit card payment would provide her with the funds quickly). Attempting to treat her similar to the National Catering contractors is setting her up to have undo financial hardship.

The IMT utilized the OLAS system to find agreements on contractors who were assigned to the incident (and arrived without a copy of their agreement). If the IMT had not already had previous knowledge of this system there would have been continued delay in receiving these agreements. It is recommended that in the future, information about the OLAS system be provided as part of the inbriefing package. This should include an ID and password and also a briefing paper on how to use the system. This will help other teams to be self-sufficient in researching agreements within the State of Alaska system.