Tanacross secure as fire continues

The village of Tanacross is secure from the still raging Eagle Trail Fire, estimated at 4,000 acres, and fire crews are doing containment lines west of the nearby Eagle Subdivision on the Eagle Trail.

Both Tanacross and the Eagle subdivision, located about a dozen miles west of Tok off the Alaska Highway, are threatened by a lightning-caused wildfire discovered late Wednesday afternoon, which quickly mushroomed from 5 acres to 2,000 acres within a few hours.

The Alaska Highway has been reopened and pilot cars are being used to lead traffic between Moon Lake at Mile 1301 to Mile 1321 on an intermittent basis. Motorists can expect delays of 20 to 30 minutes.

Fire officials laud experienced Tanacross and Tok fire crews for saving the village and previous work done by villagers clearing fuels around the perimeter of the community.

“A lot of the firefighters are locals who went above and beyond to save and secure that line around Tanacross,” said Sarah Saarloos, a fire information officer in Tok.

“With the high temperatures and low relative humidity in the single digits, that’s extreme fire activity.”

Pete Buist, a fire information officer, also praised the experienced fire crew members’ response.

“Anytime you have fire moving into a specific area, if you have people who know what to look for, they can make all the difference in the world, Tanacross is full of good firefighters.”

Please see FIRE, Page A5

Parnell signs Goldstream public-use area bill

By TIM MOWRY

It was Sen. Joe Thomas who sponsored the bill. Gov. Sean Parnell signed Thursday in Fairbanks that Goldstream public-use area will be expanded.

Surprise Visitor

Drilling delay gets mixed response
Hot spot

Extreme fire danger requires extra caution this weekend

Wildland firefighters across Interior Alaska have been busy enough this week. They don’t need more work.

With many people headed outdoors, whether to camp or just clean up the yard during the coming Memorial Day weekend, extra caution is necessary because of the high fire danger.

The state Division of Forestry on Thursday asked residents to be extremely careful this weekend, with anything that can create a flame. Remarkably, they’ve already responded to several unattended campfires that escaped this week.

Other common ignition sources include fireworks, off-road vehicles, burning brush piles and target shooting.

“Hot and dry conditions have created the potential for large-scale, long-term fires,” the division said in a public service announcement.

It appears state firefighters and the federal Bureau of Land Management already have several fires that fit that description.

Those fires aren’t too much concern when they’re burning thousands of acres of remote black spruce forest. Such fires can threaten some scattered cabins. But those cabins often are near rivers or lakes — water sources for portable, high-output, gasoline-fired pumps that can soak an area thoroughly in short order. It’s an effective, usually successful strategy.

However, when fires occur close to larger communities built away from ready water sources, the fires become much more worrisome. It’s hard to protect all the structures in a neighborhood, village or town when a wall of fire comes at it and the water must be hauled in trucks or dropped from aircraft from remote sources.

And sometimes the fires are just too hot for any amount of water to stop. That’s what happens during the kind of weather we’re seeing this week.

Lightning strikes are providing plenty of excitement without any assistance from humans. Alaskans should do everything they can to avoid creating more infernos this weekend and in the weeks ahead.

Spill doesn’t make Obama

Energy bill won’t end oil addiction

President Barack Obama said at his BP press conference that when he was shaving the other day, his daughter Malia asked him, “Did you plug the hole yet, Daddy?”

If Obama wanted to give her a quick lesson in how the world works, he might have said, “No, dear, that’s beyond my capacity. I can’t stop oil from gushing from a well 5,000 feet beneath the ocean’s surface. Now, did you do your homework?”

Malia can be forgiven for not understanding the limits on her daddy’s power. She’s 11 years old.

What’s everyone else’s excuse? If the presidency of the United States is the most powerful and majestic office on Earth, it does not confer omnipotence on the more mortal who happens to occupy it.

Perhaps Obama himself needs to be reminded. A White House aide told a reporter that the president, in a fit of frustration, barked at his aides during one meeting, “Plug the damn hole.” That’s a meaningless order with the world’s best engineers already desperately trying to solve a hellish technical problem.

BP’s engineers had initial success in executing a “top kill,” a procedure involving pumping mud into the well. If it works, it will be the deep-sea equivalent of the operation to save Apollo 13. One analyst told The Washington Post “it’s like doing brain surgery using robots under a mile of water with equipment that’s got 30,000 horsepower of energy inside it.”

If the top kill doesn’t work, BP will have to drill relief wells, which will take months. When he’s asked about that, presumably Obama’s advice will be “to drill faster.” Of course, BP already has all the incentive it needs to staunch the flow. It’s liable for the cleanup costs and has already lost about 80 percent of its market capitalization.

Since the spill is undeniably a crisis and the Obama administration’s ethic is never to let one go to waste, Obama says the BP disaster means Congress should pass his energy bill and “answer this challenge, once and for all.” As with much of Obama’s agenda, this is a convenient non sequitur posing as an urgent response.

A cap-and-trade bill could have passed years ago and we’d still be drilling offshore. The outer continental shelf had 4,000 oil and gas fields as of 2002. Obama proposed even more offshore drilling just a few weeks before the BP spill, an acknowledgment that drilling will be necessary even if he gets his way on an energy bill.
Opinion

Send your letters: letters@newminer.com

Friday, May 28, 2010

Hot spot

Extreme fire danger requires extra caution this weekend

Wildland firefighters across Interior Alaska have been busy enough this week. They don't need more trouble.

With many people headed outdoors, whether to camp or just clean up the yard during the coming Memorial Day weekend, extra caution is necessary because of the high fire danger.

The state Division of Forestry on Thursday asked residents to be extremely careful this weekend with anything that can create a flame. Remarkably, they've already responded to several unintended campfires that escaped this week.

Other common ignition sources include fireworks, off-road vehicles, burning brush piles and target shooting.

"Hot and dry conditions have created the potential for large-scale, long-term fires," the division said in a public-service announcement.

It appears state firefighters and the federal Bureau of Land Management already have several fires that fit that description.

Those fires aren't too much concern when they're burning in thousands of acres of remote brush-covered slopes. Such fires can threaten some scattered buildings. These cabins often are near years or lakes — water sources for portable, high-output, gasoline-fired pumps that can attack an area thoroughly in short order. It's an effective, fast success strategy.

However, when fires occur close to larger communities built away from ready water sources, the fires become much more worrisome. It's hard to protect all the structures in a neighborhood, village or town when a wall of fire comes at it and the water must be hauled in trucks or dropped from aircraft from remote sources.

And sometimes the fires are just too hot for any amount of water to stop. That's what happens during the kind of weather we're seeing this week.

Lightning strikes are providing plenty of excitement without any assistance from humans. Alaskaans should do everything they can to avoid creating more infernos this weekend and in the weeks ahead.

Letters to the Editor

Fire caution

May 24, 2010

To the editor,

I just wanted to call attention to something I noticed this weekend while floating a short section of the upper Chena River.

On three separate occasions, my party and I came across unattended bonfires. These weren't just smoking remnants of a bonfire; these were actively burning fires with sparks flying — the whole nine yards.

At the current mill rate, it will cost a fatality in the borough close to $6 per day and a citizen resident close to $8.75 per day to live in a borough-assessed home of $189,000. If you live in a fire at the current mill rate, it will be the same.

With a 5 percent sales tax, a Borough resident would have to spend $120 per month on a $189,000 home to offset the cost of a fire. This is how you pay for all of the services.

The current mill rate is $6.84, and it has been that way for the past 10 years.

— Paul Miller, Fairbanks

Basic biology

May 24, 2010

To the editor,

It seems trivial to me that we should all be interested in establishing the truth. The May 14 Day the ballet box.

Should think of our own, the privacy of our home, discuss it with your neighbors.

Continued next month

Fairbanks

Candidate Bartos

May 23, 2010

To the editor,

Once again, Hotack Bartos is running for office, this time for a position representing North Pole with Golden Valley Electric Association.

Rather than give a long-drawn story of why you need to vote for to save this year.

Blending my various roles, I can say I've home, and I didn't notice the ba -den and necessary to save our town, the city, and the state. I am afraid I have a hard time giving up my own little slice of paradise, credit cards, and put my key in the house and drive home. I have the keys in my car, and I am afraid I will be home and stop at the beach, and everywhere.

Offaly policy claims that the two are different, but in fact the two are the same, the manufacturer and importer of medical and home security products, and the manufacturer and importer of medical and home security products, and the manufacturer and importer of medical and home security products, and the manufacturer and importer of medical and home security products. The truth may be hard to believe, but the truth is the truth.
Fairbanks has back-to-back 80-degree days, sets record

BY TIM MOWRY

timothy.mowry@fairnews.com

Fairbanks had its first 80-degree day of the summer Wednesday and its second Thursday, along with a new seasonal high.

The high temperature at Fairbanks International Airport hit 82 degrees late Thursday afternoon, breaking the record of 81 degrees set in 1996.

It was the second straight 80-degree day in Alaska's second-largest city. The temperature hit 80 degrees on Wednesday, tying a record for that date.

Chances are good the area will rack up a few more 80-degree days before the weekend is over. High temperatures in the low 80s are forecast for today and through the weekend, said meteorologist Matthew Kibewell at the National Weather Service in Fairbanks.

By Friday or Saturday, any new records will be set during the weekend, Kibewell said. The record high for today is 90 degrees, set in 1987, and the record for Saturday and Sunday are 96 and 94, respectively.

The hot temperatures are the result of a high-pressure ridge of "hot air" over the Interior. It will remain in place through the weekend before breaking up next week. Temperatures are expected to fall into the 90s on Tuesday, according to Thursday's forecast.

The high-temperature alert is about two weeks ahead of schedule. On average, the first 80-degree day does not occur until June 12 in Fairbanks, and the temperature only reaches 80 during May about once every four years, according to weather service records.

There are typically two such summers with a high temperature of 80 degrees or higher at the airport. Last year, which featured the second-warmest July on record, there were three days over 80 degrees or higher, including the first 80-degree day in May.

That coincides with summer 2020, when the temperature hit 80 degrees twice.

Contact staff writer Tim Mowry at 459-7322.

The 60-acre Gilles Creek Fire near the Pogo Mine was started by a lightning strike.

Hot, dry conditions spark host of wildfires throughout Interior

BY MARY BETH SMETZER

smetzer@fairnews.com

Wildfires across the state are increasing because of high temperatures, low humidity, and lightning strikes, according to the Alaska Fire Service.

There were 53 active fires around the state with 31 staffed by firefighters.

The Eagle Trail Fire near Tanacross threatened the village and the nearby subdivision of the Alaska Highway. A peak fire continued to have significant growth and is monitored with smokejumpers, firefighters and support personnel.

Another lightning-caused blaze, the East Minto Lake Fire, started Wednesday and was contained by smokejumpers by 4 p.m. Thursday. The fire, which encompasses about 4,000 acres, six miles southeast of Fort Yukon, was 50 percent contained today.

The Steiner River Fire, which encompassed about 600 acres, six miles southwest of Fort Yukon, was 50 percent contained Wednesday. The fire, which consumed 61 personnel at the site, reported smoldering with no apparent growth, and crews were monitoring up.

The Tekoa Fire, which was reported to be approximately 50,000 acres in size, continued to advance southwest toward Mucha Lake and west towards East Twin Lake.

Fire officials report the fire, which is exhibiting running, flaming and short-range spotting along south and west edges, is being monitored and crept.

Hot Shot Crew, Minot No. 2 Crew and North Star Crew Type 2.

Structure protection is being carried out in the Mucha Lake area and along the Kankatna River. A type 1 crew was deployed Thursday night, and another type 1 crew was removed from the Pogo Mine fire.

Crews are mapping the Tekoa Fire, located about 25 miles north of the Tekoa Fire, which was about 15 miles north of the Tekoa Fire.

The Montane Fire, 25 miles west of Talkeetna, is on a watch status.

The 60-acre Gilles Creek Fire near the Pogo Mine was started by a lightning strike, 18 miles north of Pogo Road, and crews were monitoring Tuesday night.

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Fairbanks has back-to-back 80-degree days, sets record

By TIM MOWRY
tmowry@newsminer.com

Fairbanks had its first 80-degree day of the summer Wednesday and its second Thursday, along with a new record.

The high temperature at Fairbanks International Airport hit 82 degrees late Thursday afternoon, breaking the old record of 80 degrees set in 1990.

It was the second straight 80-degree day in Alaska’s second-largest city. The temperature hit 80 degrees on Wednesday, tying the record set in 2002.

Chances are good the area will rack up a few more 80-degree days before the weekend is over. High temperatures in the low 80s are forecast for today and through the weekend, said meteorologist Matthew Kidwell at the National Weather Service in Fairbanks.

It’s doubtful any new records will be set during the weekend, Kidwell said. The record high for today is 90 degrees, set in 1947, and the records for Saturday and Sunday are 86 and 84, respectively.

The hot temperatures are the result of “a high pressure ridge that’s firmly in place” over the Interior. It will remain in place through the weekend before breaking up early next week. Temperatures are expected to fall into the 60s on Tuesday, according to Thursday’s forecast.

The hot weather is about two weeks ahead of schedule. On average, the first 80-degree day does not occur until June 12 in Fairbanks, and the temperature only reaches 80 during May about once every four years, according to weather service records.

There are typically 11 days each summer with a high temperature of 80 degrees or higher at the airport. Last year, which featured the second-warmest July on record, there were 19 days when the temperature hit 80 or higher, including the first 90-degree day in 15 years.

That contrasts with summer 2006, when the temperature hit 80 degrees twice.

Contact staff writer Tim Mowry at 459-7587.
Hot, dry conditions spark host of wildfires throughout Interior

By MARY BETH SMETZER
msmetzer@newsminer.com

Wildfires across the state are increasing because of high temperatures, low humidity, and lightning strikes, escalating fire danger throughout the Interior.

Fairbanks hit a new record high at the airport Thursday — 82 degrees. Forecast is for the same kind of temperatures through Sunday.

Fire officials are reporting 53 active fires around the state with 10 staffed by fire personnel.

The Eagle Trail Fire near Tanacross, which threatened the village and a nearby subdivision off the Alaska Highway, continues to have significant growth and is manned with smokejumpers, fire-fighters, air and support personnel of approximately 165 people, with more resources on the way.

The Applegate Fire, 21 miles north and east of Manley Hot Springs and about 20 miles west of Minto, is estimated at approximately 100 acres. On Thursday morning, six smokejumpers were deployed to the area for structure and point protection.

Another lightning-caused blaze, the East Minto Lake fire, started Wednesday and was contained by smokejumpers by 4 p.m. Thursday and will be demobilized today.

The Sucker River Fire, which encompasses about 400 acres, six miles southeast of Fort Yukon, was 50 percent contained Wednesday. By Thursday morning 67 personnel at the site, reported smoldering with no apparent growth, and crews were mopping up.

The Toklat Fire, which was reported to be approximately 50,000 acres in size Thursday, continued to advance southwest toward Mucha Lake and west towards East Twin Lake.

Fire officials report that the fire, which is exhibiting running, flanking and short range spotting along the southeast perimeter, also is smoldering and creeping along other perimeters.

Located about 30 miles southwest of Nenana, fire personnel include four smokejumpers, five helitack crew members, the Gannett Glacier Crew, Kaltag No. 1 Crew, Midnight Sun Hot Shot Crew, Minto No. 2 Crew and North Star Crew Type 2.

Structure protection is being carried out in the Mucha Lake area and along the Kantishna River Retardant is being dropped at the south end of the fire to limit the fire’s spread to the southeast.

Crews are mopping up the Broken Tree Fire, located about eight miles northeast of the Toklat Fire, which was about 80 percent contained Thursday night, and some crew members from the Tiikaan Fire Crew were shuttled to the Montane Fire, 28 miles north and east of the Broken Tree Fire.

The Montane Fire, 2.5 acres in size, is on a monitor status.

The 60-acre Gilles Creek Fire near the Pogo Mine was started by a lightning strike, 18 miles up Pogo Road, and is being monitored by fire personnel until more help arrives.

“It is burning toward the northwest, not toward the mine,” said Doug Stockdale, fire information officer with the Alaska Fire Service.

Contact staff writer Mary Beth Smetzer at 459-7546.
The Eagle Trail Fire near Tanacross, which threatened the village and a nearby subdivision off the Alaska Highway, continues to have significant growth and is manned with smoke jumpers, fire fighters, air and support personnel of approximately 165 people, with more resources on the way.

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Fire officials report that the fire, which is exhibiting running flanking and short range spotting along the southeast perimeter, also is smoldering and creeping along other perimeters.

Located about 30 miles southwest of Ninilchik, fire personnel include a smoke jumpers, five helicopter crew members, the Gannett Glacier Crew, Kaltag No. 1 Crew, Midnight Sun

FIRE: Fuel removal grant ‘saved the day’

Continued from Page A1

Although the majority of the 200 villagers were evacuated to an emergency shelter at Tok School, those who stayed on “saved the day,” Buist said.

A federal grant the village received in 2005 to remove hazardous fuels spurred the clearing of a large area around the village and thus changed the nature of the current fire, Buist said.

“When it got to the fuel break, it switched from being a crown (tree top) fire to a ground fire. “(Fuel removal) was very scientifically done. It saved the day in conjunction with the people who stayed to protect the village,” Buist said.
Wildfires Rage On

- Crews break out heavy equipment to battle blazes
- Weekend fire precautions
- List of Interior fires

Para-cargo specialist Bob Schobert, left, steers a four-wheeler as Porter McQueary, another para-cargo specialist, straps it into an airplane Friday at the Bureau of Land Management Alaska Fire Service base air base on Fort Wainwright. The ATV, strapped to a pallet with other supplies, was being prepared to be dropped to crews fighting the Fryingpan Creek Fire off the Steese Highway.

By MARY KELTH SMETZER
msmetzer@fairbanks.com

Fire crews and support personnel are jumping from fire to fire as record-setting warm temperatures, lightning strikes and no precipitation catch up extreme wildfire behavior throughout the Interior.

On Friday, fires in several remote highway communities sparked fire officials into action.

The closest line to Fairbanks was a one-acre fire located between the Chena River and Haines Lake near 822 Mile Richardson Highway.

Within a few hours, an initial fire crew, engine and helicopter had the blaze contained, said Pat Schomberg, fire information officer for the Fairbanks area. Later, it was demobilized and put on probation status.

"It's been a busy afternoon," Schomberg said. "The crews are very challenged, but are doing an outstanding job."

Fire crews also responded Friday to a three-acre Ditch Creek, about six miles east of Clear on the east.

By MARY KELTH SMETZER
msmetzer@fairbanks.com

BP's plug plan might work

Illegal caribou hunters sentenced

By TIM MCGURK
tim.mcgurk@dailynewsminer.com

A now-defunct miner who illegally killed 30 caribou off the Steese Highway in December has been fined a total of more than $12,000, ordered to forfeit four snowmachines and offer to the state, and had his hunting permits revoked for three to five years.

Vladimir Dauzhok, 35, Grizzly River, was charged with poaching in a Juneau District on July 3, pleading guilty in a Juneau District court May 12 for killing Nenana caribou outside the federal subsistence area for which they had permits. The Alaska Department of Public Safety announced the sentence Friday.

Dauzhok, 35, received the stiffest sentence of the three men for poaching and buying a cow calved in the snow. Dauzhok was sentenced in early July to 45 days in jail and fined $5,500 in addition to paying the fine and fees. He was also ordered to pay $250 in restitution to the state. Dauzhok's hunting privileges were revoked for five years. He was placed on probation for five years and also was ordered to pay $700 in addition for the past cow calving.

By TIM MCGURK
tim.mcgurk@dailynewsminer.com

Alyeska restarts pipeline

By BECKY SOHREN
becky.sohren@dailynewsminer.com

ANCHORAGE — The operator of the trans-Alaska pipeline system restarted the 800-mile line late Friday after it was shut down because of a spill.

The pipeline was shut down for 70 hours and 16 minutes, Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. said in a statement. That is the longest shutdown since August 2012, surpassing the more
Para-cargo specialist Bob Schober, left, steadies a four wheeler as Porter McQueary, another para-cargo specialist, straps it into an airplane Friday at the Bureau of Land Management Alaska Fire Service air base on Fort Wainwright. The ATV, strapped to a pallet with other supplies, was being prepared to be dropped to crews fighting the Fryingpan Creek Fire off the Steese Highway.

By MARY BETH SMETZER
msmetzer@newsminer.com

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On Friday, fires in several nearby highway communities sparked fire officials into action.

The closest blaze to Fairbanks was a one-acre fire located between the Salcha River and Harding Lake near 322 Mile Richardson Highway.

Within a few hours, an initial fire crew, engine and helicopters had the blaze contained, said Paul Stenkamp, fire information officer for the Fairbanks area. Later, it was demobilized and put on monitor status.

“It's been a busy afternoon,” Stenkamp said. “The crews are very challenged, but are doing an outstanding job.”

Fire crews also responded Friday to a fire near Julius Creek, about six miles east of Clear on the east.

Please see FIRE, Page A7

The Eagle Trail Fire moved west and northwest on Friday toward the Little Tanana River.

Weekend fire caution urged

By MARY BETH SMETZER
msmetzer@newsminer.com

Warm temperatures and lack of precipitation have increased fire danger warnings across the Interior and left fire officials stretched thin as they respond to fast-rising numbers of wildfires.

With many people taking to the outdoors this Memorial Day weekend, fire and health officials are urging everyone to take precautionary measures.

Please see CAUTION, Page A7

Sourdough Jack sez:

"With all these wildfires going on, I've been extra careful. The only thing I've been extra careful about is not getting too close to a wildfire.

Inside

The Associated Press

ANCHORAGE — The Alaska Legislature's special ethics committee says it will ask a state agency to review inspections of a state jet for campaigning by Gov. Frank Murkowski and other candidates in 2003.

State Rep. Jay Ramras of Fairbanks asked for a second opinion, which the committee granted. The jet was inspected for damage from flying low, which Ramras contended was the purpose of the flights. His question has also been raised in a federal lawsuit accusing the governor of using state aircraft for campaign purposes.

Please see ETHICS, Page C8
**WEATHER AND FORECASTS**

**FAIRBANKS 5-DAY FORECAST**

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**ALASKA SUMMARY**

The interior will have very warm weather again today with temperatures near 80 degrees. Clouds will be few, making for mostly sunny afternoon thunderstorms from the Alaska Range north to the Brooks Range. It will be mild across the rest of the state. There will be a passing shower or two around the Kotzebue area.

**STATE AND REGIONAL FORECAST**

- **ARCTIC SLOPE**
  - Partly sunny today, with a slight chance of a passing shower or two. High: 80°F; Low: 70°F.
  - Mostly sunny tomorrow, with a slight chance of a passing shower or two. High: 75°F; Low: 60°F.

- **TANANA VALLEY**
  - A thunderstorm this afternoon and evening. High: 85°F; Low: 70°F.
  - Mostly sunny tomorrow, with a slight chance of a passing shower or two. High: 80°F; Low: 60°F.

**MORE ALASKA CITIES**

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The fire area is extremely dry, Schwarber said, and crews literally had to beat flames in grassy areas to put out the fire.

The Eagle Trail Fire near Tanacross continues to advance to the west and northwest, but fire crews continue working on fire breaks and burnouts to further ensure the protection of Tanacross and nearby Eagle Subdivision.

Residents of the village, population 200, and the subdivision were evacuated to the Tok School emergency center on Thursday and will remain there until it is deemed safe to return.

Fire officials are being cautious since weather conditions are gusty and erratic.

Continued hot and dry weather is predicted through Monday.

Fire crews are working on structure protection at nearby Crystal Springs and in the Mansfield Lake area to the north.

Tanana Chiefs Conference President Jerry Isaac said Tanacross residents are concerned about the safety of the old Mansfield Village, about 7 miles north of Tanacross.

"It's a historical village. That's where the present day Tanacross people came from," Isaac said. "It is used in the winter and summer for trapping, fishing or hunting."

ALASKA EXTREMES YESTERDAY
High ....... 33°F at Eagle
Low .......... 28°F at Shishmaref

MORE ALASKA CITIES

NATIONAL TEMPERATURES

National Weather

CAUTION: Advise against any outside fire

Continued from Page A1

whether they are on the road, boating, camping or staying at home.

Permitted burning has been suspended for days, said Robert Schmoll, a fire manager officer for Fairbanks Area Forestry, but the state has not restricted campfires to date.

Schmoll advises against building a fire of any kind unless it is absolutely necessary and keeping it small.

It is extremely dry, so make sure you have a good mineral break, using non-burnable materials such as sand or gravel. Make sure you put the fire out all the way and cold trail it, which means putting your fingers carefully through the ashes, making sure there are no hot coals."

Schmoll also advises against using chain saws or recreational vehicles that heat up and can spark a fire when dry vegetation comes in contact with exhaust pipes or hot metal.

If working outdoors with hot machinery or equipment, Schmoll recommends being careful and taking a fire extinguisher and/or a large jug of water along for safety.

If smoke from forest fires begins drifting into wherever you live, work or play, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation advises anyone with respiratory illness or heart disease, the elderly and children to avoid exposure. All others are cautioned to avoid outdoor physical exertion when conditions reach unhealthy levels.

When air quality data is unavailable, the following air quality smoke reference guide can be used to estimate air quality levels and their potential health impacts.

When visibility is 10-plus miles, air quality is good.

As visibility lessens then air quality does likewise:
6-9 miles = moderate; 3-5 miles = unhealthy for sensitive groups; 1.5-2.5 miles = very unhealthy; 0.9-1.4 miles = more unhealthy; and 0.8 miles or less, hazardous.

Air quality indexes on wildfire smoke can be obtained at www.epa.alaska.gov/eh/wildfire/default.htm or www.dec.state.ak.us/air/smoke.htm.

Contact staff writer Mary Beth Smetzer at 459-7546.

TRIPS: For re-election or to a higher office

Continued from Page A1

"This gives such an advantage to the incumbent when it is an election season, when you can go ahead and fly for a legislative purpose and combine that with fundraising or with campaigning. The challenger would have to pay for their challengers can campaign.

The travel policy applies to legislators running for re-election, as well as those running for higher office. Ramirez, a Republican, is running for lieutenant governor. Sen. Hollis French, D-Anchorage, can, said he traveled to constituents in Homer to explain what happened in the legislative session.

"And of course everyone knows I'm running for office in Homer. It wasn't a campaign trip, I wasn't campaigning. I was just talking to constituents about housekeeping campaigns."

NATIONAL EXTREMES

High: 101°F at Tucson, Ariz.

NATIONAL WEATHER

Showers, rain, thunderstorms, snow, flash floods.
It's dry, dry, dry

Little precipitation means low water in Interior's rivers

Access to the Chena River at Peger Road on Friday is a bit challenging with low river levels. This is the third-driest start to a year in Fairbanks, according to National Weather Service records dating back to 1904.

By TIM MOWRY
mowry@newsminer.com

“Access to the Chena River at Peger Road on Friday is a bit challenging with low river levels. This is the third-driest start to a year in Fairbanks, according to National Weather Service records dating back to 1904.”

“The way things are going, if we don’t get any rain, it will probably get really low,” he said.

After one of the driest winters on record — the winter snowfall of 21.6 inches was the third-lowest in more than 100 years in Fairbanks — this spring hasn’t done much to replenish the aquifer.

This is the third-driest start to a year in Fairbanks, according to National Weather Service records dating back to 1904.

With only 0.88 inches of precipitation since Jan. 1, Fairbanks is 1.09 inches below normal for precipitation for the year.

That might not sound like much, but when you consider that Fairbanks has received only 6.88 inches of precipitation in the past year and the average is 10.38 inches, that translates to 55 percent of the normal amount.

“That’s significant,” said weather service meteorologist Matthew Riddle.

“The Salkha River was running at 6.85 feet Friday. When it gets below 5 feet, it makes getting a boat out and down the river interesting, Riddle said.

“The Salkha was less than half of what it normally is for this time of year, according to Larry Rundquist at the Alaska-Pacific River Forecast Center in Anchorage.

The Chena River is running about 2 feet below normal.

The low water in the Chena hasn’t posed too much of a problem for the Riverboat Discovery, the giant sternwheeler that hauls tourists up and down the lower Chena River, but that’s only because the glacial-fed Tanana River rose in the past week because of the hot weather and backed up water into the Chena, company president Ryan Binkley said.

Please see DRY, Page 52
Fairbanks police received a report Thursday morning that a person was intoxicated and was attempting to drive from a bar. A chemical test found his breath-alcohol content to be 0.113.

Swords was convicted of drunken driving in July 2001 and August 2002, according to court records.
- Daniel Wayne Wiesnet, 50, address unknown, was charged with driving under the influence after he nearly hit a trooper on Thursday morning on Old Steese Highway near the Howling Dog Saloon. Wiesnet also was charged with misdeamenor or drugs misconduct after troopers reportedly found a marijuana pipe in his vehicle.

Multiple charges
A Fairbanks man was charged with fourth-degree assault and driving under the influence after he allegedly pushed his roommate then drove intoxicated about 100 feet down a trail off his driveway.

Larry Kirk Ivey, 49, was arrested Wednesday at his home near 329 Mile Parks Highway. Ivey’s roommate told troopers he was afraid because Ivey had been drinking and owns firearms.

A chemical test found Ivey’s breath-alcohol content to be 0.155.

Theft
- Fairbanks police received a report Thursday that someone broke into a car parked on Valley Avenue and scattered the owner’s belongings, including credit cards, around the driveway.
- Someone broke into a vehicle on Crosson Avenue overnight Wednesday and stole an 8GB iPod as well as a digital Olympus camera.

Vandalism
Fairbanks police received a report Thursday that someone broke into a vehicle parked on E Street. Nothing was stolen, but the vehicle sustained “extensive damage,” and the vandal let the air out of the vehicle’s tires.

- Chris Freiberg

Continued from Page B1

Troopers noted that the woman had red marks on her neck and that the wrench was near a couch in her home, according to the complaint.

McGrath previously was convicted of domestic violence.

Contact the newsroom at 459-7572.

Continued from Page B1

“Until last week, it was touch and go for a while,” he said. “It’s been an issue, but we’ve been able to keep going.”

Normally, the Tanana River doesn’t start backing into the Chena River until June or July, Binkley said.

“It’s like the whole summer has shifted forward a month this year,” he said.

Most of the boats coming through the Boat Shop in Fairbanks have commented about the low water, service manager Johnny Boyer said.

“People are saying it’s low, but people are getting to where they need to go,” he said. “Nobody that I’ve talked to has been stopped because of low water.”

Contact staff writer Tim Mowry at 459-7587.
Alaska wildfires grow

By AMANDA BOHMAN
abohman@newsminer.com

Winds on Saturday, carried smoke into Fairbanks from a wildfire near Nenana, while another wildfire claimed a lodge along the Iditarod Sled Dog Race trail southwest of Fairbanks.
The Farewell Lake Lodge and an unknown number of outbuildings burned late Friday, fire information officer Pete Buist said.
“They were able to extract the people before the fire took the place over,” he said.
The lodge, near McGrath, is located on the Iditarod Trail on the leg from Rohn to Nikolai, although it is not an official stopover for mushers, according to the Iditarod website.
An unknown number of people evacuated the place after the Turquoise Lake Fire moved two and a quarter miles in 20 minutes.
“That is extremely fast,” Buist said. “There was more fire than what we had resources to deal with.”

Please see FIRES, Page A6

Top kill effort fails to fix leak

By BEN NUCKOLS
Associated Press Writer

ROBERT, La. — The most ambitious bid yet to stop the worst oil spill in U.S. history ended in failure Saturday after BP was unable to cap the well.

The company decided to try a “top kill,” a previously tested method for plugging an oil well. But the leak continued to gush, forcing a new plan to plug the well with cement.

The Robert field spill is about 20 miles southwest of New Orleans in the Gulf of Mexico. Since May 2010, BP has had 177 ships working to stop the leak, clean up the area and mitigate ecological damage from the massive spill.

The top kill was to be followed by a “static kill,” which was to be performed in the early morning of May 22. The static kill is an attempt to stop oil flow by pumping mud or cement into the well while it is still open.

The leak was estimated to be flowing at 35,000 barrels per day, or 5.5 million gallons, the equivalent of 220 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

BP has predicted earlier this year that the well would stop leaking for good by the end of May, but those predictions were repeatedly proven wrong.

BP has said it would spend $20 billion to address the spill and related issues, and has maintained that the well is its responsibility.

The federal government has sued BP to force it to clean up the oil, which has spread along the Gulf Coast and into the interior of the United States.

BP’s biggest fear is that the oil will eventually end up on shorelines from Texas to New York, which could have long-term environmental and economic consequences.

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Today's weather

Another day in paradise...as long as you don't mind too much smoke.

High: ......... 80
Low: ........ 54
Precipitation: 24 hours ending 5 p.m. ....... trace

For the complete weather forecast, see Page A7

TODAY IN HISTORY

The Associated Press

Today is Sunday, May 30, the 150th day of 2010. There are 215 days left in the year.

Highlight in History:
On May 30, 1922, the Lincoln Memorial was dedicated in Washington in a ceremony attended by President Warren G. Harding, Chief Justice William Howard Taft and Robert Todd Lincoln.

On this date:
In 1431, Joan of Arc, condemned as a heretic, was burned at the stake in Rouen, France.

In 1804, the territories of Arkansas, Louisiana and the land for which the United States bought the Louisiana Territory were named.

In 1866, the United States and China signed the Treaty of Peking, which formally ended the war between the two nations.

In 1937, ten people were killed when police fired on steelworkers demonstrating near the Republic Steel plant in South Chicago.

In 1943, American forces secured the Aegean island of Attu from the Japanese during World War II.

In 1958, unidentified American service members killed in World War II were interred in the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery.

In 1960, Soviet author and journalist Yury Galanskoy was arrested and imprisoned for two years.

In 2003, a mine explosion killed 12 miners in West Virginia.

In 2010, a shooting rampage at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., killed 20 people, including 17 children, and was considered one of the deadliest mass shootings in U.S. history.

In 2012, former President George H.W. Bush was hospitalized in Houston with a urinary tract infection.
Fires: About 20 new wildfires are being reported per day; 80 are active across state

Wildland fire forces closure of Elliott Highway

Staff Report
newsroom@newsminer.com

FAIRBANKS — The rapidly growing Cascade Ridge Fire, about 10 miles northeast of Livengood, has closed the Elliott Highway to all traffic.

The fire, which started by lightning near the western portion of the highway, has burned steadily throughout the day, as reported by the National Weather Service.

"It looks like the low pressure system is pushing the smoke from that direction," meteorologist Craig Johnson said.

The state issued a travel advisory for the central interior, including McGrath, Nenana, Livengood, Hot Springs and Delta Junction. The advisory suggested people avoid smoke exposures.

"Generally, worse conditions occur overnight and during the early morning hours, when the smoke is not as dense," the state advisory said. "During the day, surface heating will mix the smoke and carry it upwards, temporarily improving air quality."

Firefighters are assessing threatening structures in the Cascade subdivision east of the fire, but they have not yet had to fight the fire.

Further west near the Elliott Highway, the Applegator Fire is burning at 6,500 acres. It started on Friday and has been burning steadily throughout the day. Firefighters have been burnt off the fire area to ensure no one is in danger.

"There's not much wind, there's nothing going on at the fire," said a firefighter.

Another fire, the Eagle Trail Fire, is burning near the village of Tanacross. The fire is expected to continue, but no threatened structures are at risk.

Firefighters are focusing on containing the fire as it moves into a protected area.

CLIMBER: So far this year, 68 climbers have reached the summit of Mount McKinley

Continued from Page A1

Unable to find a suitable landing zone, Hermansky and Merbach performed what is known as a "toe-in" landing maneuver, hovering with the tips of their skis touching the snow, while Chenoweth helped them onto the cliff.

"It was a little bit of hard work," Wright said. "We did well within our abilities."

Crossing glacier ice in the crevasse-strewn lower section makes it icy for solo climbers," Wright said. "But the slope steepens to 30-55 degrees as climbers navigate mixed ice and rock sections.

"We had to be careful not to get caught," Wright said. "As the McKinley climbing season nears its apex, climbers on North America's tallest mountain, three other recently:

- On the night of May 20, park rangers removed a guided climber for high-altitude pulmonary edema at 17,200 feet. The next day, rangers assisted a pair of climbers to the 16,200-foot summit. On Monday, a climber suffering severe altitude illness was evacuated from the 17,200-foot camp.

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Playing with fire
Congress should pass senator’s disapproval resolution for EPA

Fairbanks residents have a history of dealing with air quality issues and the regulatory approach used by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to address them. So we should understand easily why that approach is the wrong one to address the latest pollution that plagues us — carbon dioxide.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski and 41 other senators also understand this, which is why they have pushed a resolution to force the EPA from using the regulatory strategies developed under the Clean Air Act to limit carbon dioxide as a way to combat global warming. This “resolution of disapproval” should come before the U.S. Senate for a vote next week. It deserves passage.

Fairbanks first tried to solve its carbon monoxide — not dioxide — problem with mandatory inspection and maintenance of vehicles in the borough. Now we’re trying to reduce particulates in our air. Setting aside lingering skepticism about whether these pollutants are really so bad that they need expensive interventions, most people can recognize that the regulatory system used to combat them is rational and targets the specific pollution problem.

Both local efforts arose because Fairbanks violated the EPA’s National Ambient Air Quality Standards for these pollutants. Those are the standards that the EPA sets for pollutants that “endanger” public health, as its has concluded carbon dioxide does.

So the EPA expects to set a standard for carbon dioxide. It will be something lower than current carbon dioxide levels, which are approaching 400 parts per million in the air and are steadily rising. Alaska’s Department of Environmental Conservation will get to work meeting the new standard by limiting emission sources. It will give the Fairbanks North Star Borough first crack at the problem, as it did with carbon monoxide and particulates. Every state across the nation will do the same.

As part of the effort, the EPA also will require operating permits for emissions sources that exceed 100 tons of carbon dioxide per year and new construction permits for plants that create 280 tons per year, because that’s what the Clean Air Act says it must do. That sounds like a lot of carbon dioxide, but most buildings and even small manufacturers produce much less. A single pickup truck driving 10,000 miles per year at 20 mpg produces 5 tons of carbon dioxide.

The EPA and states have issued about 15,000 operating and construction permits combined across the nation in recent years. But, because so many enterprises — public and private — produce so much carbon dioxide, the EPA will need to review millions of permitting applications and thousands of construction applications. If carbon emissions come under its purview, recognizing the absurdity of this, the agency and its state partners will need to hire additional permitting staff.

It was always his wish to close the Great Lakes, but he never actually did it. The Great Lakes have never been closed, but they have been heavily regulated to protect the environment and the lives of those who depend on them. The same is true of carbon dioxide.

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The EPA needs to be held accountable for its actions, and the Senate needs to hold the EPA accountable for its actions. The resolution of disapproval should be passed, and it should be time to get on with the job of reducing carbon dioxide emissions.
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As part of the effort, the EPA has will use

Owning up and the risks comes with it

By Ben Feinberg
Associated Press

It was always his mission. That's what Americans have on their presidents.

And so as the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico became the worst in history, President Barack Obama's responsibility in the one place he left. Unequivocally.

“In case you were wondering, I am responsible, I take responsibility,” Obama said at a Thursday news conference arranged to make a point. “It is my job to make sure that everything is done to stop this leak.”

No more White House press conferences about how BP is legally and financially responsible for plugging the leak and cleaning up as they promised to do. The cost, even though the numbers are still under accurate, Obama knew how to keep accountability was needed. The president knew the angry Gulf Coast communities. The president of his administration struggled to deliver a message, for himself.

And once you're in, it's hard to get out.

In language presidents reserve for the burden of war, Obama spelled out to the nation that the time when Obama is just another president was over. The stakeholders problems that the country has are not just economic, Mideast peace negotiators, all of them and beyond this or that problem. The president has been arguing that the “most focused” on fixing the economy.

This is what comes with the presidency and the sympathy of vote-getting, everlasting. Presidents have problems that they have never faced before.

When a government不尽如人意, the people's responsibility with the people's vote will be devastating. And all other issues than politics seem to be the EPA's arguments, the EPA's arguments are weak.
rotation sources. It will give the Fairbanks North Star Borough first crack at the problem, as it did with carbon monoxide and particulates. Every state across the nation will do the same.

As part of the effort, the EPA also will require operating permits for emission sources that exceed 100 tons of carbon dioxide per year and new construction permits for plants that create 250 tons per year, because that's what the Clean Air Act says it must do. That sounds like a lot of carbon dioxide, but many buildings and even small manufacturers produce that much. A single pickup truck driving 10,000 miles per year at 20 mpg produces 5 tons of carbon dioxide.

The EPA and states have issued about 15,000 operating and construction permits combined across the nation in recent years. But, because so many enterprises — public and private — produce so much carbon dioxide, the EPA will need to review millions of operating applications and thousands of construction applications if carbon dioxide comes under its purview. Recognizing the absurdity of this, the agency has proposed a way to ignore the smaller sources, but the proposal appears to contradict the Clean Air Act and would be vulnerable to lawsuits — either from environmental groups who want stricter rules or from industry groups looking for any way to topple the program.

All these limits and costly regulations might be worthwhile if, as with carbon monoxide and particulates, the result would be substantially less carbon dioxide in the air — the kind of reduction that climate models indicate is necessary to limit warming. Unfortunately, that result isn't anticipated.

All the rules and regulations will put only a small dent in global carbon dioxide levels. If any, that's because of two factors. First, carbon dioxide is a rapidly dispersed component of our air and it spreads globally. Second, the heavily populated, developing parts of our globe are not interested in limiting their carbon dioxide emissions.

Advocates of limiting our own emissions say that other nations will follow if we lead. That may be so, but then let's lead in a rational fashion. If the United States is to limit carbon emissions, it must do so with a system that either taxes carbon or sets a total cap on emissions that creates a market in which the worst pollution is traded away first. Those ideas are fraught with problems and uncertainties as well, but they are far preferable to an old-fashioned, bureaucratic permit system.

We're playing with fire here; we don't want to get burned. Murkowski's resolution is an apt extinguisher.
Hiker slays Denali bear

By CHRISTOPHER ESHLEMAN
ceshleman@newsminer.com

A backcountry shot and killed a grizzly bear Friday night in Denali National Park and Preserve, the first such incident within the park's original borders in decades and also the first since a February change in federal law allowed licensed visitors to carry loaded guns in national parks, a park spokesman said Saturday afternoon.

Park Service biologists and rangers are investigating the case, trying to determine whether the backcountry hunting justification for shooting the bear, said Kris Fister, a park spokeswoman. The park service was withholding the bear's name as of Sunday.

Please see BEAR, Page A7

Predator plan draws federal flak

By MARY PENNERTON
Associated Press Writer

ANCHORAGE — Different motivations about how Alaska wildlife should be managed and a plan to kill wolves inside a national refuge is causing a rift between state and federal managers.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, part of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game goes ahead with the plan to combat wolf predation, while state policymakers spar over what data supports trapping.

Please see PLAN, Page A7

Fairbanks turns out to honor veterans

By AMANDA SOMMEN

Firefighters mobilize more resources to combat blazes
Firefighters mobilize more resources to combat blazes

By AMANDA BOHMAN
abohman@newsminer.com

The number of acres burned in Alaska more than doubled during the weekend, and fire officials raised their preparation level to Level 4.

Level 5, which is critical, is the highest on the scale, fire information officer Bob Summerfield said.

The number of acres burned so far in the state jumped from 115,000 acres on Saturday to 260,000 acres by Monday morning, according to situation reports.

Please see FIRES, Page A8
Today's weather
Where the smoke is not, there will be clouds. But at least we can cough in warmth.

High: 73
Low: 50
Precipitation: None

For the complete weather forecast, see Page A7.

Sunrise: 3:32 a.m.
Sunset: 12:06 p.m.
Length of day: 20 hrs, 33 min, 39 sec
Daylight gained: 6 min, 13 sec

TODAY IN HISTORY

The Associated Press

Today is Tuesday, June 1, the 152nd day of 2010. There are 213 days left in the year.

Highlight in History:
On June 1, 1819, the mortally wounded commander of the U.S. frigate Chesapeake, Captain James Barron, died in Portland, Maine.

Seattle. (The fair closed in October the same year.)

In 1943, a civilian flight from Portugal to England was shot down by the Germans during World War II, killing 17 people aboard, including actor Leslie Howard.

In 1958, Charles de Gaulle
Clearing the air

Fairbanks can't avoid mandated cleanup measures

The debate about measures to improve the air quality in Fairbanks resumes Thursday when the Borough Assembly considers a revised cleanup plan put forward by Mayor Lake Hopkins.

Public testimony and a possible vote aren't scheduled until the following week, but residents can be sure the council will be filled with pros and cons, finger-pointing and name-calling.

What borough residents need to remember, however, is the bottom line: The federal government is requiring that something be done about the poor air quality in a large portion of the Fairbanks North Star Borough.

Oh sure, local leaders in Fairbanks could ignore the federal mandate, but that's not an option of a chance that the state government is going to ignore inaction by this community. That's because the state government will suffer the consequences if Fairbanks doesn't comply. Millions of federal dollars would become unattainable to the state.

Money talks, as they say.

The state is quite content to let Fairbanks come up with its own solution, provided the solution is satisfactory to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. And that's just what Fairbanks voters said they wanted anyway when they approved an advisory ballot measure last year saying they favored having an air quality plan put together locally.

Borough Assembly members and Fairbanks residents need to remember that when they are listening to what is likely to be a heavy amount of emotional anti-government testimony. What Fairbanks cannot afford is to have leaders who don't have the backbone to be frank about the reality that the state will move to clean up Fairbanks' air if Fairbanks doesn't do it itself.

How to get into print

The Daily News-Miner's Opinion Editor, Mike Hopkins, encourages readers to write to him at Mike.Hopkins@newsminer.com.

Community perspective

Sue不满中国在南海的扩张

The Mayors of Fairbanks and Juneau have met to discuss the issue of Chinese incursions into the South China Sea. Sue, a resident of Juneau, is concerned about the impact of this on the local fishing industry.

In an effort to maintain a sustainable and economically viable fishing industry, the mayors have agreed to work together on developing a joint strategy. Sue believes that this collaboration is crucial in ensuring the long-term viability of the local fishing economy.

Sue urges the local community to support these efforts and to remain vigilant about the potential impacts of Chinese incursions. She believes that by working together, the mayors can help protect the interests of the local fishing industry and ensure a sustainable future for future generations.

GOP must plug deficit hole

Legacy of overspending becomes target

On domestic issues, House Majority Leader John Boehner is unequivocal in his support for the tea party's agenda.

The former House speaker said in a recent interview that the tea party's push for fiscal responsibility is necessary for the country's long-term health.

Boehner emphasized the importance of addressing the country's debt and deficit issues, stating that failure to do so could have severe consequences for the nation's economy.

He called for a balanced approach to fiscal policy, which would involve a combination of tax reform and spending cuts. Boehner underscored the need for bipartisanship in achieving this goal, emphasizing that both parties must work together to find common ground.

A recent op-ed piece by Kathleen Parker, titled "GOP must plug deficit hole," explores the challenges facing the Republican Party in addressing the deficit. Parker argues that the party must pivot from its traditional role as a fiscally conservative advocate and embrace a more pragmatic approach to fiscal policy.

She calls for a renewed focus on deficit reduction, urging Republicans to consider a variety of options, including entitlement reform, tax cuts, and infrastructure spending.

Parker notes that while some within the party may view these proposals as politically risky, she believes they are essential for the country's future.

"We need a new approach," Parker writes. "One that is not just about cutting spending, but also about increasing revenue through growth and innovation."
Clearing the air

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GOP must plug overspending

Legacy of overspending becomes target

On domestic issues, House Minority Leader John Boehner is unequivocal in his support for three items: Quench, Dawn and Oxiclean.

Quench refers to the body lotion. Dawn the dishwashing liquid; and Oxiclean the laundry stain remover — the first two are products of Procter & Gamble, one of the largest employers in Boehner's Ohio.

These state secrets surfaced when I asked the perpetually tan Boehner, who insists he was "born tan," how to treat my sunburn. Firing up a Camel Light, his first of three during our 40-minute interview in his Capitol office, he said, "Ah, I'm a Quench believer."

"On the news every other day, we're winning two-to-one."

For Boehner, being on "The Big Sensory of No" isn't a regret. It is a strategy aimed to make those who listen see the contrast between the things and those who ignore them. That deafening silence will cause Republican candidates to feel the heat in the final days before the election.

"All the better to hear the clanging of the gavel," he said.

Boehner & Co. are busy conducting a listening tour via the "America Speaking Out" bus, where voters can submit ideas. It's user-friendly.

Kathleen Parker
FIRES: Continue to spawn and spread in the Interior’s hot, dry and windy conditions

Continued from Page A1

"We're doing everything we possibly can with these fires, but it's going to be over anytime soon," Summerfield said. "We are just getting into hot, dry and windy season." Folks need to be prepared for the long haul.

According to the Alaska Emergency Coordination Center (AECC) in Anchorage, Level 4 preparation means more than 50 percent of "non-tactical resources" are committed and more than 75 percent of "tactical resources" are committed to new fires.

Tactical resources include smokejumpers and air tankers. Non-tactical resources include helicopters, fire engines and fire crews.

Level 5 preparation means more than 75 percent of both kinds of resources have been deployed to fight wildfires.

"More than 1,000 people are assigned to fight the wildfires," Summerfield said. "All the workers, about 500, are assigned to the Eagle Trail Fire near Tok." "When we get to PL 4 or PL 5, we have folks from all over the Lower 48 and -- as of now -- a lot of resources from Canada," said fire information officer Pete Buist.

Moving to PL 4 can be a major milestone, depending on the summer. "It's not that unusual, but there are so many people we don't reach PL 4," Buist said.

Above and at right, smoke bills from the Eagle Trail Fire near Tanacross. At right, a helicopter prepares to dump a load on the flames to slow their spread.

Reaching PL 5 takes a combination of active fire weather, multiple large fires and many new fires. Buist said the last time Alaska reached that stage was August 6-7 last year when 80 fires were burning across the state, including the Halleck Creek Fire, which briefly threatened homes near Murphy Dome. There were 87 active fires as of Monday morning.

According to a report, the Eagle Trail was about 18 percent contained Monday as firefighters continue to focus on structure protection.

The Tok Fire and the Gales Creek Fire also continue to be high priorities, Summerfield said.

The Tok Fire, burning near Nenana, is burning through black spruce with flame lengths up to 45 feet. A situation report stated: "Rapid growth is taking place on the southwestern end of the blaze."

At more than 100,000 acres, the Tok Fire is one of the largest in the state.

A more sophisticated management team took over the Gales Creek Fire, which is burning along the road to the Pogo Gold Mine outside Delta Junction, according to a situation report. Bulldozers and other equipment worked to re-establish containment lines.

North of Fairbanks, the Bolson Fire, burning near Nenana, is burning through black spruce with flame lengths up to 45 feet. A situation report stated: "Rapid growth is taking place on the southwestern end of the blaze."

A more sophisticated management team took over the Gales Creek Fire, which is burning along the road to the Pogo Gold Mine outside Delta Junction, according to a situation report. Bulldozers and other equipment worked to re-establish containment lines.

Lightning ignited a new blaze on Sunday near Healy Lake, which is about 30 miles east of Delta Junction. The estimated 100-acre Healy River Fire was hit hard from the ground and the air, a situation report stated.

The National Weather Service is calling for continued highs in the 70s with scattered thunderstorms in the coming days.

Whether a thunderstorm will actually hit Fairbanks is hard to say, meteorologist Matthew Kidwell said.

The chance for rain is better toward the end of the week, he said.

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FIRES: Continue to spawn and spread in the Interior's

Continued from Page A1

“We're doing everything we possibly can with these fires but it's probably not going to be over anytime soon,” Summerfield said. “We are just getting into what would be the start of the normal fire season. Folks need to be prepared for the long haul.”

According to the Alaska Interagency Coordination Center's guidelines, Level 4 preparation means more than 50 percent of “non-tactical resources” are committed and more than 75 percent of “tactical resources” are committed to new fires. Tactical resources include smokejumpers and air tankers. Non-tactical resources include helicopters, fire engines and fire crews.

Level 5 preparation means more than 75 percent of both kinds of resources have been deployed to fight wildfires.

More than 1,000 people are assigned to fight the various wildfires or support the firefighters. Of the workers, about 530, are assigned to the Eagle Trail Fire near Tok.

“When we get to PL (preparation level) 4 or PL 5, we have folks from all over the Lower 48 and — as of now — a lot of resources from Canada,” said fire information officer Pete Buist.

Moving to PL 4 can be a major milestone, depending on the summer. “It’s not unusual; but there are summers where we never reach PL 4,” Buist said.

Reaching PL .5 takes a combination of active fire weather, multiple large fires and many new fires. Buist said the last time Alaska reached that stage was August 6-7 last year, when 80 fires were burning across the state, including the Hardluck Creek Fire, which briefly threatened homes near Murphy Dome. There were 87 active fires as of Monday morning.

According to a report, the Eagle Trail was about 15 percent contained Monday as firefighters continue to focus on structure protection.

The Toklat Fire and the Gilles Creek Fire also continue to be high priorities, Summerfield said.

The Toklat Fire, burning near Nenana, is running through black spruce with flame lengths at 75 feet, a situation report stated. Rap- id growth is taking place on the southwestern end of the blaze.

At more than 100,000 acres, the Toklat Fire is the largest in the state.

A more sophisticated management team took over the Gilles Creek Fire, which is burning along the route of the Pogo Gold Mine at Delta Junction, according to a situation report. Diggers and other equipment worked to reestablish containment lines.

North of Fairbanks, Cascade Ridge and a gate fire have kept Elliott Highway closed to traffic. “The Elliott's breached so many times, it might as well be closed now,” Buist said.

Twenty-three fire crews, either have flown in or are being deployed, according to the Lower 48 to AICC.}

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We'd like to invite you to come visit us. You will find us to be friendly and welcoming.
Texas textbooks are unlikely to spread

By PAUL J. WEBER
Associated Press Writer

SAN ANTONIO — Pop quiz: Does the school curriculum adopted in Texas really contain material that appears in classrooms across the country?

That's why the state school board's recent decision to adopt new social studies standards was closely watched.
Fire Dangers

Haze from wildfires hangs over Fairbanks; temperature expected to climb in Interior

By TIM MOORE

colder, wetter weather across the interior on Monday nights and Tuesday provided what weather and fire officials described as a "short-term reprieve" for firefighters battling more than a dozen wildfires in the Interior, but it won't last long with warmer, drier temperatures on the way and no significant rainfall in sight.

"We're in a place where we're waiting to see what the weather does," Mark Morrow, a fire information officer with the Alaska Fire Service and Tuesday morning.

Light shower fell across the state overnight Monday, including some areas where fires were burning. The little rain that did fall was "pretty localized" and won't have much effect, fire information officer Pete Roet said.

Please see CONDITIONS, Page A6

More crews headed to Alaska as fires grow

By MARY BEHN SMETZER

Two of the 50 wildfires burning across the state - the Eagle Trail Fire near Tanacross and the Gillette Creek Fire near Pogo Gold Mine north of Delta - are ranked No. 1 and No. 2 in the nation's wildfire priority list.

But as the top two also have both negative and positive aspects.

The bad news is the fires are aggressive and not contained. But the good news is the priority rankings mean fire managers are first in line for securing resources to fight the blazes.

Please see CREWS, Page A6

Man gets 33 years for role in robberies

By CHRIS FAHREMBERG

A Fairbanks resident was sentenced to 33 years in prison Tuesday after his conviction in a December 2011 armed robbery.

James Thibert, 28, pleaded guilty to armed robbery and theft, but was sentenced to 33 years in prison. Thibert, who was 28 at the time of his arrest, faced several charges, including burglary, theft and robbery.

Thibert received an additional sentence of 8 years in prison and 12 years supervised, with no consecutive terms, for a marijuana charge. He also faces a civil trial in June for the armed robbery.

Please see SENTENCE, Page A7

Election time draws slate of candidates

By CHRISTOPHER ELLSLEMAN

The state's 2012 primary election is just a few months away, and the candidates running in Alaska are fighting for the state's important interests.

The candidates have a variety of backgrounds, with the majority of the candidates running for the Senate, House of Representatives and the Fairbanks Assembly.

In all, 140 candidates are running for various positions, ranging from the U.S. Senate to the Alaska House of Representatives and the Fairbanks Assembly.

Please see ELECTION, Page A8
Fire Dangers

Haze from wildfires hangs over Fairbanks; temperature expected to climb in Interior

By TIM MOWRY

tmowry@newsminer.com

Cooler, wetter weather across the Interior on Monday night and Tuesday provided what weather and fire officials described as a "short-term reprieve" for firefighters battling more than a dozen wildfires in the Interior, but it won't last long with warmer, drier temperatures on the way and no significant rainfall in sight.

"We're in a phase where we're waiting to see what the weather does," Mark Morrow, a fire information officer with the Alaska Fire Service, said Tuesday morning.

Scattered showers fell across portions of Alaska overnight Monday, including some areas where fires were burning. The little rain that did fall "was pretty localized" and won't have much effect, fire information officer Pete Buist said.

Please see CONDITIONS, Page A6

More crews headed to...
More crews headed to Alaska as fires grow

By MARY BETH SMETZER
msmetzer@newsminer.com

Two of the 99 wildfires burning around the state — the Eagle Trail Fire near Tanacross and the Gilles Creek Fire near Pogo Gold Mine north of Delta — are ranked No. 1 and No. 2 on the nation's wildfire-priority list.

But being at the top has both negative and positive aspects.

The bad news is the fires are aggressive and not contained. But the good news is the priority rankings mean fire managers are first in line for securing resources to fight the blazes.

Traffic moves through a haze of smoke along Chena Pump Road as seen from the University of Alaska Fairbanks on Tuesday afternoon.

Please see CREWS, Page A6

Inside

Chaos in Gaza

1 dead, 4 hurt when plane crashes in business district

By RACHEL D'ORO
Associated Press Writer

ANCHORAGE — A small airplane crashed in a busy business district near Anchorage on Monday, killing one person and injuring four others. The crash occurred near the city's downtown area, which includes restaurants, shops and a hotel. It happened just before 5 p.m., according to local police. The plane was carrying two people, both of whom died on impact. The four injured people were taken to hospital with non-life-threatening injuries. The cause of the crash is under investigation by the National Transportation Safety Board. It's not clear yet whether weather conditions or mechanical issues played a role. The crash site is closed to traffic while authorities work to clear the scene and determine the cause of the incident. The incident is being treated as a major emergency and has prompted a response from the local government and emergency services. The airport in Anchorage, which is the major transportation hub for southern Alaska, remains open to flights. However, the incident has raised concerns about the safety of flying in the area, especially during the peak of the summer travel season. The Anchorage airport is one of the busiest in the state, with over a million passengers passing through it each year. The region has a complex network of small airports that serve remote communities, and the weather conditions can be challenging. The incident has prompted local officials to renew their call for increased funding for rural aviation programs and improved air safety regulations. The crash is a reminder of the risks involved in flying in Alaska, a state that is known for its rugged terrain and unpredictable weather. It also highlights the need for better coordination between emergency services and local authorities, especially in areas where aviation is a critical part of the economy. The incident has also raised questions about the safety of small planes, which are often used for charters and personal flights in Alaska. Experts say that small planes are more vulnerable to losses caused by weather conditions, equipment failures, and human error. The crash has sparked discussions about how to improve safety in the aviation industry, including the need for better training and more rigorous inspections. The incident has also raised concerns about the safety of flying in Alaska, a state that is known for its rugged terrain and unpredictable weather. It also highlights the need for better coordination between emergency services and local authorities, especially in areas where aviation is a critical part of the economy. The crash has also sparked discussions about how to improve safety in the aviation industry, including the need for better training and more rigorous inspections.
CREWS: Drivers urged to be patient and expect delays if driving in rural Alaska

Continued from Page A1

Eagle Trail Fire crews expect to increase their current firefighting staff of 535 by another 100 people in the next few days, said Celeste Prescott, fire information officer for the type 2 team Incident Management Team.

"Five more crews are on order," she said.

Currently, the fire is 15 percent contained and is moving north and west between Mansfield Trail and Glenn Highway.

Last week, the residents of Tanacross (population 200) and the nearby Eagle Subdivision on the Alaska Highway were evacuated to emergency shelter at Tok School on Thursday night due to the fire.

Fire officials report that

"good progress has been made on containment lines and parts of the fire are on the move," said Prescott. However, there is still the potential for traffic delays on the Alaska Highway.

Currently, the focus is on catching the blaze before it reaches the old Mansfield Village to the north, which has historical and spiritual significance to Tanacross residents.

"There are eight smokejumpers and 10 crew members who are working to contain the structure," said Prescott. They have laid hoses around every structure and every home.

Numerous other structures in the area and nearby Crystal Springs have been saved by fire crews as well. The Gilles Creek Fire, located about 20 miles north of Delta Junction off Pogo Mine Road, continues to grow and firefighters are busy fighting and containing it.

"The fire, which has claimed more than 17,000 acres by Tuesday night, is contained by 252 fire personnel and is only five percent contained," said Prescott.

As Fire Information Officer Tom Lavagnino said only one helicopter is assigned to the fire, but more helicopters, support staff and hand crews are on the way from other areas.

"Power to the Pogo Gold Mine was shut off a week ago, and as the fire moves closer there have been concerns about power availability," he said.

The Hot Creek Fire, located between Manley Hot Springs and Eureka, has burned 114,100 acres with more than 14,000 acres of fire containment, according to Lavagnino.

"The fire is still burning; we have been attacking the fire from the ground," he said.

Cascading Fire, located along the Elliott Highway between Livengood and the Minto turnoff, is 25 percent contained.

Anyone driving on the Elliott Highway is urged to use caution because of heavy smoke, fire equipment traffic and firefighters working adjacent to the road.

Another rapidly expanding blaze is the Turquoise Lake Fire, which by Tuesday was 15 percent contained and had grown to more than 4,700 acres near the north fork of the Knik River. Over the weekend it burned the Farewell Lake Lodge.

The Toklat River, 25 miles southwest of Nenana, encompasses more than 127,000 acres and has 200 fire personnel on the scene.

Focus is on protecting structures near the Bear Paw, Kantishka and Toklat rivers as well as East Twin and West Twin lakes.

According to Bob Summerville, a fire information officer, the scattering of rain around the Interior Monday will not help the situation, as people are concerned that the area will remain dry and raise the risk of wildfires.

A few people have remained in the area, including a couple who have been camping near the fire. However, they are being advised to leave the area due to the fire.

People need to be prepared to know that this may be ongoing for some time,

"Please prepare to know that this may be ongoing for some time," he said.

Contact staff writer Mary Beth Smotzer at 459-7546.

CRASH: Cause unknown

Continued from Page A1

The identities of those onboard were not yet known, said Jennifer Rody, a National Transportation Safety Board investigator. The single-engine plane was brought in to Caverly and Julian Inc., a guide and outfitting business based in Port Alsworth. The business could be reached for comment Tuesday night.

Rody said it was too early to say what caused the crash.

The airport went down after departing Merrill Field about a mile away. Rody said it was unknown who was flying the plane or if a flight plan had been filed.

She said the four survivors were critically injured. However, Brosh said the girl on board was able to unbuckle herself before she was helped out of the wreckages.

Contact staff writer Tim Mowry at 459-7587.

The crash site. A small, cone-shaped piece of the aircraft landed in the motel's parking lot.

Brosh was driving from a guitar lesson and had stopped at a nearby intersection when he heard a loud noise behind him. He swung his head back as the plane slammed into the ground.

People started to pour out of their cars and run to the aircraft.

Brosh said the plane burst into flames while those on board were still extricated.

People started running over with fire extinguishers. At one point, Brosh heard some of those living in the area exclaim, "You're spraying on the baby!"

A man and a woman aboard appeared very hurt, he said. The woman's mouth was full of blood and she had been knocked out, he said.

They would not say what caused the crash.

People started running over with fire extinguishers. At one point, Brosh heard some of those living in the area exclaim, "You're spraying on the baby!"

A man and a woman aboard appeared very hurt, he said. The woman's mouth was full of blood and she had been knocked out, he said.
CREWS: Drivers urged to be patient and expect delays if driving in rural Alaska

Continued from Page A1

Eagle Trail Fire crews expect to increase their current fire suppression efforts to about 10 people in the next few days, said Celeste Prescott, Fire Information Officer for the Juneau Fire District.

"Fire crews are on site," she said.

Currently, the fire is 55 percent contained and is moving north and west between Mansfield Fire and Glentar Lake.

"The fire is not currently a threat to Tanacross," Prescott said. "The residents of Tanacross (population 200) and the nearby Eagle Subdivision are on the Alert Level.

Last week, the residents of Tanacross were evacuated. Firefighters saved homes and properties.

Another group of firefighters saved homes and properties.

The fire has claimed more than 17,000 acres by Tuesday night, said Prescott.

The popular Granite Tors Trail has not been re-opened for public use.

The Toklat Fire, 25 miles southwest of Nome, has consumed more than 127,000 acres and has 200 personnel on scene.

The focus is on protecting structures near the Toklat, Kuskokwim, and East Tordrillo wildre.

People need to be prepared to know that this may be ongoing for some time," he said.

Contact staff writer Mary Beth Smetsker at 459-7546.

CRASH: Cause unknown

Continued from Page A1

The identities and hometowns of those on board were not yet known, said David Rodi, a National Transportation Safety Board investigator.

The crash site is a small, cone-shaped piece of the aircraft landed in the motel's parking lot.

Brough was driving to a guitar lesson and stopped at a nearby intersection when he heard a loud noise behind him. He swung his head back as the plane slammed into his car.

People started to pour out of their cars and run to the aircraft.

Brough said the plane burst into flames while those on board were still being extricated.

People starting running over with fire extinguishers.

At another point, Brough heard some of those helping exclaim, "You're spraying on the wrong group!"

A man and woman on board appeared very hurt. The woman's mouth was full of blood and it appeared her teeth were knocked out, he said.

For Brough, the experience was something he won't soon forget.
They woes hit UAF athletics

Department slashes contracts to balance budget

The athletics department will work with the shortened contracts, which will in part allow the department to shave about $400,000 off its expenses. The cuts are needed to offset rising fixed costs within the roughly $7 million budget.

"The question is what are you going to give up? Probably the only area you can make up a lot is in labor," Karr said.

Karr said the "big three" expenses at the athletics department make up most of its budget — student-athlete scholarships, labor and travel. Those items are anticipated to rise by about 4 percent next year, but revenues aren't projected to keep pace.

"They're the cost of doing business, and they're hard things to adjust," Karr said.

Karr said the UAF athletics department actually had a small surplus this year, but it was because of some factors that can't be relied upon again. Deferred payments from previous years and a strong season by the hockey team helped boost revenues, among other factors.

Other budget-cutting steps are being taken, including reductions in start-up costs and extra expenses.

Please see BUDGET, Page A6

New fire warnings in effect

By MARY BETH SMETZER
msmetzer@newsminer.com

Dry weather mixed with lightning storms continue to challenge firefighting crews staffing a dozen of 84 active fires reported burning around the state Wednesday.

Between 1,500 and 1,600 fire personnel are battling the blazes. More than half are Alaska fire crews and support staff, and the rest are imported from the Lower 48 and Canada, said Pete Boist, fire information officer.

A pre-evacuation (stage one) warning was issued to residents and owners of cabins along the shores of Quartz Lake on Wednesday morning because of potential fire danger from the Gilles...
Continued from Page A1

Creek Fire, 27 miles northeast of Delta Junction near the Pogo Gold Mine.

The early warning allows people with special needs or pets and livestock to make plans for an orderly exit as necessary.

"We don't want people to think that the north shore of Quartz Lake is going to burn," Buist said.

The fire has the potential to go elsewhere, depending on the wind and the fact that there is a solid fuel bed of black spruce located in the Pogo Road, south to Quartz Lake, Buist said. "If the fire starts making an advance, we might ask people to leave."

Buist said that structures along the lake's edge are pretty easy to defend if owners take fire prevention measures such as clearing fuel around their cabin, cleaning gutters, etc.

The 18,100 acre, lightning-caused fire is staffed with 390 fire personnel and is 35% contained.

The Toklat Fire is still the biggest acreage fire in the state, claiming 431,000 acres to date, burning into the Jeannes Lake Fire which probably moderated the fire's behavior, Buist said.

The other fires in the area are being protected with firebreaks and hooverpots.

The Eagle Trail Fire is still a priority blaze because of its proximity to the Alaska Highway, Tak Tana Creek and Eagle subdivision. Fifteen percent of the fire is contained.

The Turquoise Lake Fire, 60 miles southeast of McGrath and 45 miles southwest of Niofrak, has increased to 48,000 acres and is being monitored along with 21 other fires by fire personnel out of McGrath, including the 4,400 acre North Fork Fire, located about 22 miles northwest of Niofrak.

The Turquoise Lake Fire is still completely west of the South Fork of the Keswick River and is moving downstream to the north and a little bit west, Buist said, threatening some BLM and private cabins and a remote automated weather station (RAWS).

"We use that data center for weather reporting and if it goes, it is a blow to our fire weather program that we are so dependent on in providing good weather data and forecasts for our firefighters," Buist said.

"The Applegate and Cascade fires showed down Wednesday. Fire crews are staying busy protecting structures south of the Eureka turnout and down towards Baker Creek.

The fires are being closely watched because of their proximity to the community of Eureka, the trans-Alaska pipeline and nearby Elliott and Dalton highways.

With weather patterns continuing hot and dry, fire officials expect fire activity to continue if not increase.

"We've had some moisture in the eastern Interior, but warm temperatures combined with heat, plus moisture, it results in lightning," Buist said. "Our gut reaction is we'll likely pick up more lightning starts."

With fire danger so high, Buist urges extra caution for any outdoor human activity. This is a good time to do any tasks you can do because fire can be the source of what can turn into a tragedy," he said.

Contact the newsroom at 459-7572.

Month of May was third-warmest on record

As if the smoke from nearly 100 wildfires isn't proof enough, the numbers are in and it's official: May was warmer and drier than normal.

The average temperature of 53 degrees was 4.5 degrees above normal, which made it the third-warmest May on record, in more than 100 years in Fairbanks, according to the National Weather Service's monthly weather summary.

The only years with a warmer May were 1990 and 2005.

Temperatures were close to average for the first two weeks of the month before topping off. The average daily temperature was above normal for the last 18 days of the month.

The high temperature of the month was 82 degrees on May 27, which broke the previous record of 80 degrees set in 1990. The temperature of 80 degrees on May 26 tied the record.

The average high temperature in May was 67 degrees at Fairbanks International Airport and the average low 41 degrees.

It was also much drier than normal in May, though nowhere close to a record. A total of 0.24 inches of precipitation was measured at the airport during the month, which was a little more than one-third of the normal 0.80 inches of precipitation for the month. The driest May on record was last year with 0.05 inches of precipitation.

The low temperature for the month was 29 degrees on May 6 and there were 10 days when the temperature fell to or below the freezing mark. The last freezing temperature of the season was on May 14, which is close to the average date for the last freeze at the airport.

Despite ranking as the third-warmest May on record, the month also went down as one of the wettest May's in which measurable snow fell at the airport. One-tenth of an inch of snow fell on May 6. It was the first measurable snow in May since 2002.

The May snowfall nudged the season total to 24.9 inches, the third-lowest on record in Fairbanks.

Contact the newsroom at 459-7572.

FIRES: Homeowners on Quartz Lake are notified of potential evacuations as fire nears

Continued from Page A1

FIREOS: Using Facebook as a public forum

Since going smokefree we've seen

Parnell wrote on May 21, again on his Facebook page, that he was meeting with individual lawmakers as part of his budget review to hear about local projects.

"Continuing our budget review so we can spend less/