On a hot Saturday, firefighters and the Sterling community saw their fire lines tested north of the Sterling Highway and Homer Electric transmission line as fire activity picked up. Sunday will be another test. Also along the south side of the Swan Lake Fire, crews mopped-up and started suppression repair work for restoration of wildlife habitat on the refuge. Heavy equipment operators fixed road damage, improving future access on Mystery Creek Road.

Fire crews along the East Fork Moose River continued to burnout pockets of dead trees and mop up. In the muskeg along Moose River in the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, crews kept mopping up the burn scar of the 2017 East Fork Fire, which has left a heavy load of dead and down trees, securing this perimeter.

Hotshot firefighters finished work Saturday for point protection of the Moose Research Center, and made progress guarding public use cabins and ENSTAR gas pipeline infrastructure. The Swan Lake Fire keeps slowly moving northeast, burning through thick black spruce stands.

Traffic moved well on Saturday along the Sterling Highway, with only minor delays due to re-started road construction and morning fog. Please use lights and caution driving along the highway in the fire area, as firefighters and construction workers are working along the road. A night crew will be patrolling and monitoring for smoke and flare-ups. If conditions deteriorate due to nighttime inversions, traffic delays may be possible.

Smoke and haze conditions on the Kenai Peninsula are expected to linger until Monday, when a cold front is forecast to pass to the north. Coastal areas should see clearer skies as sea breezes help disperse the smoke.

The Swan Lake Fire has continued to burn in a mosaic pattern, removing hazardous black spruce and providing for a more fire-resilient landscape for the future. Fire crews completed work June 28 to improve safety along the Sterling Fire Break. To enhance community-wide safety, residents should remove needles from roofs and flammable vegetation from around buildings. This is one of the best ways to better protect your home from fire. For information about other steps you can take to increase defensible space around your property, please visit http://forestry.alaska.gov/fire/firewise.

An interactive fire map can be found under Current Situational Reports on the Kenai Peninsula Borough emergency blog at http://www.kpboem.com. Map includes fire perimeter and land ownership overlaid on aerial photos.

WEATHER: Conditions will continue to be very warm and dry, with light winds. Smoke will hang around Sunday. Slightly cooler temperatures are forecast Monday as a cold front moves through to the north. High pressure over the peninsula will return later next week, returning to hot and dry conditions.

SAFETY: For current road conditions visit http://511.alaska.gov. The Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) over the fire area includes the Sterling Highway corridor to support suppression efforts and firefighter safety. Pilots can confirm the current TFR restrictions at tfr.faa.gov. Personal drone operations are not permitted on the refuge.

KENAI NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE INFORMATION: The Skilak Wildlife Recreation Area is closed to public use, including campgrounds, trails and cabins. Skilak Lake Road, along with Jim’s, Upper and Lower Skilak landings remain open. Contact the Refuge Visitor Center at 907-260-2820 or online at kenai.fws.gov.