

Alaskan Natives and NPS Remove Hazard Trees from Historic Mining District Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve, Alaska National Fire Plan – Rehabilitation

During the 2004 Alaska fire season 6.7 million acres burned, the most since fire reporting began in the 1950's. A national Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) team traveled to Alaska following the season to assess the potential need for emergency stabilization work on burned lands. The BAER team could not assess all affected lands, including the 14,904 acre Woodchopper Fire in Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve (YUCH). Having burned into the Coal Creek drainage, an historic (1901–1977) gold mine district known for its dredging operation, NPS Eastern Area Fire Management (EAFM) and Regional fire staff worked with the team to identify several concerns, in particular, the hazard tree removal assessment and stabilization work for the area trails impacted by the fire and develop projects to address the concerns in 2005.

Of the 10 miles of mining trails in the Coal Creek drainage, 4.5 lie within the Woodchopper Fire perimeter. On May 19, 2005 EAFM staff determined that 5000 plus hazard trees existed along the trails. EAFM defined a hazard tree as any fire weakened, killed and/or structurally damaged tree within two tree lengths of the trail. Because of the significant workload to remove hazard trees, EAFM developed a contract with Tanana Chiefs Conference to use timber fallers from Eagle Village, a native village, to clear hazard trees. Eagle Village lies 12 Yukon River miles south of the preserve boundary.

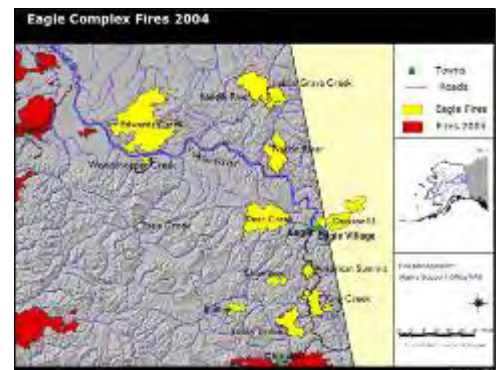
Coal Creek drainage, a remote area in YUCH, is accessible during the summer months by plane or boat. Thanks to the YUCH operated boat, 6 tree fellers and EAFM Forestry Technician, James Savage, traveled to and from Coal Creek via the Yukon River. From June 20 – 27, 2005 the crew cleared hazard trees along 4.5 miles of trails.

Through this unique partnership between NPS and Eagle Village residents, one crew member was able to revisit a part of his own family's history. His father worked at Coal Creek mine in the early 1950's. Having successfully completed the project, the crew also created a safe environment for the public to enjoy the gold mining history of Coal Creek once again.

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Hazard Tree Removal Crew at Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve dredge. NPS Photo.



Map of the 2004 Alaska fire season, Eagle Complex. NPS Map/Photo.