



In Partnership With:



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Wildfire - An Ounce of Prevention

Vegetation Treatment Protects Homes

It's Happened Here Before

June 2009 and the Shanta Creek fire on the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge burns 13,000 acres, threatening to destroy hundreds of homes.

Flash forward to May of 2014 when a new human-caused fire on the Refuge makes Shanta Creek look small. It's called the Funny River Fire, but there's nothing funny about it. Starting unusually early in the spring, high winds push the fire through thick spruce trees and dry vegetation that has not fully greened up, burning more area in a day than Shanta Creek burned in a month.

Preparation Pays Off

For years, the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge has been creating fuelbreaks by managing vegetation along its boundaries. Planning by the Refuge, the State, and private landowners led to construction of fuelbreaks designed to protect homes from the next wildfire, with the hope that they would never be needed.

The Fire is Close

In 2014, thick plumes of smoke dominated the skyline as firefighters spread through subdivisions. Some people had already been evacuated, spending the start of Memorial Day weekend wondering if they would have a home to return to. Moving fast on multiple fronts, firefighters were looking for any break they could get.



USFWS

A not so distant plume of smoke from the Funny River Fire near Soldotna, Alaska.

"The fuelbreaks made all the difference"

The call came in around midnight that the fire was going to hit the Funny River Road. By the time crews arrived, there was not much time to start a burn out to rob the approaching fire of fuel.

For the Incident Commander of the Funny River Fire the question was where to start? "Suddenly I realized I was in an area that was thinned of trees; they had built a fuelbreak!" he said. "The fuelbreak slowed the fire down enough

for crews to safely and successfully light the burn out."

What You Can Do:
www.firewise.org

Branch of Refuge Fire Management
<http://www.fws.gov/alaska/nwr/visitor/fire/index.htm>
907/786 3497

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"The fuelbreaks made all the difference."

Incident Commander, Funny River Fire



Fuelbreak near Funny River community.



Burn out operation using a fuelbreak.



Locals watch fire from nearby lake.

Photos / USFWS