

Livestock grazing on department of fish and wildlife lands.

All persons wishing to apply for a grazing permit should contact the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 600 North Capitol Way, Olympia, Washington 98501-1091.

(1) The director is authorized to enter into grazing permits when the director determines that a grazing permit will be consistent with the desired ecological condition for those lands or the department's strategic plan. Except for temporary permits, or permits that are being renewed or renegotiated with existing permittees, grazing permits shall first be submitted to the commission, which may review the permit to ensure it conforms with commission policy. If, within thirty days, the commission has not disapproved the permit, the director shall be deemed authorized to enter into that permit.

(2) The director shall negotiate grazing permits with potential grazing operators to ensure the highest benefits to fish and wildlife. The director may advertise and sell a permit to use department lands for grazing at public auction to the highest bidder. The director is authorized to reject any and all bids if it is determined to be in the best interest of the fish and wildlife to do so.

(3) The term of each grazing permit shall be no greater than five years. When an existing permit expires or is about to expire, the director may renew the permit for up to another five years, renegotiate the grazing permit with the existing permittee, negotiate a new permit with a new grazing operator, or sell the permit at public auction to the highest bidder. The director is authorized to reject any and all bids if it is determined to be in the best interest of the fish and wildlife to do so. The director may grant a term longer than five years only with the prior approval of the commission.

(4) A temporary permit may be granted by the director to satisfy short-term needs where benefits to wildlife management programs and the public interest can be demonstrated. The term of a temporary permit shall not exceed one year and no fee need be charged.

(5) Except for temporary permits lasting less than two weeks, each grazing permit proposal shall be accompanied by a domestic livestock grazing management plan that includes a description of ecological impacts, desired ecological condition, fish and wildlife benefits, a monitoring plan, and an evaluation schedule for lands that will be grazed by livestock. The department shall inspect the site of a grazing permit no less than two times each year. The director shall retain the right to alter any provision of the plan as required to benefit fish or wildlife management, public hunting and fishing, or other recreational uses.

(6) The director may cancel a permit (a) for noncompliance with the terms and conditions of the permit, or (b) if the area described in the permit is included in a land use plan determined by the agency to be a higher and better use, or (c) if the property is sold or conveyed, or (d) if damage to wildlife or wildlife habitat occurs.

(7) All lands covered by any grazing permit agreement shall at all times be open to public hunting, fishing and other wildlife recreational uses unless such lands have been closed by action of the commission or emergency order of the director.