

ACGA Working on State Trust Land Reform

The ACGA has been working with a “Stakeholder” group in yet another attempt to reach an agreement on State Trust Land Reform. The meetings commenced in March 2009 with the hope of finalizing bills no later than November 18, 2009. Representatives from ACGA have attended over 30 meetings of the group. Other interested parties include the State Land Department, Arizona School Boards Association, Arizona Education Association, Arizona Sportsmen, Home Builders Association of Central Arizona, Salt River Project, Private Property Owners, The Nature Conservancy, Sonoran Institute and other environmental organizations.

The ACGA has focused on resolving the uncertainties surrounding radical environmental groups filing “conflicting” applications for state land leases where the current lessee is in compliance with all of the conditions of their previous lease. In addition, the ACGA has been working to extend the current 10 year leasing program to an “up to” 20 year program (making it similar to other lease categories).

While a long ways from the final draft, roughly 830,000 acres are designated for conservation in one category or another as described below. Maps of designated lands may be viewed on the Arizona State Land Department website at www.land.state.az.us. The maps are available through a link on the home page ([Updated Trust Land Reform Meetings and Map Information](#)). Conservation lands may only be conveyed to an agency of the state, to a county, city or town or to a non-profit organization that is exempt from federal income tax pursuant to federal law.

Free to a Good Home lands (523,675 acres) will be permanently restricted against development. Lands within this category are subject to the pre-existing leases and may be renewed for terms of up to 25 consecutive years without advertisement or auction.

Lands to be Purchased includes 37,880 acres of API land (Arizona Preserve Initiative land in urban corridors) and an additional 62,864 acres earmarked for conservation that will be offered for sale at their true value (primarily urban lands). Terms of payment for these lands must be established in a written purchase agreement and must be paid in full within 25 years of the date of the purchase agreement. If any of these lands are not sold or paid for as prescribed, their status and designation terminates and the lands may be re-classified for other uses.

Federal In holdings (136,263 acres) are state lands that are trapped within federal government lands. These lands may be sold or otherwise transferred to the United States so long as the lands continue to be protected against development. Consideration for the lands will be based on their true value and may include monetary consideration or federal land of equal value in lieu of monetary consideration.

University Lands (70,090 acres) will remain in the trust and may be re-designated among the beneficiaries so long as the true value of the lands allocated to each beneficiary remains unchanged.

The ACGA is requesting that lessees please review the maps listed on the link above – which are on the State Land Department’s website – and provide feedback to the Association. The ACGA leadership and staff are working to provide more certainty for grazing lessees (and their improvements) while addressing right of way issues that our members have found difficult to resolve. We are conducting this in a manner which does not violate the Trust or the Beneficiaries of State Trust Lands.

*For more information contact: Patrick Bray at (602) 267-1129 or pbray@arizonabeef.org