



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **New Public, Marine, and Fire Weather Zone Boundaries will Support more Geographically-Targeted Forecasts and Warnings**

In an effort to continue to redefine our forecast zones, and be more in-tune with regional and local forecast needs, our forecast office worked closely with local community leadership and incorporated climatology, alert needs, and locally-identifiable naming conventions in the implementation of these new forecast changes. With this March's forecast zone upgrade, NWS WFO Anchorage will make a series of edits to previous forecast zones. We believe this will provide a vast improvement to those who live and transit through the affected areas across Southern Alaska.

For the complete list of anticipated changes to forecast zone names and numbers, please refer to the [Service Change Notice](#). Zone change implementation will occur **March 3, 2026**.

If March 3, 2026 is declared a Critical Weather Day, this implementation will be postponed to March 4, 2026 at 2100 UTC.

For now, know that the changes being made are as follows:

- There will be one new marine zone created, zone AKZ768 and will be named Unimak Pass. This is the zone that will reflect the Unimak Pass area that is heavily used for shipping traffic. The adjacent zones 770-775 and 759 had their borders adjusted to accommodate this new marine zone and to ensure proper boundaries with public zones were maintained. These adjustments were minor so zone numbers and names remained the same. Importantly, numbers and names were kept the same at the request of partners and the communities in these areas.
- Akutan Island is currently grouped with the West Aleutian Census Area, when in fact, it's part of Aleutians East Borough. Akutan will be grouped correctly into the appropriate Borough, aligning alerting needs. This will also aid with known wind climatology in the Unimak Pass and areas east within the Borough.
- Other naming convention changes will be made to eliminate confusion communicated to the NWS:
  - AKZ781: Alaska Peninsula → will now be called "Aleutians East Borough" as previously stated
  - AKZ785: Eastern Aleutians → will now be called "Unalaska and Nikolski"

- AKZ787: Central Aleutians → will now be called "Atka and Adak"
- AKZ791: Western Aleutians → will now be called "Shemya and Attu Islands"
- AKZ761: Central Alaska Peninsula → will now be called "Southern Alaska Peninsula"
- AKZ773: Chignik → will now be called "Chignik and Perryville"
- The Petersville community was split into three separate land-base zones: 745, 746 and 747. This will be fixed with this update. It will also reflect the river basin more accurately and give the 745 zone a stronger identity.
- To better serve the fire community and better align with fire weather needs and fuel types, a minor change is planned along the leeward side of the Kenai Mountain Range to pull the boundary back towards the base of the mountains. Please note that due to alerting needs, there will be no changes made to the public zones in the Kenai Peninsula Borough and that this change will only be reflected in the Fire Weather Zones.

The National Weather Service will be coordinating with partners and media outlets from across the state to facilitate greater awareness of these planned changes. These changes are part of a long-term National Weather Service improvement plan to provide the public with forecasts and alerts more relevant to their area of concern in the clearest way possible.

For more information about the planned zone changes and access to all material created to help educate the public, please refer to the National Weather Service website at [www.weather.gov/afc/NWSAnchorageLandandMarineBasedForecastChanges](http://www.weather.gov/afc/NWSAnchorageLandandMarineBasedForecastChanges).

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