

DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
BOARD OF AGRICULTURE & CONSERVATION

ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM AND ROLL CALL:

The regular meeting of the Board of Agriculture & Conservation (BAC) was held on 2/25/2025, in person & via Zoom/teleconference. Chair Jeff Vance called the meeting to order at 9:00 am.

A. ROLL CALL/ APPROVAL OF AGENDA & MINUTES OF PRECEDING MEETING

Rollcall Vote:

VOTE: 7 yes, 0 no, and 0 absent during Roll Call vote.

Board members present and establishing a quorum were:

- Jeffrey (Jeff) Vance, Chair (Zoom)
- John Anderson, Vice Chair (Zoom)
- Matt Bates, Board Member (Zoom)
- Tom Bergy (In Person)
- James (Jamie) Boring, Board Member (Zoom)
- Stuart (Stu) Davies, Board Member (Zoom)
- Adam Jenski, Board Member (In Person)

Staff in Attendance:

Bryan Scoresby, Director

Christy Kolvoord, Natural Resource Specialist III (ARLF Loan Officer, In person)

George Deaton, Accountant 3, DNR (Zoom)

Kevin Higgins, Attorney 5, Dept. of Law (Zoom)

Public Attendance: Danno Williams, Lori Williams, Tarn Coffee, Andrew Jensen

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

C. CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES-NONE

D. REPORTS/CORRESPONDENCE

i. Public Comment Session

Danno Williams – Frustrated with loan process and paperwork, says the ARLF program gives the Div of Ag. a bad name in the industry and hurts farmers.

E. NEW/OLD BUSINESS

Vote to Repeal

Section 11 AAC 39.191 - Overall maximum loan limit

In addition to the specific loan limits in 11 AAC 39.131 - 11 AAC 39.181, no loan will be made for any purpose if, when the amount of the loan is added to the outstanding balance of other loans made to the applicant under this chapter, the total would exceed \$1,000,000.

Section 11 AAC 39.201 - Application of loan limits

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The total outstanding loan balances under AS 03.10 and this chapter to a borrower may not exceed \$1,000,000. The limitation under this section does not apply to financing for the purchase of an asset of the fund.

11 AAC 39.201 Eff. 12/1/84, Register 92; am 10/27/2002, Register 164

Authority: AS 03.09.040, AS 03.10.020, AS 03.10.030, AS 03.10.050

Board Member Comments:

Stuart Davies- Do we have to vote on new loan limits or just repeal the regulation?

Director Scoresby – Just getting the regulation out of way so we can follow statutes.

Matt Bates – Expressed favor for repealing regulation and increasing the loan limit. Claims he would rather see smaller loans for more people instead of large multimillion-dollar loans. The more people we can help the better.

Adam Jenski- Doesn't support 3,000,000 loan increase as he's worried what would happen to ARLF funding. Wants to see smaller loans so all current applicants have a chance to receive funding. Why are we risking depleting the ARLF fund? It is foolish and would like to see more involvement instead of cutting things down.

Director Scoresby – legal process regs can go for 30 days then expire and repeal current regulation.

Stuart Davies - Already discussed loan limit before statute changed, didn't hear any negative opinions for loan limit increase.

Kevin Higgins– Statute says you can make loans with a total balance not exceeding 3 million previously was 1 million. What will remain is 3-million-dollar limit after voting to repeal. Meeting minutes sent to the department of law where it is verified and sent to lieutenant governor for endorsing. After this it is accepted for filing it proceeds to public comment for 30 days and is now here for adoption by the board to repeal. Nothing requires the board to accept loans up to 3 million dollars but allows the ability to issue larger loans.

Director Scoresby – One public comment was received in favor of regulation repeal.

Matt Bates – we don't want to limit ourselves to 1 or 2 loans by issuing million-dollar loans. However, I am in favor of repealing this regulation. The board needs to be responsible with how many dollars we give individuals.

- i. MOTION: To repeal 11 AAC 39.101 and 311 AAC 9.201
 - i. 1st – Jamie Boring

ii. 2nd – Stuart Davies

Chair Jeff Vance	Yes	No	
Vice Chair John Anderson	X		
Matthew (Matt) Bates, Board Member	X		
Thomas (Tom) Bergey, Board Member	X		
James (Jamie) Boring, Board Member	X		
Stuart (Stu) Davies, Board Member	X		
Adam Jenski, Board Member	X		

Quorum: ☒ Yes ☐ No

Motion ☒ Approved ☐ Denied

F. BOARDMEMBER COMMENTS

Andrew Jensen- Thank the board members for their service, we are aware of lack of funds in the ARLF balance, thanks for your action today.

Matt Bates – While we are in a board meeting, I'd like to hear what members have to say about the new Ag. Department.

Stuart Davies – I'm in favor of a new Dept. of Ag. with following conditions: consolidation including farm services, state agencies, land and water, state vet, EPA, and commerce. Also wants to see University extension and NRCS under the Dept. as well. Claims we are competing with UAF extension and should work together. Consolidation saves money and confusion, only one place to go for help. It was confusing 25 years ago and is still confusing now. Delta Junction meeting kind of sponsored by university but also state agencies. I'd like to see more farmers than bureaucrats at the meeting. Another thing I'd like to see is requirements of subdividing Ag. parcels to be dropped. Eliminate this to provide more existing land in smaller parcels. Right now, restrictions are severe, I would like to see 5-acre parcels as an option for subdivision in Ag. parcels. How will we pay for all of this? We place tariffs on Walmart, Kroger, and Safeway with a penny a pound for imported food. Give people the incentive to farm more and buy local. Repeal Jones Act and make Alaska a port of all the world, not just Seattle shipping. People will notice Alaskan farming instead of an oil patch on the north slope.

Matt Bates – I am a big supporter of the new Dept. of Ag. We don't have a seat at the governor's table or in the senate. DNR has too many hands in their pockets and Ag. is not a concern. We need a commissioner to give us a view of what we need so we can save on farmer input costs and transportation costs. We need barges to come in from everywhere instead of just Seattle. We don't need handouts, but a voice for farmers so they can afford to farm. Farmers would double their acreage if we could lower input costs by one half. 50,000 acres are overgrown in Delta alone. The market is here, villages are losing subsistence hunting, fishing, and need food. I Like the idea of tariffs on outside food coming in. Big supporter of having a seat at the table so our voice can be heard. A Commissioner can vocalize for farmers' needs.

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John Anderson – I'll make motion for unanimous consent to support governor's executive order creating Dept. of Agriculture.

Adam Jensi- I don't see how having another voice at the table will get us more money. We don't spend our money effectively as it is. We aren't investing in infrastructure. This started at a cost of \$76,000 and now it's close to \$2.2 million. I don't see more funding coming to ARLF by having a commissioner. We need the right politicians who actually support agriculture.

Matt Bates – We need boots on the ground not bureaucrats. Agriculture gets lost under the DNR title and we aren't getting representation. The current commissioner has too much going on to represent agriculture as well. We need infrastructure in place.

Jensi – We have a very powerful board, but we need more power, we want to distribute power to board instead of politicians which can be more effective. The board is a good voice for farmers. The board was blindsided by the CROP Act last year and wishes they would reach out to the board for advice.

Stuart Davies - We do need a department and are spinning our wheels right now. A commissioner can assist us with moving parcels out of the state's possession into farmers' hands. I would like to streamline a process for farmers to gain access to land. Farm roads are in poor condition. There are many restrictions on Ag. covenants and would like to see them removed.

Matt Bates – would like to build a home for his kids on his own farm but can't because of Ag. covenant restrictions. Doesn't want to have to seek permission before building his kids a home on his own property. Need some serious revisiting toward current restriction. Hard to keep future farmers involved with farming operations once they've left.

Tom Bergey – We need the governor's vision of what his department looks like. The board is aware of what we need, this hasn't been made public yet. I would be more comfortable if I was able to understand the governor's vision for the department. I know how difficult it is to have a voice in the legislature, and we need a seat at the governors' table for our current farmers. I would like to see the commissioner with a set of qualifications to the Department of Education. We need a qualified candidate. I've heard the board's vision, but what is the governors? Is it close to the boards? The media is covering marijuana under the umbrella of agriculture, however, there is more to this, and I could have missed it.

Andrew Jensen – Happy to speak. Cannabis is not part of the governor's vision. In the future we can dedicate a state veterinarian to the new Dept. We want people to come to the new department and can direct them from there. I would have liked to see another land sale since 2022 and

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having a new commissioner will help. Budget and legislative request are streamlined through a department each with their own priorities which a division doesn't directly have access to. Agriculture will have a stronger voice through its own department. We're not adding a layer of bureaucracy through the new department, but removing an old one, and giving the industry a direct voice which will help with items like adding a state veterinarian to the department.

Stuart Davies- Reminder that the board was helpful with the interview of the Director of Agriculture.

Matt Bates- The new commissioner of Ag. has board's approval and recommendation before going to governor for his approval, or similar process for this new position. A formal process and boards voice should be written into statute for Ag. commissioner position moving forward.

Jeff Vance – Its all about communication with where we are at and, where were going. Andrew Jensen's comments are very appreciated. This process may take longer than expected but it will be beneficial.

Stuart Davies – There is a motion on the floor

- i. MOTION: Support for the Governor's executive order creating The Department of Agriculture
- i. 1st – John Anderson
- ii. 2nd – Matt Bates

Chair Jeff Vance	Yes	No	
Vice Chair John Anderson	X		
Matthew (Matt) Bates, Board Member	X		
Thomas (Tom) Bergey, Board Member	X		
James (Jamie) Boring, Board Member	X		
Stuart (Stu) Davies, Board Member	X		
Adam Jensi, Board Member	X		

Quorum: ☒ Yes ☐ No

Motion ☒ Approved ☐ Denied

G. NEXT MEETING: [05/25/2025]

H. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn Stuart Davies

Second John Anderson

All in favor say "Ay". The ayes have it.

Adjourned [10:06]