

## GOALS, POLICIES AND MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES - AGRICULTURE

### GOALS

1. Agricultural Development: the development of an agricultural industry which contributes to the state and local economy without long-term subsidy.
2. Agricultural Land Base: the development and maintenance of the area's agricultural land base:
  - a. to maintain agricultural lands in agricultural production
  - b. to protect and develop land capable of production for domestic and export markets
  - c. to provide, in addition to large scale farm units, a supply of land in 40-80 acre parcels suitable for a variety of small-scale crop and livestock production
  - d. to manage high capability agricultural lands not presently designated for agricultural disposal in a manner which will not preclude future agricultural development
  - e. to provide roads, railroads, ports, and other transportation facilities to serve agricultural lands
3. Environmental Quality: adequate regulation of agricultural practices in areas where those practices may result in increased erosion, sedimentation, siltation or pollution which pose significant threats to wildlife or human activities:
  - a. to provide adequate buffers between the agricultural areas and areas of high fish and wildlife and recreation values
  - b. to provide adequate buffers between agricultural areas and other land uses which would conflict with agriculture
  - c. to minimize effects on water quality

## IMPLEMENTATION POLICIES

### 1. Disposal of Agricultural Lands

Agricultural development rights only will be sold on parcels of borough and state lands which are designated for agricultural use; other development rights shall be kept in public ownership.

### 2. Large-scale Commercial Agricultural Development

Large contiguous blocks (1,000 acres or larger) of lands designated for agricultural use shall be used primarily to support commercial scale farms (80 acres or larger).

The state and borough agree to designate the approximately 18,000 acres of high capability agricultural land in the Fish Creek Management Unit as the focus of a joint large scale agricultural development project to be initiated at a time mutually agreed. Due to topographic limitations, some of this acreage will not be suitable for large scale farming; however, it is the intention of the state and borough to dispose of commercial scale farms to the maximum extent feasible in this area.

### 3. Small Farms (40-80 acres)

The borough and state recognize the considerable demand for land for small farms and agree to provide additional land for that purpose.

State Lands: Most state agricultural lands in the sub-basin are in large contiguous blocks suitable for commercial scale agriculture. Small farms will be made available in portions of large scale agricultural projects where topography limits farm size, specifically within the Fish Creek Management Unit. To a lesser extent the state will dispose of small farms in the Kashwitna, Susitna Corridor, Ronald Lake, and Pear Lake Management Units.

Borough Lands: Most of the publically owned land suitable for small farms within the sub-basin is owned by the borough. This is land with good agricultural capability but in parcels too small or scattered for commercial scale agriculture.

Borough lands suitable for small farms are located in abundance in the Knik, Fish Creek and Iron Creek Management Units - and in smaller quantities in the Ronald Lake, and Pear Lake Management Units. The borough will accelerate agricultural disposals within those management units.

## Targets for Small Farm Disposals

State: Within the management units specified above the state will attempt to meet a small farm disposal target of 3,000 acres during the next 5 years.

Borough: Within the management units specified above, the borough will attempt to meet a small farm disposal target of 4,000 acres within the next 5 years.

Disposals of land for small farms shall be contingent on proximate or planned road access. Therefore targets for small farm disposals are contingent on economic feasibility of providing access. In general, providing road access to small farms will be feasible only when a road serves other resource development or recreation purposes.

### 4. Protection of Agricultural Potential

Public lands of high agricultural potential which are not designated for agricultural use are to remain in public ownership to protect future agricultural potential. These lands will not be developed for residential, commercial or other uses which would preclude future agricultural use. Uses such as habitat enhancement and forestry management will be permitted on these lands.

### 5. Timber Salvage on Agricultural Lands

All timber having high value for commercial and personal use shall be salvaged on borough and state lands to be cleared for agricultural development.

Management plans which include agricultural development projects should address the following items:

- a. the implementation techniques used to assure salvage;
- b. the time required for the local timber industry to accomplish salvage between the times of access development and clearing completion; and
- c. effect of the sale on the development of the forest industry.

### 6. Grazing

The following policies apply only to state lands in the Willow Sub-basin where grazing is a designated land use.

- a. All grazing lands will be managed as multiple use lands to support a variety of public benefits in addition to livestock production, including the following:
  - 1) fish and wildlife maintenance
  - 2) water quality maintenance
  - 3) public recreation
  - 4) timber management
  - 5) soil conservation
- b. Grazing lands will be managed to insure sustainable forage for domestic stock and wildlife.
- c. Public access across and public use of grazing lands may not be unreasonably limited by persons holding grazing leases or permits.

#### MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Agriculture guidelines listed below address the following issues:

- 1. Protection of the Hydrologic System and Associated Habitat
- 2. Public Access
- 3. Protection of Trails with Important Recreational or Historic Value
- 4. Farm Conservation Plans
- 5. Timber Salvage on Agricultural Lands
- 6. Grazing
- 7. Miscellaneous

#### 1. Protection of the Hydrologic System and Associated Habitat

- a. Stream buffers: See Policies and Management Guidelines; River and Stream Corridors, this chapter.
- b. Wetland buffers: See Policies and Management Guidelines; Wetlands, this chapter.
- c. Instream flows: See Policies and Management Guidelines; River and Stream Corridors, this chapter.
- d. Hydrologic monitoring: See Policies and Management Guidelines; River and Stream Corridors, this chapter.

2. Public Access

See Policies and Management Guidelines; Public Access, this chapter.

3. Trail Protection

See Policies and Management Guidelines; Recreation and Historic Trails, this chapter.

4. Farm Conservation Plans

Wherever possible, farm conservation plans should incorporate appropriate ecologically sound agricultural practices developed by the Soil Conservation Service and other agencies with relevant expertise. It is the responsibility of the Soil Conservation Subdistricts to act as liaisons between local farmers and agencies or institutions with agricultural expertise. State agencies with expertise potentially useful to Soil Conservation Subdistricts should make their resources known and available to Subdistrict officers.

5. Timber Salvage on Agricultural Lands

All timber having high value for commercial and personal use shall be salvaged on lands to be cleared for agricultural purposes. The following are examples of implementation techniques:

- a. salvage of forest products is specified at the time of disposal as part of the disposal contract
- b. the agricultural rights holder is allowed to select specified areas for non-salvage (windbreaks, headquarters site, etc.). The state or borough contracts the remainder and the agricultural rights holder is given the right of first refusal
- c. economic incentives are created for timber salvage. These incentives should, at a minimum, specify that the value of forest products on each parcel be added to the base land price with that amount not eligible for inclusion in the state loan program
- d. the useable forest products are sold and removed before sale of the agricultural rights.

Any method which insures product salvage may be implemented in a particular area. The choice will depend on the specific details of the sale. However, all of the techniques assume realistic scheduling of clearing and access development.

## 6. Grazing

The following management guidelines apply only to state lands in the Willow Sub-basin where grazing is a designated land use.

### a. 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, water quality degradation and other environmentally sensitive areas. These areas will be identified through DNR's range management plans (see e. below).

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

Note: Provisions of existing grazing leases and permits in the Hatcher Pass area and in other portions of the Willow Sub-basin 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 permits or leases issued under this provision should adhere to applicable management guidelines.

### b. Modification of Vegetation

No artificial modification of natural vegetation (e.g., clearing, crushing, seeding, fencing, burning, etc.) will be permitted without approval of DNR. Consultation with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) will precede approval of range modification.

### c. Stock-Predator Conflicts

When protection of stock necessitates destruction of predator species, e.g., bear, wolves, etc., a lessee or permittee must comply with ADF&G salvage regulations. Frequent (three or more occurrences annually) livestock-predator conflicts may be grounds for modification of a lessee's or permittee's operations plan (see f. below).

### d. Seasonal Limitation

To minimize competition between domestic stock and moose for browse, seasonal limitations should be placed on grazing. DNR, with the consultation of ADF&G, may establish spring and fall dates for the release and removal of stock on grazing lands. The seasonal limitations are intended to minimize stock utilization of browse by restricting grazing to the period when there is adequate protein available in grasses and other

non-moose browse species. Locations for which seasonal limitations will be in effect will be specified in DNR's range management plans and will be stipulated in grazing leases or permits for those locations.

e. Range Management Plans

Prior to the issuance of grazing leases or permits for grazing areas designated by the plan, DNR will develop range management plans (RMP). Plans shall be developed for the Kashwitna, Hatcher Pass, Moose Range, and Susitna Corridor management units. Plans shall be developed by the Division of Land and Water Management (DL&WM) in consultation with the Division of Agriculture, ADF&G and SCS. The provisions of range management plans, as well as these guidelines, will be the basis of stipulations to be included in grazing leases and permits in the Willow Sub-basin. Range management plans shall address, at a minimum, the following items:

- 1) Maximum Stocking Densities: The state shall use standard United States Department of Agriculture range management procedures to identify the abundance, distribution, annual productivity and seasonal availability of range vegetation to be utilized by proposed grazing stock. Maximum allowable stocking densities will be computed on the basis of discounted moose browse species and sustainable range production and condition.
- 2) Water Quality Protection: Range management plans will state how anadromous fish streams, other waterways and lakes are to be protected from adverse impacts of grazing. Fencing may be required to protect portions of streams. Specific watering sites, feeding stations, headquarter sites, or other methods may be required to minimize the adverse impacts of grazing.
- 3) Annual Grazing Schedule: Range management plans will establish, if necessary, spring and fall dates for release and removal of stock on grazing lands. To determine these dates, the necessary scientific research will be conducted to determine seasonal levels of protein in available forage.
- 4) Physical Resources Map: Range management plans will include a map which shows the location, acreages, and configurations of proposed lease and permit areas; proposed feed lot sites, stock watering sites, and supplemental feeding stations; farm headquarter sites; fences and other improvements required to implement these guidelines.

- 5) Environmental Monitoring: Range management plans will establish procedures to monitor the impacts of grazing on 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.
- 6) Access: Proposed roads, bridges, etc., necessary for grazing operations will be identified.

f. Grazing Operations Plan

Persons holding grazing permits or leases must have an approved grazing operations plan (GOP) prior to placing any livestock on state lands. A grazing operations plan will be approved by DNR only when it is in compliance with these guidelines and applicable range management plans. DNR will assist a lessee or permittee in plan preparation with the consultation of ADF&G and SCS. Minimum requirements of a grazing operations plan are as follows:

- 1) Cooperative agreement between the lessee and the Alaska Soil Conservation District or appropriate subdistrict.
- 2) A physical resource map identifying: (1) location, acreage, and configuration of the proposed lease or permit areas(s); (2) proposed feedlot sites, stock watering sites, and supplemental feeding stations; (3) farm headquarter site, outbuildings, fences, and other proposed improvements.
- 3) A record of the lessee's proposed management activities, including (1) range management practices considered essential or desirable; (2) livestock species to be stocked; (3) annual grazing schedule and (4) forage balance sheet.
- 4) Proposed stocking densities: Maximum stocking density will be based on DNR's range management plan for the area concerned. A minimum stocking density with a schedule for achieving it will also be established as part of each grazing operations plan to insure efficient use of state grazing lands.

g. Modification of Grazing Operations Plan

Modifications to grazing operations plans may be required if grazing activities are determined to impair water quality or soil stability or if sustainable forage for stock and wildlife cannot be maintained under an existing grazing operations plan. Determination that modification of a grazing operations

plan is necessary will be made by DNR with the consultation of DEC, ADF&G, and SCS. Range management plans for each grazing area will establish specific conditions under which grazing operations plans may be modified.

7. Miscellaneous

Individual farms are encouraged to promote ecological diversity and wildlife abundance by retaining vegetation suitable for wildlife food and cover in woodlots, hedgerows between fields, and along roadsides wherever possible. Where possible, woodlots should be situated to increase the effective size of stream and wetland buffers.

Lessees are encouraged to consider regulated public hunting as a potential tool for reducing crop damage by wildlife. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game will provide technical assistance to any agricultural leaseholder who wishes to permit regulated public hunting on agricultural lands.

Two publications are highly recommended to both public and private land developers for practices which protect and enhance wildlife resources:

- a. A Synthesis and Evaluation of Fish and Wildlife Resources Information for the Willow and Talkeetna Sub-basins. ADF&G, 1980.
- b. Guidelines for Wildlife Design in Residential Developments. ADF&G Habitat Protection Section, 1979.