

SETTLEMENT

1. GOALS

A. Private Land Use. Make available to present and future Alaskans suitable public land needed for the following private settlement purposes:

1. Year-round residences or community expansion. For this category of use, DNR will offer land that has road access and is suitable to meet the needs of growing communities. This category serves people whose principal place of residence — and usually work — is in the area of the disposal.

Where the state does have land suitable for this purpose disposal will be a high priority unless there are overriding public values. To address this important category of settlement the state will concentrate its efforts on assisting municipalities with their disposal programs under the provisions of AS 38.04.021.

2. Recreational use or seasonal residences. For this use, which is the most common use of land disposed of by the state, DNR will offer high quality sites with characteristics such as proximity to water, views, good hunting, or interesting topography. The state will be selective in land offered for this use.

Although the state also will offer a variety of lands for sale commensurate with demand, expenditures of time and money will be directed toward identifying high amenity disposals.

The state also will provide the opportunity for private construction of cabins on state-owned land under a remote cabin permit program. Under this program an individual can get a permit allowing use of five acres for construction of a cabin without gaining title to the land.

3. Year-round, relatively self-sufficient remote residences. For this use, DNR will attempt to provide opportunities for a small number of people who wish to pursue a remote, more or less self-sufficient lifestyle. Generally, the state will not offer tracts large enough for families to subsist on, but rather offer smaller parcels adjacent to public land that can be used for the gathering of firewood and houselogs and for hunting and fishing.

This category, although important, will not be a high priority in the disposal program because it requires low-density settlement and thereby

satisfies few people, and it is less in demand than the preceding two categories. Committing sufficient land to allow individuals to create a self-sufficient lifestyle in effect allocates a massive land area to a few people.

4. Settlement associated with natural resource development projects. The state will set a high priority on making land available for the development of new towns or the expansion of areas adjacent to such projects. In some cases this will require a decision by the state as to whether leasing lands for a campsite or temporary settlement is preferable to selling land for a townsite.

5. Industrial or commercial development. In order to stimulate or facilitate economic development, DNR will attempt to sell, lease or protect for future use suitable land for private, commercial and industrial use. Requirements for these uses are highly site-specific, and disposal decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis as demands arise.

B. Resource and Economic Impacts. Contribute positively to other uses of natural resources and minimize undesired impacts from land disposals.

C. Pricing. Receive fair market value for public land sold for private use. However, in the case of homesteads and homesites, allow land to be earned by personal investment of time and effort.

D. Fiscal Impacts. Minimize future fiscal costs to local or state government for services, wildfire management, and infrastructure requirements resulting from settlement of state lands.

E. Community and Social Impacts. Minimize undesired changes in the character of life among nearby communities or residents as a result of land disposal projects.

F. Coordination with Local Governments. Coordinate state land offering programs with similar programs of local governments to best achieve common objectives.

2. MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

A. Land Use Needs. Regional demand assessments for settlement lands will include estimates of land necessary for projected conversion to residential, commercial, industrial, public facility and recrea-

tional uses, based on projected population levels. The disposal program will give a high priority to ensuring the availability of an adequate supply of land to meet these needs, including an amount necessary for market choice.

The state also will make available land for investment beyond what is necessary for actual use. However, providing land for specific needs will be a higher priority.

B. Long-Term Program. The disposal program will be designed to make land available for at least twenty years to ensure that Alaskans in the future have the opportunity to purchase public land.

C. Price and Terms. The state will make land available to be earned by personal investment of time and effort in homesteads and homesites. This will continue to result in acquisition of those lands at less than fair market value. Aside from this, fair market value should be received for public land sold to private parties. This does not preclude offering generous payment terms.

D. Competition with the Private Market. The state will not seek to minimize competition with private land markets by changing or reducing its land offerings. The state, however, will not undercut the market with artificially low prices.

E. Protection and Management of Natural Resources. In its settlement program, the state will protect the economic potential of public lands with high value for oil and gas development, minerals, coal, forest products, public recreation, tourism, agriculture and the production of fish and wildlife resources, including lands especially important to the livelihood of local residents. Exceptions to this guideline may be made where land is needed for community expansion or other important purpose and no other suitable land is available.

When the state sells land in locations and amounts that have high potential for commercial agricultural use, only agricultural rights to that land should be sold. This policy is not intended to mean that all land with high agricultural potential will be designated for agricultural use. Some of these lands may be retained for forest management, public recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, or other public uses. However, if lands with high commercial agricultural potential are to be sold they generally should be sold for agricultural use rather than alternative uses such as settlement. An exception to this policy may be made where land is needed for community expansion or other important purpose and no other suitable land is available.

Most lands of high potential or value for mining,

commercial forestry, fish and wildlife habitat or public recreation, or lands where numerous active mining claims exist, will not be offered for sale for residential or recreational purposes. However, much of the settlement land offered by the Department also is valuable for public recreation or habitat, and some lands of high value for public recreation or habitat will continue to be offered.

F. Protection of Life and Property. The state will, by retention of public lands, discourage development in areas of flooding, unstable ground, significant avalanche risk, poor percolation for septic tanks and other hazards. The state will coordinate with local governments to achieve this.

Public lands within the surveyed 100-year floodplain should remain in public ownership except where a regulatory floodway and flood fringe have been identified through detailed hydrologic studies. When such studies have been done, public lands within the flood fringe may be offered for sale. Land offerings within the flood fringe should be for low density development — for example, private recreation cabins or agriculture — rather than dense residential subdivisions. DNR will provide available information about flood zones in land disposal brochures when a disposal is in a potential flood hazard area.

In drainages where the 100-year floodplain has not been surveyed, the best available information will be used to determine the flood hazard zone which should remain in public ownership. In areas where no alternative land is available for development, the Director of the Division of Land and Water Management may make exceptions to these floodplain guidelines.

Lands generally will be retained where slopes are predominantly north-facing and steeper than 25 percent. This will hold in public ownership many lands where permafrost is prevalent, where shadows prevail for four months of the year, and where the vegetation is predominantly black spruce. These sites are among the least appealing residential environments.

G. Protection and Management of Valuable Environmental Processes. The state will provide a publicly-owned open space system to preserve important fish and wildlife habitats and natural areas such as estuaries, shorelands, freshwater wetlands, riparian lands, watersheds, and surface and ground water recharge areas.

Wetlands with important hydrologic, habitat or recreational values and adjacent buffer strips will be retained for open space. Systems of publicly owned land will be designed to provide the

necessary linkage and continuity to protect or increase values for human uses and wildlife movements. Some places it may be necessary to retain large areas to provide adequate terrestrial habitat.

H. Protection and Enhancement of Scenic Features. The state generally will retain in public ownership unique natural features such as cliffs, bluffs and waterfalls, as well as foreground open space for panoramic vistas. Public access to such amenities also will be preserved.

Land disposal offerings along scenic roads popular for sightseeing will be selected and designed to minimize their impacts on scenic vistas. Unusual landforms or scenic features will be retained in state ownership for enjoyment and use by the public. Such lands include islands in lakes or rivers unless land disposals can be designed to prevent negative effects on the scenic and recreational values of the area.

I. Protection and Enhancement of Recreational, Educational and Cultural Opportunities. The state will retain areas for outdoor recreation, trails, campsites, boat launches, fairgrounds, historic sites, areas for scientific study, etc. Areas for both intensive and dispersed use will be preserved.

J. Providing Public Land for Communities. The state will reserve green belts, public-use corridors, personal-use wood lots, buffer areas, commons, building setbacks, and other open spaces to help create a desirable land use pattern in developing areas.

K. Reservation of Land for Future Urban Development. Public lands will be retained as a transitional tool to help shape community development by precluding premature private development on sites intended for schools, gravel pits, roads, parks, sewer treatment plants, etc.

L. Cost of Public Services. In accordance with AS 38.04.010, the Department will attempt to guide year-round settlement to areas where services exist or can be provided with reasonable efficiency. State land that is located beyond the range of existing schools and other necessary public services, or that is located where development of sources of employment is improbable, may be made available for seasonal recreation purposes or for low density settlement with sufficient separation between residences so that public services will not be necessary or expected. Wildfire management costs resulting from settlement will be considered and minimized to the extent feasible.

DNR will set a high priority on seeking funding to implement the provisions of AS 38.04.021 to assist

municipalities in their disposal programs with the aim of making land available in and around established communities.

DNR will seek the assistance of and cooperate with the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT/PF) in evaluating the impacts of proposed disposals on the costs of extending, improving and maintaining transportation facilities.

M. Provision of Access. DNR will comply with the capital improvement provisions of local government subdivision ordinances. Where no subdivision ordinance is in effect, DNR will ensure the existence of actual physical access (by road, rail, air or water) to each new state subdivision.

N. Local Plans. DNR will comply with provisions of local comprehensive plans regarding the pace, location and density of land development, except to the extent that local requirements are inconsistent with a major overriding state interest.

O. Personal Use of Nearby Resources. One of the considerations in deciding the location, size and design of land disposal projects will be the nearby supply for personal use of resources such as firewood, houselogs and fish and wildlife. Where it is anticipated that land recipients will want to use wood resources, some blocks of land nearby may be retained in public ownership to provide some firewood and/or houselogs.

In general, in remote areas the Department will cluster disposal offerings. This will provide some nearby public land for gathering of firewood and houselogs and for hunting and fishing and will keep open options for other uses of these lands when access develops.

P. Design Review Boards. A local design review board will be established when, in the opinion of the Director of the Division of Land and Water Management, it would be a constructive way to involve persons affected by a disposal project. A design review board will consist of a maximum of eight citizens and local government officials appointed by an appropriate local government official. Where local government does not exist or is unwilling to appoint such a board, DNR will make the appointments if sufficient interest exists.

The design review board will participate in and review all stages of design, including location, design of parcel size, transportation routes, open space, etc. The board will make recommendations to the Director of the Division of Land and Water Management at appropriate points in the design process.

Q. Cumulative Effects. Chances for inadvertent and undesired cumulative effects of land offerings and disposals will be minimized by a planning process

that examines the impacts of various regionwide comprehensive land use alternatives. DNR's state-wide and area planning program attempts to do this and will be used to establish and revise regional land offering and disposal policies for state lands (see Guideline V below).

R. Subdivision Design. Subdivisions will be designed to preserve and enhance the quality of the natural setting and the recreational opportunities that make an area attractive to potential buyers.

The following slope and lot size standards should generally be applied in state subdivisions (on-site waste disposal assumed):

Percent Average Slope	Minimum Lot Size
0-12	1 acre
13-20	4 acres
21-30	10 acres
30	No development

Other procedures and standards for subdivisions design will be as set forth in "Design of Residential and Recreational Subdivisions," in the Division of Land and Water Management's Policy and Procedures Manual.

S. Easements. Easements will be used as one means to acquire rights through privately owned lands needed for public use.

Easements generally will **not** be used as a means of retaining a public interest in lands within a subdivision. Exceptions to this policy may be made where the interest protected is very limited such as for local pedestrian access that is not part of an integrated neighborhood or community trail system. This policy will minimize confusion between public use rights and private ownership rights.

T. Owner Staking. In areas where severe land use conflicts and inefficient use of resources are expected to result from owner staking, DNR will offer homestead parcels with prestaked or pre-designated boundaries.

U. Staking Outside Designated Areas. It is the responsibility of entrants to establish the location of their parcels accurately. Title will not be granted to parcels located outside the boundaries of designated settlement areas. Entrants who incorrectly locate parcels outside designated areas may be given a second opportunity to stake within the proper area.

V. Statewide Land Disposal Plan. In partial fulfillment of the provisions of AS 38.04.020, the Department will prepare annually a statewide land

offering and disposal plan. This plan will incorporate existing area and management plans and describe the Department's intentions for land offerings in each region of the state. These will be based on the Department's settlement and land management policies and on information on land suitability and competing land use values, supply, demand and need for disposal, effects of disposal on other resources and resource uses, transportation systems, available funds and other factors of regional or statewide concern.

W. Coordination with Local Governments. State land offering programs should be coordinated with similar programs of local government to best achieve common objectives. To this end, DNR proposes the annual development of a joint disposal plan with each municipality (for both state and municipal lands). This plan would be based on consideration of the municipality's road extension priorities and its plans for levels of services in different areas—in short, on local fiscal planning. If a municipality has a comprehensive land use plan, that plan will provide direction for disposal priorities. The disposal plan should demonstrate what community objectives are being met, and how the requested capital improvement funds would support municipality-wide priorities for roads and service extensions to benefit current and future residents. The disposal plan should demonstrate how increased access and development would promote use of other resources such as agriculture, mining, forestry and recreation, and thus provide state as well as regional benefits.

Joint municipal and state disposal plans as described here would constitute sections of the statewide disposal plan discussed above. The Susitna Area Plan provides the means of coordinating borough and state disposal planning in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

X. Remote Cabin Permit Program

1. Remote cabin permits can be offered only in management units where their use has been allowed by this area plan and where a subsequent more detailed interagency planning process decides that permits are in fact appropriate.
2. A unit may be eligible for remote cabin permits if:
 - a. Access by road or railroad is not likely for at least ten years; and,
 - b. Settlement disposal of land in the local area is not desirable or practical at this time because of public resource values, the area's remoteness or the expense of surveying; or,

- c. In a settlement area, after disposal offerings are completed or on parcels of land unusable for disposal because they are too small or scattered or because of some other reason.
3. Remote cabins will be allowed only in locations, numbers and under management guidelines that result in no significant conflicts with other anticipated forms of resource use and management (e.g., wildlife habitat, forestry, agriculture, public recreation and mining).
 4. To avoid significant conflicts, specific guidelines for remote cabin permits will be set for each unit or portion of a unit opened. In every instance these guidelines will include the number of permits to be offered. In addition, consideration should be given to setting guidelines for the allowed density of cabin sites (e.g., number of cabins on a lake, number of cabins per township), location criteria (e.g., prohibited areas), limitations on the number or size of buildings, allowed or prohibited forms of access, and any other considerations appropriate to the area.
 5. These guidelines and the decision whether remote cabin permits will be offered in a management unit will be decided by an interagency planning team, with public participation. Meetings of the planning team for this purpose will be convened and chaired by the South central Regional Office of the Division of Land and Water Management. If a management plan is prepared for the unit, these guidelines and decisions instead should be prepared as part of the plan.
 6. The stream corridor, trail corridor, lake shore and wetlands management guidelines for land disposal projects also apply to remote cabin permits.
 7. Remote cabin permits are not intended to be converted to fee simple disposals of land that otherwise would be retained in state ownership. Guidelines for remote cabins in each area will be designed to avoid creating future pressures for actual disposal (e.g. by setting appropriate number and density limitations).
 8. The remote cabin permit program will be paced to ensure that some opportunities to acquire permits are available in the Susitna Area Plan region for at least 20 years. The numbers of areas opened and permits available will be set to achieve this.
 9. New rights-of-way to remote cabin permit sites generally will not be allowed.

10. Unless closed for other reasons than the presence of permitted remote cabins, remote cabin permit areas will remain open to mineral entry.

Y. Other Guidelines Affecting Settlement. A number of other guidelines may affect settlement. For details of these guidelines, see the following sections of this Chapter:

Agriculture
Fish and Wildlife Habitat
Forestry
Recreation
Subsurface Resources and Materials
Transportation
Lakeshore Management
Public Access
Stream Corridors
Trail Management
Wetlands Management
Resource Management and Borough Land Bank

3. LAND ALLOCATION SUMMARY

A. Supply of Settlement Lands. The Susitna Basin, unlike some regions of the state, has a large amount of undeveloped land with settlement potential. Much of this land is near roads and is privately owned or owned by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. There are approximately 300,000 acres of non-native private lands in the Susitna area, a substantial portion of which is currently road accessible, yet undeveloped. (This includes approximately 70,000 acres of land sold by the state since 1979.) There are approximately 360,000 acres of native lands physically suited for settlement, much of which is near roads. In addition, the majority of the borough's approximately 350,000 acres has good settlement potential; much of this land, also, is near roads.

Approximately 5%, or 700,000 acres, of the 15,000,000 acres of federal and state land in the planning area is physically suited for settlement (i.e., it is land that is adequately drained, not too steep, etc.). Nearly all of these 700,000 acres are state owned. However, less than 10% of this land is within 2 miles of a road or railroad. An additional 25% has access via fly-in lakes or boatable streams. The remaining 65% of the net acreage of state land suitable for settlement is located in areas that generally are considered too remote to allow disposal without access improvements.

B.State and Borough Lands Allocated to Settlement. A total area of approximately 602,000 acres is allocated to settlement in the plan. Of this total, defined as the **gross** area allocated to settlement, it is estimated that approximately 110,000 acres of state land and 7,000 acres of borough land actually will be sold or otherwise transferred to private ownership through various disposal programs. This estimated level of actual disposals, called the estimated **net** disposal offering, is lower than the gross area allocated to settlement as a result of the retention of land within disposal boundaries. Lands are retained within these areas either because they have low physical capability for settlement or because they provide public rights-of-way, stream buffers, woodlots, etc. Most state land disposals will be used, at least in the near term, for recreational, seasonal or investment purposes. The net acreage figure should be considered a preliminary estimate prior to more detailed evaluations of site characteristics and the decision regarding the type of disposal to be offered at each settlement area. These decisions will occur with further agency and public review through the department's disposal process.

Tables 1 and 2 on the following pages present figures on the gross and estimated net acreage designated for settlement on state and on borough lands in each of the area's 12 subregions. While these allocations reflect the application of all the settlement goals listed on the preceding pages, the plan sets highest priority on three goals: 1) making settlement land available where necessary for community expansion, 2) making land available for resource development, and 3) offering accessible, high amenity lands where demand for recreational/seasonal settlement is high.

The first goal is achieved largely by relying on the abundant existing supply of private lands in areas where communities are located. The state owns very little land within or adjacent to existing communities. Where the state does own land in or near communities, a high priority will be placed on offering the land for disposal or using it for community purposes such as schools, airfields, etc. Borough lands in areas adjacent to communities are generally designated "borough land bank" — a category which maintains the option to sell these areas in the future while retaining the lands in borough ownership in the near term.

The state will be in a good position to meet future needs for settlement lands associated with resource development, simply because the state owns large tracts of land in remote areas where future projects might occur. Where there is a near term possibility

of major resource development, for example the development of coal reserves in Beluga, the plan designates specific areas to support workcamps or townsites. In other areas where there is some future possibility of resource development but the exact locations are not yet known, for example development of mineral resources in the Talkeetna Mountains, the plan is flexible enough to accommodate these possible settlement land needs.

The last goal, provision of accessible high amenity land for recreational/seasonal settlement, is met by allocating new lands for settlement and relying on existing private lands and the unsold portions of past state offerings. Because of the location of state lands relative to employment opportunities, most disposal lands will be used for recreational/seasonal or investment purposes, at least in the near term. New land designated for future disposals for this type of use is concentrated in the Petersville Road, Glenn Highway, Lake Louise, South Parks Highway and Susitna Lowlands subregions. In these subregions state land is relatively accessible. Land offerings in the more remote subregions generally also will provide some high amenity areas for recreational/seasonal use. The relative quality of these areas is expected to rise as access improves over the twenty year life of the plan. Borough land, much of which has very high quality for recreational/seasonal settlement, generally will be designated "borough land bank." An exception is borough land surrounding Larson Lake and Amber Lake which is designated for settlement and which the borough hopes to offer for sale after roads are constructed into the areas.

Regarding the location of sales, overall the plan strives to concentrate settlement areas. To the extent state lands are available, sales are concentrated in the vicinity of existing settlement areas, for example, near Trapper Creek and Talkeetna. Concentrating sales provides greater efficiency in the provision of public services and facilities and allows retention of blocks of public land for other uses (e.g., forestry, mining, public recreation and habitat protection). However, to reduce the impacts of disposals on existing rural residents, substantial amounts of land within and near disposals will be retained in public ownership to protect public access, water quality and habitat and to provide areas for public recreation and woodlots.

TABLE 1**ACREAGE IDENTIFIED FOR SETTLEMENT ON STATE LANDS**

(includes agricultural homesteads and spring '85 offerings)

SUBREGION AND TYPE OF OFFERING *	GROSS AREA (ACRES)	NET AREA (ACRES)
North Parks Hwy New Offerings	22,000	2,610
Reofferings	-----	-----
South Parks Hwy New Offerings	38,020	10,330
Reofferings	6,400	-----
Petersville Road New Offerings	41,000	9,490
Reofferings	29,790	1,570
Sunflower Basin New Offerings	62,300	6,620
Reofferings	26,130	5,590
Susitna Lowlands New Offerings	47,630	13,775
Reofferings	165,420	29,970
Beluga New Offerings	5,440	1,400
Reofferings	-----	-----
Mt. Susitna New Offerings	27,650	7,430
Reofferings	37,210	4,800
Alaska Range New Offerings	16,320	3,330
Reofferings	-----	-----
Lake Louise New Offerings	5,125	1,125
Reofferings	46,080	4,600
Glenn Hwy. New Offerings	25,230	5,750
Reofferings	-----	-----
TOTALS		
New Offerings	290,715	61,860
Reofferings	311,030	46,530
GRAND TOTALS	601,745	108,390

In addition to land disposal, the state will meet demand for recreational/seasonal settlement through opening portions of the Susitna area to construction of privately owned cabins under the remote cabin permit program. Under this program, individuals can get a permit allowing use of five acres for construction of a cabin without gaining title to the land. The permits are for at least 25 years. Finally, the state will institute a system of public use cabins on appropriate public lands. Such a system will provide the public with an inexpensive recreational cabin experience and will provide the public an alternative to buying land and building a cabin.

TABLE 2**ACREAGE IDENTIFIED FOR SETTLEMENT ON BOROUGH LANDS**

SUBREGION AND TYPE OF OFFERING	GROSS AREA (ACRES)	NET AREA (ACRES)
South Parks Hwy New Offerings	8,000	1,870
Petersville Road New Offerings	9,030	3,630
Glenn Hwy New Offerings	1,550	470
TOTALS	18,580	5,970

*Acres shown as reofferings are planned land sales within the boundaries of areas previously offered under the remote parcel program. These areas will be offered primarily as homesteads. No figures on land available over-the-counter from past subdivisions are shown. It is estimated that approximately, 8,000 acres in over 1,400 unsold, subdivided parcels are available over-the-counter in the Susitna area.