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Department of
Fish and Game

Division of Wildlife Conservation

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release



Wildlife Troopers Ask Hunters to Avoid Active Wildfire Perimeters

As firefighters work on blazes, hunters are urged to adjust plans if necessary

August 21, 2019 (WILLOW) – Alaska’s unusually volatile and prolonged wildfire season this year has extended into hunting season, creating challenges for firefighting crews and hunters alike. Of particular concern are popular game management units along the highway system between Homer and Talkeetna where several wildfires are currently burning even as moose hunting seasons open.

“With general-hunt moose seasons opening Sunday in Game Management Unit 14A, fire crews working the Deshka Landing Wildfire have expressed concerns about having 200 firefighters in the Willow Swamp area with hunters nearby potentially shooting in their direction,” said Alaska Wildlife Troopers Captain Rex Leath.

That’s a legitimate safety concern, Leath said, not only in 14A, but anywhere around the perimeters of the Deshka Landing Wildfire; the McKinley Wildfire, currently burning between Willow and Talkeetna; the Swan Lake Wildfire, being fought on the Kenai Peninsula around Cooper Landing; and the North Fork and Caribou Lake wildfires north of Homer.

“All of these fires are happening right now in popular, road-accessible hunting areas,” Leath said. “Firefighting crews and equipment are present around each fire perimeter and the best thing hunters can do is avoid these areas. That may mean changing plans, traveling well beyond active wildfires, and hunting new country.”

In addition to fears that firefighting crews could be caught downrange of hunters seeking moose and other big game, hunters also face logistical challenges in the form of road closures due to fire activity, poor visibility or air quality from smoke, and getting caught in the paths of rapidly moving fires.

“There’s a large chunk of the hunting public, for example, that uses Deshka Landing as the main access point for hunting in (GMU) 16B,” said Eddie Grasser, director of the Alaska Department of Fish

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and Game's Division of Wildlife Conservation. "Hunters need to be aware that trucks and trailers left near fire perimeters could impede firefighting activity or even become vulnerable to fire."

Wildlife Troopers, Fish and Game, and the Alaska Division of Forestry agree these are all good reasons to look for areas to hunt away from the fires.

Even while hunting well away from active wildfires this hunting season, hunters are asked to take extra precautions to see that new fires aren't ignited. For information on fire safety, visit

<https://www.alaskacenters.gov/trip-planning/stewardship/safety/fire-safety>

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