

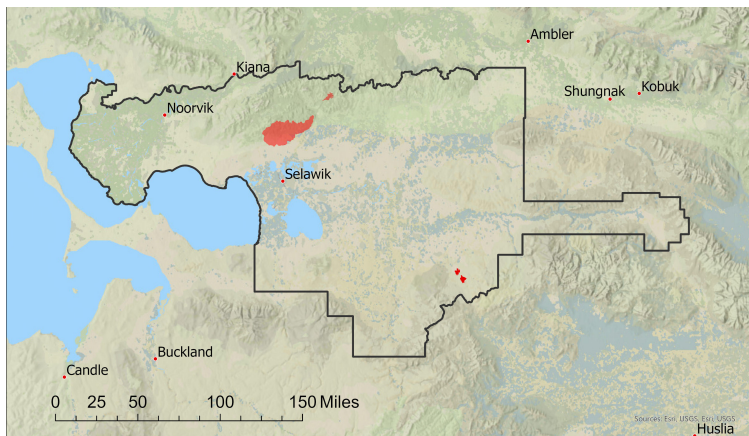


Selawik National Wildlife Refuge

2024 Fire Season Summary

Four fires were recorded on Selawik Refuge in 2024, all ignited by lightning. The Naluk fire was the largest and burned 23,406 acres across Refuge, NANA, and private lands.

Map of Selawik Refuge 2024 Fires.



Selawik Refuge 2024 Fires

Purcell Fire: 1,055 acres
 Ekiek Fire: 833 acres
 Fish Fire: 1,383 acres
 Naluk Fire: 23,406 acres total

Naluk Fire in detail

- Selawik Refuge: 18,313 acres
- NANA Lands: 4,801 acres
- Native Allotments: 283 acres

Naluk Fire



This aerial photo of the Naluk Fire shows its scale and impact.

Discovered on June 22 about 20 miles north of Selawik village, this fire quickly spread through black spruce and tundra on both Selawik National Wildlife Refuge and NANA lands. The fire burned to the west of the Fish River, a known site for whitefish spawning in the region (see map).

Wildfires like Naluk play a natural role in Alaska's environment, helping to renew vegetation and maintain ecological balance.

Many factors including weather, vegetation, and terrain, influence how a fire spreads.

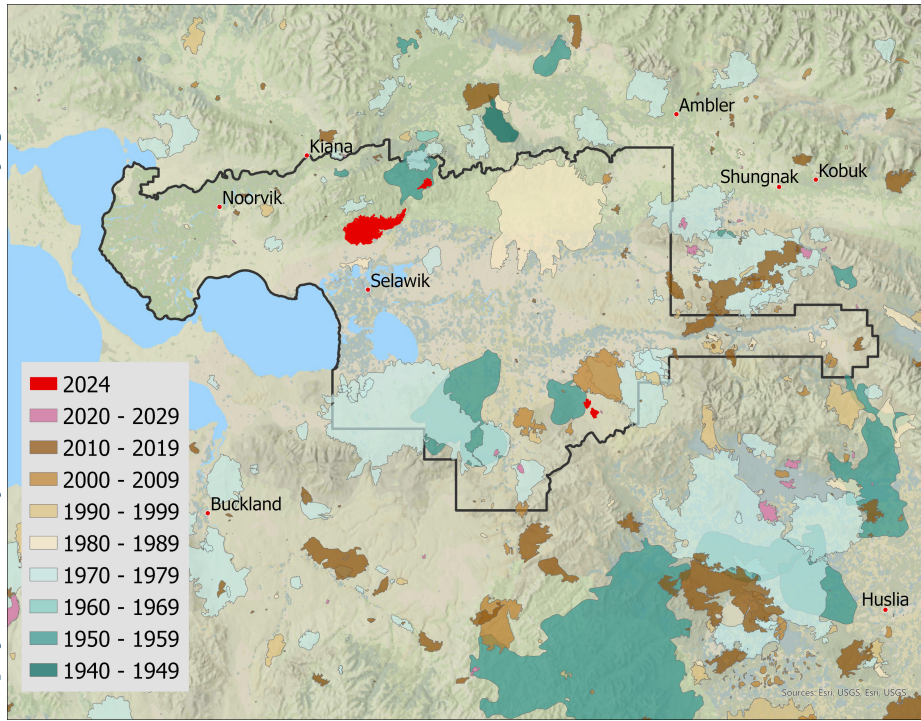
Fire Response

Firefighting response to the Naluk Fire included ground crews and water-scooping aircraft. Challenging weather conditions—high temperatures and strong winds—heightened the risk to nearby property, including Native allotments and the 'Spud Farm.'

Response efforts focused on point protection to safeguard these important resources while managing the fire's impact on the landscape. The total cost of the fire was \$927,900.

FIRE ON THE LAND

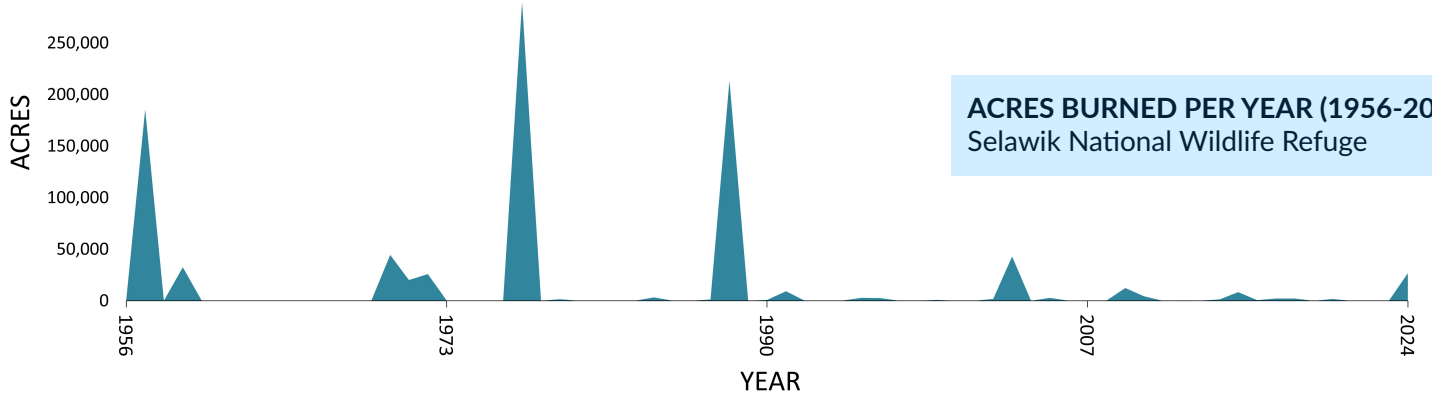
Map of Fire History in and around Selawik Refuge.



History

Fire is a natural part of the ecosystem of Selawik Refuge. Local Iñupiat have knowledge of wildfire occurring far back in history. Alaska fire agencies began recording fires officially in the 1950s.

Each year, lightning strikes occur that can start fires. The extent of wildfire within the refuge varies annually and depends on weather conditions and habitat type at the location of a start.



ACRES BURNED PER YEAR (1956-2024)
Selawik National Wildlife Refuge

Plants and Fire

Tundra burns less frequently than forested areas, but during dry periods large fires on the tundra can occur.



Forest:

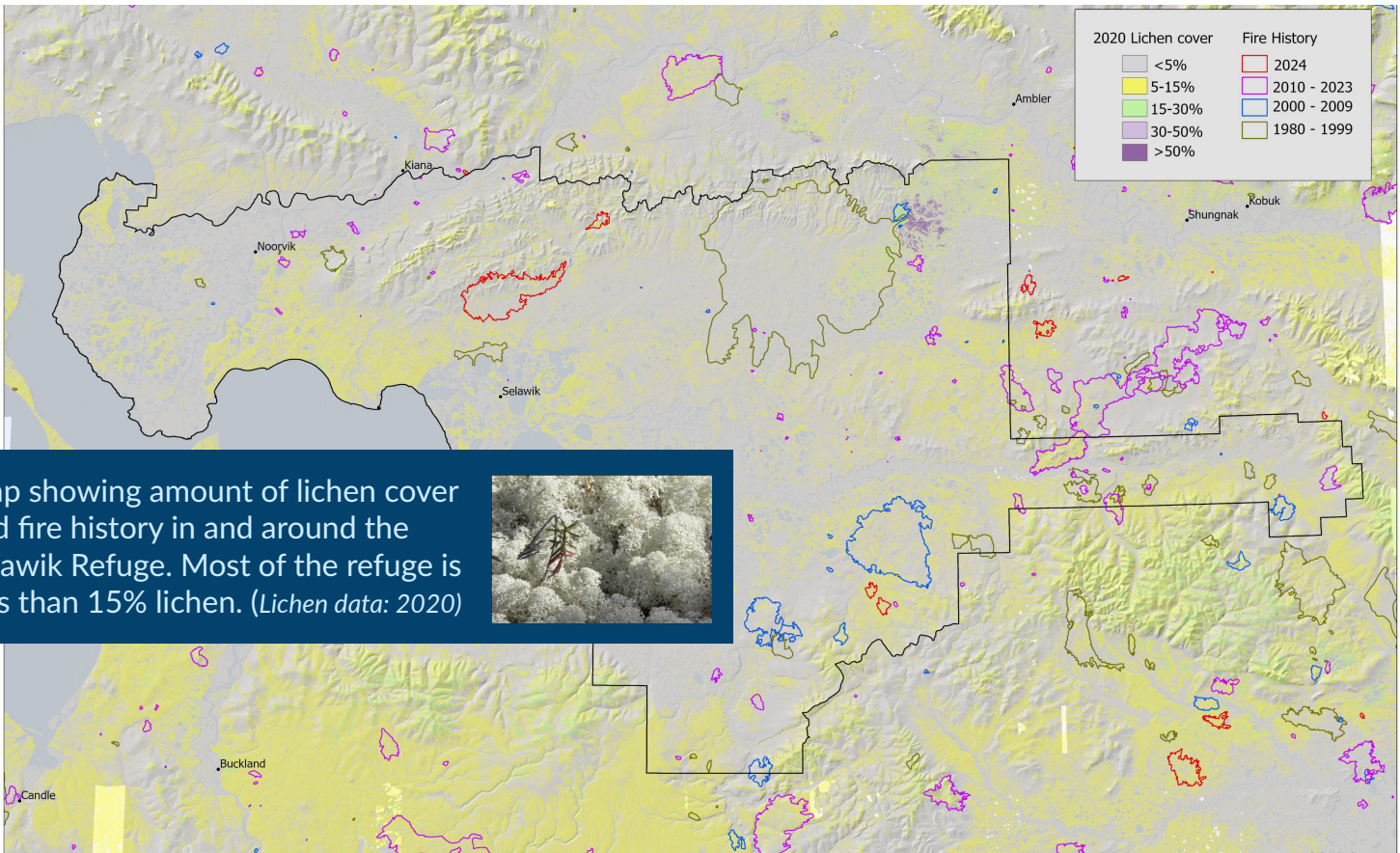
Black spruce (*napaaqtug*), the main tree in forested areas, is very flammable. Although the adult trees are typically killed by fire, *napaaqtug* is considered a fire-adapted species because its cones need heat to open. The newly released seeds sprout and grow well in freshly burned places.



Tundra:

When fires do occur on the tundra, tussocks make a fast-burning fuel because they tend to hold a lot of dead/dry leaves from prior years. In a changing Arctic climate, both warmer temperatures and different precipitation patterns may affect plant growth and fire frequency. Increasing shrub growth in tundra areas may, depending on the species of shrubs, either increase fire intensity and spread by adding fuel or reduce fire spread by holding on to moisture.

AFTER A FIRE



Map showing amount of lichen cover and fire history in and around the Selawik Refuge. Most of the refuge is less than 15% lichen. (Lichen data: 2020)



PLANTS

Plant regrowth after a wildfire depends on fire severity, including how deeply the fire burned through the layer of mosses and older plant material on the ground. If the fire didn't reach their roots, many plants—including berries—can resprout quickly. Fires that remove much or all of the vegetation mat, exposing mineral soil, can lead to different plants seeding in, including fireweed and willows.



ANIMALS

Wildlife use of a recently burned area varies. Rodents and snowshoe hares like to eat many of the plants that come in soon after disturbance. These animals in turn are important prey.

When willow growth increases after a fire, moose benefit. Caribou, on the other hand, prefer lichens (especially in winter) which are easily killed by fire. After a fire, lichens most preferred by caribou can take decades to recover; they are slow-growing species.

Fire impacts on fish can vary widely depending on the size, severity, and frequency of wildfires and the types of landscapes in which they occur.

PEOPLE

Wildfires affect the availability, distribution, and quality of many plants and animals important to local people.



Fire can be destructive in the short term. Smoke is harmful to your health.

Fire also provides some long-term benefits by increasing habitat diversity, stimulating plant growth, and improving ecosystem health.

2025 Wildfire Advisory

for community members & pilots

Tips to be prepared!

1. Check fire conditions through the Alaska Interagency Coordination Center (AICC).
2. Create defensible space around homes and structures.
3. For pilots, review the latest Notices to Airmen (NOTAMs) and weather updates before flying.

Key cautions for health and safety:

1. **Wildfire Smoke:** Minimize outdoor activity in smoke affected areas and under poor air quality conditions.
2. **Fire Management Aircraft:** When fires are active, pilots should be aware of aerial firefighting operations in the area. Do not use personal drones when firefighting aircraft are present.
3. **Fire-Prone Weather:** Warm and dry weather increase the risk of fire starts as soon as vegetation is exposed in the spring; use extra caution during hot, dry spells to prevent accidental fire ignition.



TO REPORT A WILDFIRE: Alaska Interagency Coordination Center (AICC): 1-800-237-3633

For statewide fire information visit: akfireinfo.com or fire.ak.blm.gov

Wildfire in Alaska is changing —and fast.

Read more in "Alaska's Changing Wildfire Environment"

This 2025 report highlights the latest trends, how fire is impacting communities, wildlife, and the land, and what's being done to adapt. It breaks down what's changing, how it affects communities, wildlife, and ecosystems, and how fire managers and scientists are working together to respond.

www.frames.gov/afsc/ACWE

Next Steps: Planning Ahead

Selawik Refuge, with support from our Alaska Refuge System Fire Management team, is updating our fire management plan. This document guides the response to fires on refuge lands, including how and where fire is suppressed or allowed to play a natural role.

Goals for this update include:

1. Incorporate local knowledge from communities and partners;
2. Account for changing environmental conditions so the plan will fit its purpose for the coming 10-15 years.

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