

# COMMUNITY VIEWS ON FIRE



**Grade Level:** 6-12

**Alaska State Content Standards:** LB3, LE2, SA15, GeoE4, GeoE5

**Subject:** Language Arts, Science, Geography

**Skills:** Analysis, Evaluation, Generalization, Research

**Duration:** 1 class period

**Group Size:** individual

**Setting:** indoors

**Vocabulary:** fire season

## OBJECTIVE

Students will research local community viewpoints regarding fire management.

## TEACHING STRATEGY

Students interview people in their community about how fire management issues affect them.

## MATERIALS

- Paper and pencil

## TEACHER BACKGROUND

The occurrence of fires in Alaska affects residents' lifestyles and livelihoods in many different ways.

For people hunting or trapping for commercial or subsistence purposes, fire has both short-term and long-term effects on wildlife habitat, wildlife populations, and personal property.

Furbearers that initially flee a burned area return when their prey--voles, hares, and small birds--move in to take advantage of the food and cover that new plants provide. Moose will often come back to a recently burned area to feed on the new growth or to find an easy travel route. Bears soon discover that burned areas produce abundant berry crops. As the forest progresses from early to later successional stages, wildlife diversity declines.

During the **fire season**, people from villages are employed to fight fires and provide goods and services to firefighters. Local grocers, hardware stores, pilots, restaurants, and hotels welcome the business. This revenue fluctuates greatly depending on the severity of the fire season. Sometimes pre-suppression activities such as the

construction of fire lines provide work and income during periods of low fire occurrence. Prescribed burning activities might generate income for firefighters and businesses, although the income might be less than that generated by actual fire suppression.

The occurrence and suppression of fires may affect tourism. Visitors may feel that scenic values are compromised by fire and that goods and services are more difficult to obtain due to increased demand in areas where fires are being fought.

It is important for people to understand how fire activity and management decisions affect their local community. Governmental agencies meet with local people whenever changes to fire management plans are being discussed.

## **PROCEDURE**

1. Brainstorm with the class the many ways fire affects the lifestyles and livelihoods of people in their community. On the board make a list of local people whose livelihoods might be affected by fire. This list might include firefighters, subsistence or sport hunters, and fishermen, trappers, village elders, pilots, guides, lodge owners, store owners, photographers, firewood cutters, commercial loggers, landowners, and others.
2. Divide the class into interview teams of two or three students and assign one livelihood to each team.
3. Each team is to choose one (two if possible) local individuals with that livelihood in their community. Teams

will ask the individuals these questions:

- Have you ever benefited from a wildland fire?
- Have you ever done any work associated with wildland fire?
- Has wildland fire ever had a negative impact on your life? In what way?

(Safety Note: Students should only interview friends or family members, not strangers.)

4. After the teams have completed their interviews, have each team share with the class what was said at their interview. Make a list of the different comments on the board. Point out to the class the great variety of comments made and the complexity of fire management issues.

## **EVALUATION**

Have students write several paragraphs about what was said during an interview given and reported by another student group.