Wildfire Scorches 10 Acres on Afognak

Thursday, 14 May 2009

{audio}/images/stories/mp3/090514.afognak_fire.mp3{/audio}

Erik Wander/KMXT

A small wildfire broke out on Afognak Island Monday morning near a campsite where employees of Fish and Game were conducting a field project.

Sharon Roesch is a fire prevention officer and spokeswoman for the State Division of Forestry office in Soldotna. She said the Division of Forestry first learned of the fire, which ultimately spread eight to 10 acres, when they received a report from Kodiak Fish and Game.

-- (Fire 1 42 sec. "Their employees, a total of ... off the fire later that evening.")

Roesch said she didn't know what time the eight fire jumpers from Fairbanks were able to contain the fire located along the Afognak River or what time they were released from the scene, but she said the fire was easily brought under control by Monday evening. Roesch said the precise cause of the fire was unknown, but that the Fish and Game employees had an idea of what may have caused it.

-- (Fire 2 8 sec. "What the employees were thinking ... using at the camp.")

Roesch said fires on Afognak Island are unusual at this time of year, although not unheard of. She said the lack of rain is cause for concern and highlights the importance of vigilance and caution when it comes to wildfire prevention.

-- (Fire 3 41 sec. "We did have a large fire there ... should be more careful of fires.")

Rob Baer (Bear), a fisheries biologist with Fish and Game, made the initial distress call to the Division of Forestry after the group from Fish and Game were unable to extinguish the fire. He said the employees were at the site working on a smolt and weir field project. Baer said there was no structural damage to the campsite and no injuries were reported, but he pointed out that the dry conditions were ideal for a fire to break out.

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