

# SETTLEMENT

## Goals

**Private Land Use.** Make available to present and future Alaskans suitable public land needed for private settlement purposes. DNR can identify and offer lands that have characteristics which make them suitable for year-round residence, seasonal residence, or self-sufficient remote residence, but once the land is sold the owner must decide how to use the land. DNR can not guarantee that, for instance, land sold to satisfy the demand for seasonal residences will not be used for permanent residences. Nor can DNR assure that future land owners will not demand public services and improvements such as schools. DNR is trying to satisfy five categories in the Copper River Basin.

1. Year-round residences or community expansion. DNR will offer accessible land that is suitable to meet the needs of growing communities. This category serves people whose principal place of residence--and usually work--is or will be in the area of the disposal. The state owns little land in or near communities. Where the state does have land suitable for this purpose, disposal will be a high priority unless there are overriding public values.
2. Recreational use or seasonal residences. This category is the most common use of land disposed of by the state. DNR will, where feasible, avoid poor quality sites, such as north facing slopes, and offer quality sites with characteristics such as proximity to water, views, good hunting, or interesting topography. Because there is a limited supply of state land with characteristics that make it highly desirable, the state will have to offer some lands that do not have exceptional amenity values to meet the demand for recreational and seasonal use.

The state will also offer opportunities for short term private use of state-owned cabins through the state's remote cabin program.

3. Year-round, relatively self-sufficient remote residences. DNR will provide opportunities for a few 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 will offer smaller parcels adjacent to public land on which the public can gather firewood and houselogs and hunt and fish.

This category, although important, will not be a high priority in the disposal program because it is expensive (due to survey costs) and requires a commitment of large amounts of public land to satisfy relatively few people; and it is less in demand than the preceding two categories.

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 existing communities adjacent to major resource development projects. In some cases, the state must decide if leasing lands for a campsite or temporary settlement is preferable to selling land for a townsite.
5. Industrial or commercial development. To stimulate or facilitate economic development, DNR will 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 case by case as demands arise.

**Resource and Economic Impacts.** Contribute positively to other uses of natural resources and minimize the undesired impacts of land offerings on opportunities for resource use.

**Land Prices.** Title to lands offered in the homestead and homesite programs may be acquired by residency and construction thereon, as defined by appropriate statutes. Other public lands offered for private ownership under the general land disposal program will be sold for current, fair market value, subject but not limited to the exceptions noted in AS 38.05.055 and 38.05.057.

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

**Community and Social Impacts.** Minimize undesired changes in the character of life among nearby communities or residents caused by land disposal projects while considering the needs and demands of all state residents.

**Coordination With Local Governments.** Coordinate state land offering programs with similar programs of local governments to best achieve common objectives. Consider availability of land in private ownership when determining the amount, type, and location of state land offerings.

## **Management Guidelines**

### **A. Planning and Coordination**

1. Long-term Program. The disposal program will be designed to make land available for at least 20 years to ensure that Alaskans have the opportunity to purchase public land in the future. The pacing of land disposals will be controlled through the statewide disposal plan.
2. Competition. Although the state will coordinate its offerings with those of other landowners, it may compete with the private sector or local governments if necessary to satisfy demand, provide market choice, or moderate prices.
3. 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. No local governments exist in the Copper River Basin at this time.
4. Design Review Boards. In addition to holding public meetings, 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 five 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 is advisory and will participate in and review all stages of design, including location, design of parcel size, transportation routes, and open space. The board will make recommendations to the Director of the Division of Land and Water Management at appropriate times during the design process.

5. Coordination with Local Governments. If any local governments are formed in the planning area, state land offering programs should be coordinated with similar programs of local government to best achieve common objectives. To this end, DNR would develop a joint disposal plan with any municipality (for state and municipal lands). This plan would consider the municipality's fiscal planning for road extension priorities and its plans for levels of services in different areas. 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 would be 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 will promote use of other resources such as agriculture, mining, forestry and recreation, and thus provide statewide as well as regional benefits.
6. Pacing. Due to concerns about impacts on community lifestyles or resources, the following land offerings should be phased over a number of years:

Tonsina Plateau (MU 17)  
Fireweed Mountain (MU 24)  
Paxson - Meiers Lake (MU 27)

#### **B. Types of Offerings**

1. 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 predesignated boundaries. This commonly will occur in areas on or near the road system or existing communities.
2. Staking Outside Designated Project Areas. Entrants are responsible for establishing the location of their parcels accurately. Title will not be granted to parcels located outside the boundaries of project areas. Entrants who incorrectly locate parcels outside designated areas may be given a second opportunity to stake within the proper area.
3. Isolated Parcels of State Land. The state has acquired--and will continue to acquire--isolated parcels of land through foreclosure, escheat, and other methods. The following guidelines apply to management and possible disposal of these parcels.
  - In or Near Existing Communities. If the parcel is in or immediately adjacent to an existing community or past state land offering, the parcel can be offered for settlement unless it is appropriate as a site(s) for schools, gravel pits, roads, parks, sewer treatment plants, or other public facilities.
  - Parcels Near Other State Land. If the parcel adjoins or is surrounded by other state land, it should be managed according to the management intent and guidelines applicable to the adjacent lands.
  - Parcels Not Near Other State Land. Parcels, such as mining claims acquired by foreclosure in the middle of a federal conservation system unit, should be considered for sale or exchange to the adjacent land owner.

4. Agricultural Sales. Designated agricultural areas can be offered under the settlement programs (for example, nonagricultural homesteads or subdivisions) if found unsuitable for agriculture. See page 2-3.

### C. Protection, Management, and Enhancement of Other Resources

1. Protection of Life and Property. The state will, by retention of public lands and coordination with local governments, discourage development in areas of flooding, unstable ground, significant avalanche risk, and other hazards.

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 conducted, public lands within the flood fringe may be offered for sale. Land offerings within the flood fringe should be for low density development such as 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 that should remain in public ownership.

2. 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 shorelands, freshwater wetlands, riparian lands, watersheds, and surface and ground water recharge areas. (See policies on these subjects for details.)

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. In some places, large areas may be retained to provide adequate terrestrial habitat.

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

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

4. Protection and Enhancement of Recreational, Educational, and Cultural Opportunities. Project the need for and retain appropriate areas for outdoor recreation, trails, campsites, boat launches, historic sites, and areas for scientific study. Areas for intensive and dispersed use will be preserved.

### D. Design

1. Provision of Public Land for Communities. Project the need for and retain appropriate greenbelts, public-use corridors, personal-use wood lots, buffer

areas, commons, building setbacks, sites for schools, gravel pits, roads, parks, and other public facilities such as sewer treatment plants and health clinics, as well as other open spaces to help create a desirable land use pattern in developing areas.

2. Cost of Public Services. In accordance with AS 38.04.010, DNR 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 or for low density settlement with sufficient separation between residences so that public services will not be necessary or expected. Wildfire management costs that result from settlement will be considered and minimized to the extent feasible.
3. Provision of Access. The State will ensure that legal, practical public access routes (roads, trails, or other options most appropriate to the particular situation) are identified and reserved within land offerings. Field assessment will be used, and where appropriate, road grade profiles prepared, to ensure that access routes are feasible.

Section line or other easements will not be relied on for access without field inspection of the practicality of such routes. Identified access routes will be described in the land offering brochure. Where needed to reduce the likelihood of conflicts with existing private owners, DNR may brush or flag public access routes to land offering projects.

DNR will comply with the applicable provisions of local government subdivision ordinances, including capital improvements. Where no subdivision ordinance is in effect, DNR will ensure actual physical access is available or can be developed (road, air, or water) to each new state subdivision project. The department will evaluate the need to construct new access to a subdivision case by case.

4. 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 of resources such as firewood and houselogs and the expected demand from people who will own the parcels. Where it is anticipated that land recipients will want to use timber resources, nearby wood lots may be retained instead of selling individual parcels large enough to meet the personal use demands of the owner. This would provide some nearby public land on which firewood and houselogs can be gathered while keeping open options for other uses of those lands when access develops or new demands are identified.
5. 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, assuming that the parcels have been reviewed and approved as required by Department of Environmental Conservation regulations:

<u>Percent Average Slope</u>	<u>Minimum Lot Size</u>
0-12	1 acre
13-20	4 acres
21-30	10 acres
greater than 30	No development

Other procedures and standards for subdivision 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.

6. **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 to retain a public interest in lands within a subdivision. Instead, DNR will generally retain such lands in public ownership. 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 and private ownership rights.

**E. Other Guidelines Affecting Settlement.** Several other guidelines may affect settlement. See the following sections of this chapter:

- Agriculture
- Fish and wildlife habitat
- Forestry
- Materials
- Recreation, cultural, and scenic resources
- Subsurface resources
- Transportation
- Lakeshore management
- Public access
- Stream corridors and instream flow
- Trail management
- Wetlands management

## **Land Allocation Summary**

The Copper River Plan will determine what state land will be offered for private ownership during the next 20 years. The amount, type, and location of land offerings are determined by balancing demand for land in the region and the social, fiscal, economic, and environmental impacts of land offerings. A high priority of the disposal program will be to ensure the availability of an adequate supply of land to meet these needs, including an amount necessary for market choice.

Under this plan DNR can offer approximately 18,000 acres of land through the settlement and agricultural programs. The areas to be proposed for land offerings meet these criteria:

1. The land is relatively good quality.
2. The land is relatively accessible.
3. The land is state owned or is land the state is likely to own.
4. Conflicts with wildlife and recreation are less than in other areas that are suitable for settlement in the basin. 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, because so much of the state's

land has high value for habitat and recreation, it is inevitable that some of these lands will continue to be offered.

5. The public has expressed some support for land offerings in that area.

The areas which best meet these criteria are listed below.

<u>Settlement Areas</u>	<u>Potential Net Acres</u>
Glenn Highway - scattered parcels	250
Glennallen - odd tracts	500
Tonsina Plateau	2,000
Tonsina North (mixed agricultural - nonagricultural)	2,000
Tolsona Ridge - Ridgeview	2,500
Meiers Lake - Paxson area	400
Squirrel Creek	500
Fireweed Mountain II (500 acres delayed until after 1996)	900
Crosswind Lake - south and east	250
North of Nelchina River	500
Tielkel Block - Richardson Highway	500
Klutina Lake Area (depends on land ownership)	500
Northwest of Gulkana Airport	200
Reofferings	<u>1,000</u>
<b>Total Nonagricultural Projects</b>	<b>12,000</b>

A few additional areas that can be considered for land offerings (in lieu of acreage from other areas) are listed below. These areas are under dual selections by the state and Native corporations. If they are eventually transferred into state ownership, they could be offered for settlement.

Edgerton Highway	1,000 acres
Klutina South area larger block (SE. of Copper Center) - mixed agricultural/nonagricultural	500 - 1,000 acres
Mankomen Lake	500 acres

Agricultural land offerings are described on page 2-8. Total agricultural offerings proposed are 6,000 acres. Total land offerings, including agricultural offerings, are 18,000 acres. The acreages on any given area may be adjusted up or down based on the amount of land determined suitable for offering during the land disposal planning process. The total acres offered in the basin under settlement and agricultural programs will not exceed 18,000 acres.