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Department of  
Natural Resources

Anchorage, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

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## **Burn closure to be lifted for Kenai Peninsula and Mat-Su boroughs**

**(Anchorage, AK)** – An emergency burn closure issued two weeks ago on state, private and municipal lands in the Kenai Peninsula and Matanuska-Susitna boroughs is being rescinded effective at 8 a.m. Wednesday, Sept. 4.

With cooler, wetter weather moving into Southcentral Alaska over the weekend, fire danger and the potential for large fire growth on the Kenai Peninsula and in the Mat-Su Valley has been reduced, said State Forester Chris Maisch.

The emergency burn closure was enacted by the Division of Forestry on Aug. 21 due to extremely dry conditions and substantial wildfire activity in both boroughs. The closure prohibited all open burning, including campfires and charcoal grills. With the closure lifted, campfires and charcoal grills are now allowed.

However, burning debris in the open or in a burn barrel still requires a small- or large-scale burn permit under an emergency order extending Alaska's wildfire season through Sept. 30. The extension was a response to the large wildfires burning in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley and on the Kenai Peninsula, as well as high fire danger persisting due to warm, dry conditions.

“Even with the burn closure rescinded, people still need to be extremely careful with any kind of burning,” Maisch said. “While the rain over the weekend was enough to dampen fine surface fuels, it was not substantial enough to penetrate down to the deeper layers of the duff that remain extremely dry.”

Most of Southcentral Alaska received one-half to three-quarters of an inch of rain over the Labor Day weekend. While not enough to extinguish active wildfires, the rain and higher relative humidity, combined with cooler temperatures, did help to moderate fire

behavior. Cooler, wetter weather remains in the forecast for most of this week for Southcentral Alaska, which should continue to temper fire activity.

The Division of Forestry will continue to evaluate conditions daily to determine if Area-by-Area burn permit suspensions are warranted. During a burn suspension, open debris burning and the use of burn barrels are prohibited but campfires less than three feet in diameter and two feet high are allowed. To see if burning is required on a particular day, residents and visitors may call their local state forestry office or check online at <http://forestry.alaska.gov/burn>.

While acreage burned this fire season falls well below the record of approximately 6.6 million acres burned in 2004, it marks the fifteenth time in 80 years of records that Alaska has seen more than 2 million acres burn in a single season. As of Tuesday, 700 fires have burned nearly 2.6 million acres in Alaska this season. There were still 207 active fires in the state as of Tuesday morning.

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