

Agriculture and Grazing

Agriculture

Goals

Food Security. Provide a reserve of land for agricultural use to support the local and regional production of foodstuffs necessary to support the citizens of Alaska in the future. Known as ‘food security’, this goal recognizes the potential variabilities of worldwide food production and its distribution in the future and indicates the state’s intent to ensure a continuing agricultural land base.

Economic Development. Diversify and strengthen the state’s economy by increasing the availability of Alaska food products by:

- Encouraging expanded production and availability of farm products from agricultural lands within Alaska;
- Increasing the acreage available as demand or market opportunities warrant;
- Preserving the ability to produce agricultural products as a future option.

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

Agricultural Land Disposals. The primary purpose of future agricultural land disposals is to bring land into agricultural production and/or preserve it for agricultural use by future generations.

Conservation of Agricultural Resources. Agricultural land disposals shall be designed to maintain or enhance the productivity of the soil.

Protection of Environment. Agricultural land disposals shall consider off-site impacts and shall utilize appropriate mitigation measures.

Management of Invasive Plants and Animals. Mitigation efforts shall be taken to avoid the spread of invasive plants and animals.

Management Guidelines

A. Agricultural Sales: Classification. Agricultural land disposals under AS 38.05.321 may only occur within areas designated Agriculture Land².

B. Agricultural Sales: Size. Within the planning area, agricultural sales should have a minimum area of 40 acres. Sale areas may be less than 40 acres, if requested by the Division of Agriculture in the written decision under AS 38.05.035(e), and is determined that such an action is in the best interests of the state.

C. Agricultural Land Disposals. Agricultural land disposals shall be consistent with the requirements of 11 AAC 67. Agricultural land cannot be used for other purposes that would preclude its eventual use for agriculture.

- Land conveyed under this authority may only be used for agricultural purposes or for purposes that do not conflict with the use of the land for agriculture.
- Remote state land with good agricultural potential and designated Agriculture, but not scheduled for sale within the next 15 year period, shall remain in public ownership, continue in an agricultural designation, and shall not be used for other purposes except through a plan amendment that re-designates such areas into another land use designation. Non-permanent, temporary uses of agricultural land (such as uses associated with permits) may be allowed. Longer term uses that do not prevent the use of the surrounding land for agricultural purposes (such as an access easement) may be authorized without a plan amendment with concurrence from the Division of Agriculture.
- State Farm Conservation Plans, which must be approved by the state, shall be provided as a condition of an agricultural sale and shall meet all other requirements of 11 AAC 67.
- In addition to the requirements of 11 AAC 67.180 or as part of an AS 38.05.035(e) decision, the impacts of agricultural activities on adjoining areas classified Habitat Land shall be evaluated in consultation with ADF&G during the decision process. Appropriate measures to minimize impacts of agriculture on adjacent habitat will be incorporated into the Preliminary/Final Finding and Decision or State Farm Conservation Plan. Agricultural sales adjoining lands designated Settlement shall evaluate the need for measures necessary to minimize adverse impacts to areas of land disposals and shall similarly incorporate such measures into the Preliminary/Final Finding and Decision or State Farm Conservation Plan. It is not intended that mitigation measures will always be required in these instances, but that the need for such measures be assessed and required where necessary.

² There may be instances where areas classified Settlement may also be appropriate, within specific areas of the site, for agricultural land disposals. The determination of whether a management unit is appropriate for the collocation of these two forms of disposal shall be made in the written decision process under AS 38.05.035(e). The decision shall specify which areas of the unit are appropriate for each type of disposal.

- Where agricultural land disposals occur within a floodplain; the State Farm Conservation Plan will identify locations where permanent structures are inappropriate due to potential for flooding. Agricultural land disposals should exclude floodways. Where neither floodways nor flood plains have been mapped, the best available information will be used to identify areas where flooding is likely to be a severe limitation on development.

D. Site Specific Requirements. Agricultural land sales within the planning area are subject to the following additional requirements:

- A riparian buffer of undisturbed vegetation of a minimum of 100' shall be retained in state ownership (or otherwise protected so that riparian functions are not impaired) adjacent to all anadromous waterbodies and high value resident fish streams. See the standards for riparian areas in the section 'Shorelands and Stream Corridors' in this Chapter.
- Areas of reported historic, archaeological, or paleontological sites should not be disturbed. Agricultural operations shall not be authorized within 300 feet of the boundaries of known sites unless OHA determines, in coordination with the Division of Agriculture, that agricultural activities can occur without significant impact to the cultural resource. OHA shall work with the Division of Agriculture to develop site-specific mitigation measures to protect known cultural sites while allowing agricultural operations. A buffer, or other management mechanism sufficient to protect the cultural resource, of 50' or greater shall be established around significant cultural resources identified by OHA as part of agency review.

E. Other Guidelines Affecting Agriculture. Other guidelines may affect agriculture. See other sections of this chapter.

Grazing

Goals

Food Security. Provide opportunities for grazing on state lands to support the local and regional production of livestock to support the citizens of Alaska in the future. Known as "food security", this goal recognizes the potential variability of food production and distribution in the future and indicates the state's intent to ensure a grazing land base.

Availability of State Land. Make units with existing forage and rangeland resources available for short-term and long-term grazing, consistent with the management intent of the units affected by grazing operations and with the following management guidelines.

Contribute to Economic Diversity. Contribute to Alaska's economy by protecting range lands that provide opportunity for the development of the livestock industry.

Management Guidelines

A. Use of State Land for Grazing. Grazing on state land may be allowed in areas with appropriate classifications (11 AAC 60.010) and if consistent with the management intent of the unit and with management guideline B, and if DNR determines in the authorization decision that the potential conflicts with other resource or land uses are acceptable or can be mitigated with stipulations (11 AAC 60.170).

B. Areas Not Appropriate for Grazing Leases. In addition to the restrictions on grazing provided by 11 AAC 60 grazing leases are not appropriate on lands classified Water Resources Land, Transportation Corridor Land, Heritage Resources Land, and lands classified Wildlife Habitat that are designated Harvest in the plan. Lands classified as Settlement Land may be appropriate for short term grazing only under 11 AAC 60.010(b).

A grazing lease should not be authorized within a floodway; however, a grazing lease may be authorized within a floodplain. Floodways should be identified for exclusion in the Grazing Management Plan using the best available information. A lease will not be authorized without an approved Grazing Management Plan.

C. Multiple Use. Lands used for grazing will be managed as multiple use lands to support a variety of public benefits, including fish and wildlife habitat and harvest, water quality maintenance, public recreation, and public access (11 AAC 60.130).

D. Access and Use. Public access across and public use of grazing lands may not be limited by persons holding grazing leases or permits unless approved as part of a grazing operations plan (11 AAC 60.130).

E. Operational Requirements. Grazing operations on state land are subject to the requirements of 11 AAC 60.

F. Grazing Operations Plans. Prior to initiating grazing activities on a grazing permit or lease, a person must have an approved grazing operations plan that will become part of the lease or permit. DNR will assist a lessee or permittee in preparing a plan in consultation with the Natural Resources Conservation Service or other agencies.

G. Cultural Resources. Impacts to reported historic, archaeological, or paleontological sites should be avoided or minimized. Division of Agriculture staff shall consult with the Office of History and Archeology to determine if agricultural activities can occur without significant impact to the cultural resource. OHA shall work with the Division of Agriculture to develop site-specific mitigation measures to protect known cultural sites while allowing agricultural operations.

H. Other Guidelines Affecting Grazing. The impacts of grazing on adjoining areas classified Habitat Land shall be evaluated in consultation with ADF&G during the decision process. Appropriate measures to minimize impacts of grazing on adjacent habitat will be

incorporated into the Preliminary/Final Finding and Grazing Management Plan. It is not intended that mitigation measures will always be required in these instances, but that the need for such measures be assessed and required where necessary. Other guidelines may affect grazing. See other sections of this chapter.