

Project Update for Region II Kenai – Kodiak, Focus on GMU 15A

Due to the declining moose populations, ADF&G seeks to improve habitat quality in Region II, with a focus on Game Management Unit 15A. Through the existing All Lands All Hands (ALAH) interagency group, ADF&G is partnering with the Kenai Peninsula Borough, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Alaska Division of Forestry, U.S. Forest Service and others, to address habitat with respect to fire management. This group is developing an approach to further integrate wildland fire, mechanical vegetation treatments and prescribed fire for the common land management objectives of fire mitigation and enhancing habitat for moose.

By building on the success of the Funny River Road fire break that protected homes from the 2014 wildland fire, the ALAH group developed the following project plan. We acknowledge the existing fuels within the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge and adjacent lands in GMU 15A, and the high potential for wildland fire to damage communities and infrastructure in the area. Program steps include a review of the Sterling Community Wildlife Protection Plan, and construction of a fuel break around the northern perimeter of Sterling. In doing this, fire suppression agencies have “decision space” to protect the homes and businesses within the community, if a fire were to ignite to the north.

In the future, prescribed and natural wildland fires could be used to manage forest fuels while simultaneously resetting forest succession. The regenerating hardwoods that grow after fire will provide the needed forage for moose. Through a long term regime of incorporating fire onto this landscape, a mosaic of forest stands could again support increased browse species for moose and other wildlife.

Next Steps

Currently, ADF&G is coordinating with the Alaska Division of Forestry and the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge (KNWR) to pool funding resources to build a fuel break around the northeast corner of Sterling in winter 2015/2016. Through cooperation with landowners, a continuous treated area can provide the same protection offered by the Funny River Road fire break. Once this line is established, opportunities open for prescribed fire in the Lilly Lake area and other units already designated within the KNWR fire management plan. This fuel break will also serve as a habitat enhancement project in itself. Hardwood regeneration after treatment will provide forage for moose in the coming years.

Contact

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