



April 9, 2026

The Honorable Cathy Giessel
Chair, Senate Resources Committee
Alaska State Capitol, Room 121
Juneau, AK 99801

Chair Giessel:

This letter provides responses to questions and requests for information from the hearing regarding SB 208, Agricultural Land Leases, on April 1, 2026. These questions included how agricultural land is classified, and information on where agricultural land is located.

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources, through the Division of Mining, Land and Water (DMLW), classifies state land for agricultural use under AS 38.04.065 through a statutory planning process that governs both the development and maintenance of regional area plans. In developing an area plan, DMLW conducts comprehensive resource inventories and evaluates soil capability, topography, hydrology, vegetation, existing authorizations, and access conditions to determine appropriate land-use designations and management intent. This process includes internal consultation with relevant DNR divisions, such as Agriculture, Forestry, and other resource programs, and coordination with other state agencies such as the Alaska Departments of Fish and Game, Transportation, Environmental Conservation, and Commerce, Community, and Economic Development. Municipal governments, Tribal entities, user groups, and the general public also participate through scoping and public comment opportunities. Draft plans undergo formal public notice and comment in accordance with AS 38.04, 38.05.945, and 11 AAC 55 before being refined and adopted by the Commissioner, at which point agricultural designations are formalized through Land Classification Orders and implemented through agricultural land sales, long-term leases, and permitting programs.

When updates to an existing area plan are needed, such as adding, modifying, or removing agricultural classifications, DMLW undertakes an Area Plan Amendment, which follows a similar process using updated soil data, land-use capability analyses, and resource inventories, along with interagency review and a required public comment period.

Within lands classified for agricultural use, compatible or co-classified secondary uses may be authorized under applicable authorities, including the Generally Allowed Uses under 11 AAC 96, unless specifically restricted in the governing area plan. This comprehensive framework ensures a transparent, evidence-based, and multi-agency approach that supports sustainable agricultural development while ensuring responsible stewardship of Alaska's state lands.

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| | Agriculture | Agriculture, Settlement | Grazing | Grazing, Public Recreation | Grazing, Wildlife Habitat |
|--|--------------------|------------------------------------|----------------|---|--|
| Copper River Basin Area Plan | 6,259 | 9,045 | | | |
| Eastern Tanana Area Plan | 32,694 | | | | |
| Kenai Area Plan | | | | | 15,261 |
| Kodiak Area Plan | | | 55,557 | 86,125 | |
| Susitna Matanuska Area Plan | 71,919 | | | | |
| Southeast Susitna Area Plan | 461 | 830 | | | |
| Tanana Valley State Forest within ETAP* | 28,868 | | | | |
| Yukon–Tanana Area Plan | 190,819 | | | | |
| Totals Across Regions | 331,019 | 9,875 | 55,557 | 86,125 | 15,261 |

*portions encompassing ~1.35 million acres, is a Legislatively Designated Area within the Eastern Tanana Area Plan (ETAP).

The graph above breaks down where agricultural land is located, and what it is utilized for.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



John Crowther
 Commissioner-designee

cc: Jordan Shilling, Legislative Director, Office of the Governor