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Department of  
Natural Resources

Anchorage, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

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## Prescribed Burns Planned for Bison Range Habitat Spruce Stands

**(Delta Junction, AK)** – The Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G), in partnership with the Alaska Division of Forestry & Fire Protection (DOF), will conduct prescribed burns within the Delta Junction Bison Range starting in June 2025 as weather and fuel conditions permit. This habitat enhancement project will target black spruce stands within the Panoramic and Gerstle Field Complexes.

These burns are designed to restart ecological succession in the black spruce stands, which are surrounded by existing grass and shrub fields. By promoting the growth of early successional vegetation, ADF&G aims to increase the forage availability and improve habitat for various game species in an area readily accessible for hunting and wildlife viewing. Prescribed fire is a well-established and effective tool for achieving these habitat management goals.

To ensure safe and effective operations, ADF&G and DOF have developed detailed burn plans. Mechanical treatments have already been implemented to create wide fuel breaks around four designated black spruce units, ranging from 460 to 1,050 acres. These fuel breaks will facilitate safe access for personnel and equipment, provide strategic points for ignition and suppression, protect private lands south of the Alaska Highway, and improve overall access for firefighting resources.

The burns will only proceed under specific weather conditions, including favorable wind direction, to minimize the risk of uncontrolled spread and limit smoke impacts on nearby communities and the Alaska Highway. Fire personnel will continuously monitor conditions throughout the burn operations.

ADF&G is working closely with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation to comply with the Clean Air Act and the Enhanced Smoke Management Plan for Alaska. Air quality will be carefully monitored before and during the burns to minimize any impact on residents, highways, and other sensitive areas. Given that burning black spruce can produce significant smoke, operations will only occur when winds are predicted to carry smoke north, away from populated areas and the Alaska Highway. However, as wind shifts are possible, ADF&G will issue public notices if smoke drifts towards communities, allowing individuals with health concerns to take necessary precautions. Air quality monitors will be strategically placed to track particulate levels and enhance community notifications.

Building on annual prescribed fire efforts since 2017 to maintain grass and shrub fields, the 2025 burns will expand to target mature black spruce stands. This will encourage the growth of early successional vegetation such as birch, willow, and aspen—important food sources for moose and upland birds.

This operation will also provide valuable training for DOF wildland firefighters in preparation for the upcoming fire season. A small test burn will be conducted before full ignition to ensure conditions are favorable.

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