

Department Programs and Relevant Studies

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages Alaska's surface and subsurface resources, including more than 160 million acres of state public domain land. The department's critical functions include state land sales, leasing and permitting, water management, wildland firefighting, agricultural development, state park and outdoor recreation management, oil and gas leasing, and identifying Alaska's resource potential and geologic hazards.

DNR's main offices are in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau, with smaller area offices in other communities. The department's website is dnr.alaska.gov.

THE COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

Sets department goals and policies and provides support services to DNR's divisions and its boards and commissions. The Commissioner maintains offices in Anchorage and Juneau and oversees several other offices, including:

- The Mental Health Trust Land Office, managing the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority's land and resource assets on behalf of Alaskans with mental illness, developmental disabilities, chronic alcoholism and other substance related disorders, Alzheimer's disease and related dementia, and traumatic brain injury.
- The Office of Project Management & Permitting, coordinating large projects and the state participation in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act.
- The Public Information Center, offering customer service in Anchorage and Fairbanks for the department's programs and services.

Relevant studies: political science, public and business administration, law, land, mining, environmental science, ecology, fisheries, wildlife habitat management, computer science and natural resource management.

DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE

Works with local producers to promote and support Alaska's agriculture industry through financing for farmers and processors, land sales, conservation education and inspection, and farm product certification. The division's Alaska Grown program promotes Alaska's farm products and its Farm to School program supports efforts to make Alaska Grown food available in the state's schools. The Plant Materials Center develops and tests plants for Alaska's climate for use in agricultural production, erosion control, land reclamation and habitat improvement.

Related studies: agriculture, agronomy, soil science, horticulture and associated fields.

DIVISION OF FORESTRY

Manages state-owned forested land, including three state forests, under a multiple-use, sustained yield approach, and sells timber via competitive and negotiated sales to purchasers. The Division administers the Forest Resources and Practices Act (FRPA), under the auspices of the Board of Forestry and in conjunction with the departments of Fish and Game and Environmental Conservation, to protect fisheries habitat and water quality, and promptly reforest harvested areas. Staff provides technical assistance to private and municipal forest landowners, and develops and delivers conservation education programs, urban forestry and forest health and forest stewardship services. The Wildland Fire and Aviation program provides fire protection services and related fire and aviation management activities on 150 million acres of land throughout Alaska. The program works with communities to identify and treat hazardous fuels to reduce fire risk and actively promotes homeowner responsibility via the Fire wise program. Training is provided to urban and rural fire departments, individual emergency firefighters and crews. The Division also fields an interagency Incident Management Team (IMT) to assist local jurisdictions in the management of large project fires.

Related studies: forestry; forest engineering; soil science; forest management; silviculture; geographic information system and database management; forest entomology; conservation education; computer sciences; wildland fire management and suppression, fire ecology, dispatching, logistics, aviation management and pilots.

DIVISION OF GEOLOGICAL & GEOPHYSICAL SURVEYS

Collects, analyzes, and interprets data on natural resources and natural conditions; maps and inventories resources on state land for use by government, private industry, scientists, educators and the public. The division's geologic hazards program provides engineering and safety information on slope-stability, volcano and earthquake hazards, permafrost and other natural conditions. The staff annually publishes about 75 technical reports and geologic maps and distributes more than 11,000 copies of publications.

Related studies: geology, geophysics, mining, engineering, natural resources and computer science.

DIVISION OF MINING, LAND & WATER

MINING SECTION

Oversees state mineral exploration, development and leasing programs (excluding oil, gas, and geothermal energy) on state land; maintains records of locatable mineral claims; administers the state's Surface Coal Mining Control and Reclamation Program; and provides mineral information to the public and technical assistance to the mining industry.

Related studies: mining engineering, geology, natural resource management, environmental science.

LAND SECTION

Primary manager of Alaska's general land holdings including uplands, tidelands, submerged lands, and shore lands. Responsibilities include receiving and disposing of state land title; classifying land; resolving state title to submerged lands under navigable water bodies; selling land and materials; authorizing the appropriate use of state land and resources for recreation, commercial and industrial uses, development and access; providing appropriate stewardship of the state's land and resources; resolving conflicts of competing uses of multiple-use lands; managing major projects such as the fulfillment of the state's land entitlement, major yearly land sale auctions, and transferring replacement lands to the university.

Related studies: land management, planning, natural resource management, survey, appraisal, real estate, law, history, environmental science, natural science, geography, computer science, GIS, communications, business and public administration.

WATER SECTION

Manages, plans, promotes and authorizes responsible use of Alaska's water resources on both public and private lands. Its staff also works to collect and provide information on quantity and quality of Alaska's vast surface, ground, and coastal waters; provides hydrologic assistance to businesses and individuals; issues water-use permits and water rights; and protects lives and property through its dam safety program.

Related studies: hydrology, natural resource management, law, engineering, geology, environmental science.

DIVISION OF OIL & GAS

Develops and manages the state's oil and gas leasing programs which generate more than two-thirds of the State of Alaska's general fund revenues. The staff identifies prospective lease areas; performs geologic, economic, environmental, and social analyses; develops a five-year leasing schedule; and conducts public review of proposed sales. The division conducts competitive oil, gas, and geothermal lease sales and monitors collection of bonuses, rentals and royalties resulting from its leasing program. The division also houses the State Pipeline Coordinator (SPC) section which processes, issues, and manages pipeline right-of-way leases under the Alaska Right-of-Way Leasing Act. The SPC has oversight of 19 pipelines including the 800-mile Trans-Alaska Pipeline System.

Related studies: computer science, petroleum engineering, geology, geophysics, and associated fields.

DIVISION OF PARKS & OUTDOOR RECREATION

Develops and manages the Alaska state park system and provides grants and assistance for recreation and historic preservation. The division operates the largest state park system in America with 122 parks, recreation areas and historic sites containing 3.3 million acres. Sections within the division are Field Operations, Administration and Grants, the Office of Boating Safety, Design and Construction, Interpretation and Education, and the Office of History and Archaeology. There are six primary area offices in Anchorage, Wasilla, Juneau, Soldotna, Fairbanks, and Kodiak. The division hires hundreds of volunteers and seasonal staff annually to help maintain parks and provide interpretive programs.

Related studies: park management, outdoor recreation, natural history, archaeology, anthropology, history, natural resource management.

SUPPORT SERVICES DIVISION

Provides administrative policy and management support to the department, including financial (revenue and expenditure accounting), budget, procurement, facilities management and data processing services. It is responsible for land record information management and the operation of the State Recorder's and Uniform Commercial Code office. Key data processing services include network, desktop, application programming, web administration, department databases, and geographic information system.

Related studies: business and public administration, accounting, land records management, resource management, geography, computer sciences and GIS.