

## AGRICULTURE & GRAZING

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### Goals

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**Economic Development.** Diversify and strengthen the state's economy by increasing the availability of competitively priced Alaskan food products by:

1. encouraging expanded production and availability of competitively priced farm products from existing agricultural lands;
2. increasing the acreage available as demand and market opportunities warrant; and
3. preserving the future option to use some potential agricultural lands for agricultural use.

**Agrarian Lifestyle.** Provide the opportunity for Alaskans to pursue an agrarian lifestyle.

**Conservation of Agricultural Resources and Protection of the Environment.** Design all agricultural disposals in a manner that maintains or enhances the productive capability of the soil and protects or enhances the quality of the natural environment.

### Management Guidelines - Agriculture

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- A. Disposal of Agricultural Development Rights.** Agricultural development rights only will be conveyed to private ownership where the department disposes of state lands that are designated for agricultural use.
- B. Farm Development Schedules and Conservation Plans.** When agricultural development rights are conveyed to private ownership, terms of conveyance will include the requirement to comply with a farm development schedule and farm conservation plan. Conservation plans will be approved by DNR in consultation with DF&G prior to farm development. The plans will incorporate soil, water, and wildlife conservation practices as developed by the SCS and other affected agencies. DF&G's technical assistance to farmers and Soil and Water Conservation Districts in the preparation of farm conservation plans will be the primary means of incorporating fish and wildlife concerns into these plans.
- C. Agricultural Disposal Program.** Large blocks of designated agricultural lands (2,000 or more generally contiguous acres) should be used

primarily to support commercial farming under the state's agricultural land disposal program (rather than under the homestead program, which limits farm size to 160 acres, and imposes a relatively lenient development schedule). Scattered, smaller parcels of designated agricultural lands should be considered for disposal such as under the agricultural homestead program.

- D. Protecting Options for Agricultural Development.** Remote state land with good agricultural potential, but not scheduled for sale or homesteading, should generally remain in public ownership and be classified "resource management" to protect the option for agricultural use. Exceptions to this policy may occur when exceptionally high forestry, habitat, or recreation values merit a long-term retention classification. Potential agricultural lands classified resource management will be available for uses that do not preclude agricultural development or impact other primary resource values. Such uses include habitat protection and enhancement, recreation, and forestry management.
- E. Protecting Wetlands, Lakes, and Streams.** A minimum buffer width of 100 feet (publicly owned or reserved as an easement or covenant) will apply to all agricultural land sales. (See *Wetland Management, Stream Corridors and Instream Flow, and Lakeshore Management* sections of this chapter, pages 2-12, 2-24, and 2-35).
- F. Timber Salvage on Agricultural Lands.** See Guideline B, *Timber Salvage* page 2-10.
- G. Depredation.** Depredation of crops by wildlife will be minimized by avoiding agricultural disposals in areas where depredation is likely to be a major problem and by integrating game movement corridors into the design of agricultural projects. When depredation does occur on agricultural land, non-lethal means of control are preferred.
- H. Floodplains.** DNR will generally avoid agricultural disposals in the 10-year floodplain. Where the 10-year floodplain has not been identified, the best available information will be used to identify areas where flooding is likely to be a severe limitation on agriculture. Agricultural disposals in such areas will be avoided.

**I. Other Guidelines Affecting Agriculture.** Other guidelines may affect agriculture. See in particular the following sections of this chapter:

Fish and Wildlife Habitat and Harvest  
Forestry  
Lakeshore Management  
Materials  
Public Access  
Stream Corridors and Instream Flow  
Subsurface Resources  
Trail Management  
Wetland Management

## Management Guidelines - Grazing

### A. Improved Pasture Grazing.

1. **Fish and Wildlife Conflicts.** Improved pasture grazing will not be allowed in habitat categories A-1, A-2, and B-1 (see Appendix A, *Glossary*) to avoid spreading disease, creating conflicts with natural predators, and preventing competition with wildlife. The habitat categories are identified in the Fish and Wildlife Element of the Tanana Basin Area Plan. These categories are further defined and mapped in the Fish and Wildlife Element, Tanana Basin Area Plan (DNR and DF&G, 1983).
2. **Lands Classified Agriculture.** Improved pasture grazing will be allowed on those lands classified for agriculture.
3. **Lands Classified Resource Management.** Improved pasture grazing may be allowed in areas classified resource management if DNR determines that agriculture is the primary value present, after considering conflicts with other resources.
4. **Other Lands.** In the remainder of the Tanana Basin, improved pasture grazing may be allowed provided that (1) land included under sections 2 and 3 above is not reasonably available, and (2) at a minimum the following criteria are met:

- The area meets the requirements of Section 1 above.

- Improved pasture grazing is shown to be consistent with the primary use of the area.
- Resulting activities will not cause access problems such as blocking trails or restricting access to public lands.
- A statement is obtained from the Soil Conservation Service indicating that the soils are suitable for improved pasture grazing without draining.
- Fencing of the area will generally be required. Riparian habitat adjacent to waterbodies with habitat, watershed, or public recreation values of regional or statewide significance must be protected through fencing, unless other feasible and prudent methods are found.
- All improvements must be removed upon termination of the lease at the discretion of the director of Division of Land in consultation with DF&G.
- Department of Environmental Conservation recommendations regarding possible non-point source pollution problems are addressed.
- Livestock feedlots are prohibited.
- All activities are subject to a Grazing Operation Plan.

- B. Unimproved Grazing Lands.** In the Tanana Basin, grazing generally will be discouraged in roadless areas with little natural grazing potential and in areas where there are no feasible farm headquarters sites. This policy is intended to direct the department's leasing and permit program and range management plans to areas where grazing is economically feasible and to minimize the impacts of grazing on soil stability, water quality, and habitat. Grazing will be prohibited in high value Dall sheep and grizzly bear habitats. In other areas grazing will be permitted on a case-by-case basis if consistent with the statement of management intent for the management unit in question.

### C. Multiple Use Management of Grazing Lands.

1. **Multiple Use.** Grazing lands will be managed as multiple use lands to support a variety of public benefits to livestock production, including the following:

- fish and wildlife maintenance
- water quality maintenance
- public recreation
- timber
- soil conservation

**2. Forage for Domestic Stock and Wildlife.** Grazing lands will be managed to ensure sustainable forage for domestic stock and wildlife.

**3. Public Access.** Public access across, and public use of, grazing lands may not be limited to persons holding grazing leases or permits unless approved as part of a grazing operations plan.

**D. Grazing Permits and Leases.** A grazing lease or permit issued by DNR is required for any person who releases livestock on state grazing lands. Grazing leases will be granted for a period not to exceed 25 years. Permits must be renewed annually. Permits, rather than leases, should be issued in areas especially susceptible to soil erosion or water quality degradation and other environmentally sensitive areas. These areas will be identified through DNR's range management plans (see Guideline E, below).

The requirements stated in these guidelines will be implemented through appropriate lease and permit stipulations.

Provisions of existing grazing leases and permits are not affected by these guidelines. In areas where grazing leases and permits have been issued previously, new permits may be issued and existing leases may be renewed prior to the completion of range management plans. However, such permits or leases will be subject to these management guidelines.

**E. Range Management Plans.** When grazing is anticipated to be a significant, widespread land use with potential for creating environmental harm, DNR will develop range management plans (RMP) before issuing grazing leases or permits. RMPs will be developed by DL in consultation with the Divisions of Agriculture and Forestry, DF&G, SCS, and Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The provisions of RMPs will provide the basis of approval of grazing operations plans (see F below) and of stipulations to be included in grazing leases and permits. RMPs will not be required where grazing is a minor use

with few animals and little land area involved. DNR will determine where range management plans are appropriate based on consultation with other affected agencies, including DF&G. RMPs shall address, at minimum, the following items:

**1. Stocking Densities.** The state shall use standard United States Department of Agriculture range assessment procedures or other scientifically acceptable methods to identify the abundance, distribution, annual productivity, nutrition, and seasonal availability of range vegetation available for grazing. Forage availability, expressed as animal unit months shall be used with proposed grazing schedules to establish maximum allowable stocking densities. Consideration will be given for meeting wildlife forage requirements. Stocking densities will provide sustained range production and condition.

**2. Water Quality Protection.** Range management plans will state how anadromous fish and streams, other waterways, and lakes are to be protected from adverse impacts of grazing. Fencing may be required to protect portions of waterbodies. Identification of specific watering sites, feeding stations, headquarter sites, or other improvements may be required to minimize the adverse impacts of grazing.

**3. Annual Grazing Schedule.** Range management plans will establish spring and fall dates for release and removal of stock on grazing lands. This may be necessary to protect the range and to minimize competition between stock and wildlife.

**4. Map of Proposed Grazing Areas.** Range management plans will include a map that shows the location, acreage, and configurations of proposed lease and permit areas.

**5. Physical Improvements.** Range management plans will show proposed feed lot sites, stock watering sites, supplemental feeding stations, farm headquarter sites, fences, and other improvements necessary to minimize conflicts between grazing and other resource values. Range management plans shall include, where appropriate, guidelines for the design, location, and use of roads, trails, bridges, and other improvements or actions that may be necessary or incidental to grazing operations.

- 6. Environmental Monitoring.** Range management plans will establish procedures to monitor the impacts of grazing on wildlife, vegetation, and soil stability and establish conditions under which a lessee's or permittee's grazing operations plan may be modified to prevent environmental degradation.
- 7. Disease Transmission and Livestock-Predator Conflicts.** Range Management plans will establish measures necessary to minimize transmission of disease between domestic stock and wildlife and to minimize livestock-predator conflicts.
- 8. Modification of Vegetation.** Artificial modification of natural vegetation (for example, clearing, burning, seeding) will be permitted only in locations and under guidelines specified by applicable range management plans.
- F. Grazing Operations Plan.** Before receiving a grazing permit or lease, an applicant must have an approved grazing operations plan. DNR will assist a lessee or permittee in plan preparation with consultation of DF&G and SCS. A grazing operations plan will be included as a condition of a lease or permit. Minimum requirements of a grazing operations plan are as follows:
- 1. Agreement with Soil and Water Conservation District.** Cooperative agreement between the lessee and the appropriate Alaska Soil and Water Conservation District.
  - 2. Resource Map.** A physical resource map identifying: (1) location, acreage, and configuration of the proposed lease or permit area(s); (2) proposed feedlot sites, stock watering sites, and supplemental feeding stations; (3) farm headquarter site, outbuildings, fences, and other proposed improvements.
  - 3. Proposed Management Activities.** A statement of the lessee's proposed management activities, including (1) range management practices considered essential or desirable, including clearing and modification of vegetation; (2) livestock species to be stocked; (3) annual grazing schedule and (4) forage balance sheet.
  - 4. Proposed Stocking Densities.** A maximum stocking density will be based on DNR's range management plan for the area concerned (if such a plan exists). A minimum stocking den-
- sity with a schedule for achieving it will also be established as a part of each grazing operations plan to ensure efficient use of state grazing land.
- G. Standards of Approval -- Grazing Operation Plans.** A grazing operations plan will be approved only when it is in compliance with an applicable range management plan. Where there is no range management plan in effect, approval will be based on consideration of the potential effects of grazing on other natural resources, including water quality, riparian lands, soil stability, disease transmission, livestock-predator conflicts, and competition between wildlife and stock for forage. DNR, in consultation with affected agencies, may require that appropriate measures be specified in a grazing operations plan to minimize adverse impacts.
- H. Modification of Grazing Operations Plan.** Modification of grazing operations plans may be required if grazing activities are determined to cause significant degradation to the range or wildlife habitat, including water quality, soil stability, or sustainable forage for stock and wildlife. Determination that modification of a grazing operations plan is necessary will be made by DNR in consultation with the lease or permit holder, DEC, and DF&G.
- I. Other Guidelines Affecting Grazing.** Other guidelines may affect grazing. See in particular the following sections of this chapter:
- Fish and Wildlife Habitat and Harvest
  - Forestry
  - Lakeshore Management
  - Materials
  - Public Access
  - Stream Corridors and Instream Flow
  - Subsurface Resources
  - Trail Management
  - Wetland Management