

GRAZING

Goals

Continue to provide opportunities for grazing on state lands on the Kenai Peninsula.

Make available parcels with existing forage and rangeland resources for short-term and long-term grazing.

Lands designated or co-designated Grazing will be managed in a manner that supports the sustained production of forage needed for raising livestock while providing for other public uses and minimizing impacts.

Encourage coordinated interagency range management planning and community-grazing pools to foster economic efficiency, protect the environment, and protect public access.

Background

The grazing regulations are proposed for revision including repealing sections that prohibit grazing leases on lands under certain classifications and restricting the terms of grazing leases on lands under other classifications. Under current regulations, even if a classification is changed to one that does not allow grazing, a grazing lease is not automatically terminated based on the new classification alone. However, if the management intent for a particular unit does not allow grazing, existing leases may not be renewed and new leases may not be issued. Also, failure to make substantial use of all or any part of the land, consistent with accepted range practices, shall constitute grounds for cancellation of the grazing lease (11 AAC 60.060).

Management Guidelines

A. Livestock Grazing. Authorizations for livestock grazing should be issued in areas that provide existing forage and range land.

B. Range Management. Fencing or other management practices will be considered as a component of range management and grazing plans. Fencing may be required to protect anadromous fish streams and riparian zones, and should not significantly impede public uses.

C. Length of Grazing Authorizations. DNR should consider long-term or short-term grazing authorizations on a case-by-case basis. In general, where grazing is likely to be an encumbrance on other likely future uses or authorizations, authorizations should be short term or not issued. These include:

- Land selected by the borough if the borough opposes assuming the encumbrance imposed by a grazing authorization;
- Land intended for sale during the term of the proposed grazing authorization or likely to receive applications for uses that generate greater revenues such as leases;

- Materials sites where extraction may reduce the size of the area to be grazed or would require additional costs for DOTPF in fencing or compensation to the leasee;
- Land proposed for additions to the State Park System;
- Lands with high-value brown bear habitat (allowing for revisiting this issue when the Brown Bear Conservation Strategy Plan is adopted); and
- Land where other higher value uses are likely to be authorized or that may occur that may result in a significant reduction of range if a grazing lease were issued resulting in compensation to the leasee.

In addition, short-term rather than long-term authorizations may be issued where environmental or other factors warrant a cautious approach. The purpose of a short-term authorization is to allow the evaluation of the impact of grazing activities prior to considering a long-term authorization.

D. Range Management Plans. For new large-scale leases with other significant resources, DNR should use a coordinated interagency planning process to develop range management plans if the process can be completed within a reasonable time frame. Broad agency and public participation in range management planning is encouraged. Interagency coordination may include shared management and funding responsibilities. Fox River Flats is an example of an area that has been addressed by a coordinated planning process for rangelands.

E. Long-term Leasing and Community Grazing Systems. DNR should encourage community grazing pools or associations. DNR's intent is to enable grazing operators to live close to their livestock and facilities resulting in more effective and efficient management of livestock and rangelands.

F. Brown Bears. Please refer to the *Brown Bear* guideline in the *Fish and Wildlife Habitat* section in this chapter for information about bear habitat. Grazing should be discouraged in important bear feeding, denning, and migration areas.

Resource Allocation Summary

There are several pending and issued grazing authorization within the planning area, particularly around Homer and on the Fox River Flats. The plan co-designates almost 15,000 acres Grazing and although the plan allows for grazing authorizations in a much larger area. The plan includes guidelines and management intent that provide opportunities for the continuation of this activity in the planning area while including guidelines that would mitigate impacts on other resources and uses.