

Grazing on State Land



State of Alaska
Department of Natural Resources
Division of Agriculture

Topics

- What is a State Grazing Authorization
- Types of grazing authorizations
- Generally allowed uses
- Our constitutional mandate
- Grazing Management plans
- Grazing vs. Multiple Use permits
- Application process
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What is a State Grazing Authorization?

- A grazing authorization is an instrument used by the Department of Natural Resources to approve the limited use of state land for grazing animals.
- A grazing authorization does not authorize the construction of permanent structures. Such as houses, barns, silos, and storage buildings.
- State land within and surrounding a grazing authorization is subject to principles of multiple use and must remain open to public access.

Types of Grazing Authorizations

- Depending upon the scope of the grazing proposal, the range improvements, and the term requested, the Division of Mining, Land and Water will elect to process an application as either a Land Use Permit or Lease.
- Land Use Permits are temporary authorizations that are revocable and may include range improvements, such as, temporary fencing.
- Leases are longer term and may include range improvements that require additional terms and conditions to guarantee use over a longer period of time. Grazing leases are a limited property interest.

Generally Allowed Uses

- General State lands are managed per Generally Allowed Uses outlined in 11 AAC 96.020 by the Division of Mining, Land and Water. Generally Allowed Uses include a list of activities allowed to take place on state lands under certain conditions without a specific land use authorization. Examples include:
 - Driving livestock: including any number of reindeer or up to 100 horses, cattle, or other domesticated animals.
 - Grazing: no more than five domesticated animals.

Constitutional and Department Mandates

Policy Statement for Natural Resources

Article VIII, Section 1 of the Alaska Constitution states: “It is the policy of the State to encourage the settlement of its land and the development of its resources by making them available for maximum use consistent with the public interest.”

Mission State for the Department

“To responsibly develop Alaska’s resources by making them available for maximum use and benefit consistent with the public interest.”

Multiple Use Land Management ~ AS 38.05.285

“Disposal and use of state land shall conform to the constitution of the State of Alaska and principles of multiple purpose use consistent with the public interest.”

Grazing Management Plans



- Grazing Management Plans (GMP) are a comprehensive outline of where animals will be grazed, what and how many animals will be grazed, how the animals will be managed, and how the area will be used while remaining open to public access. GMP are a necessary component of any request to utilize state land for grazing purposes.
- Applicants begin by contacting the DNR Division of Agricultural (DOA) to assist with basic land status research. Key considerations include:
 - Is the area state owned land?
 - Is it consistent with the area plan and land classification?
 - How much land is needed for the proposed activity?
 - What is the proposed animal unit months, quality of forage, and potential carrying capacity of the area?
 - Are there steep slopes or riparian areas that need special protections?

Grazing Management Plans



- Applicants generally seek assistance from the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) with the preparation of a Conservation Plan (CP).
- The CP contains useful information about planned conservation practices & includes a map of the proposed grazing area, but is a supplement to the GMP, not a substitute for a GMP.
- Once the CP is complete, the applicant submits it to the DOA along with any planned Environmental Quality Incentive Program Practices which are also attached to the GMP.
- DOA then works with the applicant to fill in any missing information for their GMP.

Grazing Management Plans



- The preliminary GMP is then forwarded on to DMLW along with a complete application for adjudication, public notice, and final decision.
- Note: GMP are subject to review and modification based upon specific land management decisions and agency input.
- A final GMP will be approved by DOA and attached to the grazing authorization issued by the DMLW.

Grazing vs. Multiple Use Principles

- The challenge is to balance competing uses of state land with grazing. Examples of competing uses include: oil and gas exploration, public recreation, public access, and generally allowed uses.
- Range improvements, such as fences, can create the perception that the land is private property.
- Maintaining public access is critical to ensure the public is aware where the access gates are located, what types of livestock might be within, and who to contact in case of questions or concerns.

Application Process

- Contact the DOA
- Prepare a Preliminary GMP with the Natural Resource Conservation Service and DOA
- Submit an application to the DMLW
- Agency review/Public notice
- DOA approves the final GMP
- DMLW issues final decision
- Bonding, insurance, and fees
- Authorization issued by DMLW
- DOA and DMLW manage authorization

Questions and Contacts

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