



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
Natural Resources

Peter Goldmark - Commissioner of Public Lands



Agriculture and
grazing on Washington's
trust lands

Sustainable land stewardship, revenue for schools, and more



Apple orchard



Wine grape vineyard



K-12 public schools statewide
benefit from revenue earned on
Common School trust lands

Trust lands were granted to Washington by Congress at statehood in 1889—most were to support the new state’s public educational institutions.

Washington’s trust lands

Washington State’s Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages more than a million acres of agricultural and range lands under leases or permits to farmers and ranchers.

These state-owned trust lands were granted by Congress at statehood in 1889—to be held and managed “in trust.” As trust land manager, DNR is to generate revenue for specific beneficiaries. The largest land base belongs to the Common School trust, managed to help fund (K-12th grade) public school construction statewide. Income from other trusts’ lands supports Washington’s universities, mental hospitals, prisons, and buildings at the Capitol.



Supporting beneficiaries—forever

“We work with lessees to produce agricultural products that bring revenue to the trusts and create jobs in local economies. Trust lands are managed sustainably, so they remain productive and provide financial, environmental, and social benefits for generations to come.”

—PETER GOLDMARK
COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC LANDS



Pivot irrigation system and high-value potato crop on trust lands, right.



DNR leases more than 100,000 acres in dryland agriculture.

Investments in lands bring diverse, higher value commodities

State trust lands are to support the trusts ‘in perpetuity’—that is, forever. DNR and its lessees enhance the value and income-producing capability of trust lands through long-term capital investments, good stewardship, and prudent lease management.

DNR strives to achieve the “highest and best use” for each lease parcel. Agency land managers stay current on business and market trends and work with lessees to achieve multiple goals.

Improvements by lessees or DNR—such as improving irrigation wells and irrigation systems, and planting orchards and vineyards—allow for more diverse crops and usually produce higher-value commodities. Long-term income to trusts and lessees increases when improvements are made.

Revenue, sustainability and conservation of natural resources



Cherry blossoms.



Blueberry starts on state trust lands.

DNR-managed lands in agricultural and grazing production

DNR leases and permits about one million trust acres for agricultural and grazing production.

ACRES	LAND USE
500,000	Grazing (leases)
322,000	Grazing on forested lands (range permits)
110,000	Dryland grain crops
32,000	Irrigated row crops
14,000	Orchards and vineyards

As of 7/1/08

Resource protection and stewardship

DNR has a fiduciary responsibility that includes both revenue production and protection of the resources.

State-owned agricultural and grazing lands must meet or exceed certain ecosystem standards. DNR and lessees address potentially harmful effects of their activities upon soil stability, watershed function, and local native plant communities.

Ecosystem standards are applied through Resource Management Plans incorporated into every lease. They protect long-term productivity of the land, and improve air and water quality and wildlife habitat.

Contributing to the state and to local communities

State trust lands in agriculture and grazing generate millions of dollars annually, mostly for schools.

Like most state-owned property, Washington's trust lands are exempt from paying real estate taxes. To address this issue, the state Legislature enacted the Leasehold Excise Tax. DNR's lessees pay a leasehold tax as part of their rent, so trust lands pay their fair share.

Trust lands also provide benefits for Washington's cities, counties, and the general public through associated taxes, employment, and recreational opportunities.

Leasing state trust lands

Land managers notify the public of leasing opportunities. Leases are awarded to applicants who optimize short- and long-term returns to the trusts while protecting the health of the natural resource land base.

Lease rates are based on a fair market value assessment that considers factors such as crop options, landlord-lessee investments, soil type, water availability, and carrying capacity. Rents are cash per acre, percentage of crop, or both. Throughout the lease term, rents may be adjusted periodically to the current market rate. Grazing leases and permit ranges are by animal unit month.

Information www.dnr.wa.gov

For all agriculture and grazing leasing opportunities in Washington state, contact:



WESTERN WASHINGTON

Pacific Cascade Region

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Castle Rock, WA 98611-0280
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NORTHEASTERN WASHINGTON

Northeast Region

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CENTRAL & SOUTHEASTERN WASHINGTON

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