

TITLE 43--PUBLIC LANDS
CHAPTER 8A--GRAZING LANDS
SUBCHAPTER I--GENERALLY

Sec. 315. Grazing districts; establishment; restrictions; prior rights; rights-of-way; hearing and notice; hunting or fishing rights

In order to promote the highest use of the public lands pending its final disposal, the Secretary of the Interior is authorized, in his discretion, by order to establish grazing districts or additions thereto and/or to modify the boundaries thereof, of vacant, unappropriated, and unreserved lands from any part of the public domain of the United States (exclusive of Alaska), which are not in national forests, national parks and monuments, Indian reservations, revested Oregon and California Railroad grant lands, or revested Coos Bay Wagon Road grant lands, and which in his opinion are chiefly valuable for grazing and raising forage crops: Provided, That no lands withdrawn or reserved for any other purpose shall be included in any such district except with the approval of the head of the department having jurisdiction thereof. Nothing in this subchapter shall be construed in any way to diminish, restrict, or impair any right which has been heretofore or may be hereafter initiated under existing law validly affecting the public lands, and which is maintained pursuant to such law except as otherwise expressly provided in this subchapter nor to affect any land heretofore or hereafter surveyed which, except for the provisions of this subchapter, would be a part of any grant to any State, nor as limiting or restricting the power or authority of any State as to matters within its jurisdiction. Whenever any grazing district is established pursuant to this subchapter, the Secretary shall grant to owners of land adjacent to such district, upon application of any such owner, such rights-of-way over the lands included in such district for stock-driving purposes as may be necessary for the convenient access by any such owner to marketing facilities or to lands not within such district owned by such person or upon which such person has stock-grazing rights. Neither this subchapter nor the Act of December 29, 1916 (39 Stat. 862; U.S.C., title 43, secs. 291 and following), commonly known as the "Stock Raising Homestead Act", shall be construed as limiting the authority or policy of Congress or the President to include in national forests public lands of the character described in section 471 of title 16, for the purposes set forth in section 475 of title 16, or such other purposes as Congress may specify. Before grazing districts are created in any State as herein provided, a hearing shall be held in the State, after public notice thereof shall have been given, at such location convenient for the attendance of State officials, and the settlers, residents, and livestock owners of the vicinity, as may be determined by the Secretary of the Interior. No such district shall be established until the expiration of ninety days after such notice shall have been given, nor until twenty days after such hearing shall be held: Provided, however, That the publication of such notice shall have the effect of withdrawing all public lands within the exterior boundary of such proposed grazing districts from all forms of entry of settlement. Nothing in this subchapter shall be construed as in any way altering or restricting the right to hunt or fish within a grazing district in accordance with the laws of the United States or of any State, or as vesting in any permittee any right whatsoever to interfere with hunting or fishing within a grazing district.

Sec. 315a. Protection, administration, regulation, and improvement of districts; rules and regulations; study of erosion and flood control; offenses

The Secretary of the Interior shall make provision for the protection, administration, regulation, and improvement of such grazing districts as may be created under the authority of section 315 of this title, and he shall make such rules and regulations and establish such service, enter into such cooperative agreements, and do any and all things necessary to accomplish the purposes of this subchapter and to insure the objects of such grazing districts, namely, to regulate their occupancy and use, to preserve the land and its resources from destruction or unnecessary injury, to provide for the orderly use, improvement, and development of the range; and the Secretary of the Interior is authorized to continue the study of erosion and flood control and to perform such work as may be necessary amply to protect and rehabilitate the areas subject to the provisions of this subchapter, through such funds as may be made available for that purpose, and any willful violation of the provisions of this subchapter or of such rules and regulations thereunder after actual notice thereof shall be punishable by a fine of not more than \$500.

Sec. 315b. Grazing permits; fees; vested water rights; permits not to create right in land

The Secretary of the Interior is authorized to issue or cause to be issued permits to graze livestock on such grazing districts to such bona fide settlers, residents, and other stock owners as under his rules and regulations are entitled to participate in the use of the range, upon the payment annually of reasonable fees in each case to be fixed or determined from time to time in accordance with governing law. Grazing permits shall be issued only to citizens of the United States or to those who have filed the necessary declarations of intention to become such, as required by the naturalization laws, and to groups, associations, or corporations authorized to conduct business under the laws of the State in which the grazing district is located. Preference shall be given in the issuance of grazing permits to those within or near a district who are landowners engaged in the livestock business, bona fide occupants or settlers, or owners of water or water rights, as may be necessary to permit the proper use of lands, water or water rights owned, occupied, or leased by them, except that until July 1, 1935, no preference shall be given in the issuance of such permits to any such owner, occupant, or settler, whose rights were acquired between January 1, 1934, and December 31, 1934, both dates, inclusive, except that no permittee complying with the rules and regulations laid down by the Secretary of the Interior shall be denied the renewal of such permit, if such denial will impair the value of the grazing unit of the permittee, when such unit is pledged as security for any bona fide loan. Such permits shall be for a period of not more than ten years, subject to the preference right of the permittees to renewal in the discretion of the Secretary of the Interior, who shall specify from time to time numbers of stock and seasons of use. During periods of range depletion due to severe drought or other natural causes, or in case of a general epidemic of disease, during the life of the permit, the Secretary of the

Interior is authorized, in his discretion to remit, reduce, refund in whole or in part, or authorize postponement of payment of grazing fees for such depletion period so long as the emergency exists: Provided further, That nothing in this subchapter shall be construed or administered in any way to diminish or impair any right to the possession and use of water for mining, agriculture, manufacture, or other purposes which has heretofore vested or accrued under existing law validly affecting the public lands or which may be hereafter initiated or acquired and maintained in accordance with such law. So far as consistent with the purposes and provisions of this subchapter, grazing privileges recognized and acknowledged shall be adequately safeguarded, but the creation of a grazing district or the issuance of a permit pursuant to the provisions of this subchapter shall not create any right, title, interest, or estate in or to the lands.

Sec. 315c. Fences, wells, reservoirs, and other improvements; construction; permits; partition fences

Fences, wells, reservoirs, and other improvements necessary to the care and management of the permitted livestock may be constructed on the public lands within such grazing districts under permit issued by the authority of the Secretary, or under such cooperative arrangement as the Secretary may approve. Permittees shall be required by the Secretary of the Interior to comply with the provisions of law of the State within which the grazing district is located with respect to the cost and maintenance of partition fences. No permit shall be issued which shall entitle the permittee to the use of such improvements constructed and owned by a prior occupant until the applicant has paid to such prior occupant the reasonable value of such improvements to be determined under rules and regulations of the Secretary of the Interior. The decision of the Secretary in such cases is to be final and conclusive.

Sec. 315d. Grazing stock for domestic purposes; use of natural resources

The Secretary of the Interior shall permit, under regulations to be prescribed by him, the free grazing within such districts of livestock kept for domestic purposes; and provided that so far as authorized by existing law or laws hereinafter enacted, nothing contained in this subchapter shall prevent the use of timber, stone, gravel, clay, coal, and other deposits by miners, prospectors for mineral, bona fide settlers and residents, for firewood, fencing, buildings, mining, prospecting, and domestic purposes within areas subject to the provisions of this subchapter.

Sec. 315e. Rights of way; development of mineral resources

Nothing contained in this subchapter shall restrict the acquisition, granting or use of permits or rights of way within grazing districts under existing law; or ingress or egress over the public lands in such districts for all proper and lawful purposes; and nothing contained in this subchapter shall restrict prospecting, locating, developing, mining, entering, leasing, or patenting the mineral resources of such districts under law applicable thereto.

Sec. 315f. Homestead entry within district or withdrawn lands; classification; preferences

The Secretary of the Interior is authorized, in his discretion, to examine and classify any lands withdrawn or reserved by Executive order of November 26, 1934 (numbered 6910), and amendments thereto, and Executive order of February 5, 1935 (numbered 6964), or within a grazing district, which are more valuable or suitable for the production of agricultural crops than for the production of native grasses and forage plants, or more valuable or suitable for any other use than for the use provided for under this subchapter or proper for acquisition in satisfaction of any outstanding lieu, exchange or script rights or land grant, and to open such lands to entry, selection, or location for disposal in accordance with such classification under applicable public-land laws, except that homestead entries shall not be allowed for tracts exceeding three hundred and twenty acres in area. Such lands shall not be subject to disposition, settlement, or occupation until after the same have been classified and opened to entry: Provided, That locations and entries under the mining laws including the Act of February 25, 1920, as amended [30 U.S.C. 181 et seq.], may be made upon such withdrawn and reserved areas without regard to classification and without restrictions or limitation by any provision of this subchapter. Where such lands are located within grazing districts reasonable notice shall be given by the Secretary of the Interior to any grazing permittee of such lands. The applicant, after his entry, selection, or location is allowed, shall be entitled to the possession and use of such lands: Provided, That upon the application of any applicant qualified to make entry, selection, or location, under the public-land laws, filed in the land office of the proper district, the Secretary of the Interior shall cause any tract to be classified, and such application, if allowed by the Secretary of the Interior, shall entitle the applicant to a preference right to enter, select, or locate such lands if opened to entry as herein provided.

Secs. 315g, 315g-1. Repealed. Pub. L. 94-579, title VII, Sec. 705(a), Oct. 21, 1976, 90 Stat. 2792

Sec. 315h. Cooperation with associations, land officials, and agencies engaged in conservation or propagation of wildlife; local hearings on appeals; acceptance and use of contributions

The Secretary of the Interior shall provide, by suitable rules and regulations, for cooperation with local associations of stockmen, State land officials, and official State agencies engaged in conservation or propagation of wildlife interested in the use of the grazing districts. The Secretary of the Interior shall provide by appropriate rules and regulations for local hearings on appeals from the decisions of the administrative officer in charge in a manner similar to the procedure in the land department. The Secretary of the Interior shall also be empowered to accept contributions toward the administration, protection, and improvement of lands within or without the exterior boundaries of a grazing district, moneys, so received to be covered into the Treasury as a special fund, which is appropriated and made available until expended, as the Secretary of the Interior may direct, for payment of expenses

incident to said administration, protection, and improvement, and for refunds to depositors of amounts contributed by them in excess of their share of the cost.

Sec. 315i. Disposition of moneys received; availability for improvements

Except as provided in sections 315h and 315j of this title, all moneys received under the authority of this subchapter shall be deposited in the Treasury of the United States as miscellaneous receipts, but the following proportions of the moneys so received shall be distributed as follows: (a) $12\frac{1}{2}$ per centum of the moneys collected as grazing fees under section 315b of this title during any fiscal year shall be paid at the end thereof by the Secretary of the Treasury to the State in which the grazing districts producing such moneys are situated, to be expended as the State legislature of such State may prescribe for the benefit of the county or counties in which the grazing districts producing such moneys are situated: Provided, That if any grazing district is in more than one State or county, the distributive share to each from the proceeds of said district shall be proportional to its area in said district; (b) 50 per centum of all moneys collected under section 315m of this title during any fiscal year shall be paid at the end thereof by the Secretary of the Treasury to the State in which the lands producing such moneys are located, to be expended as the State legislature of such State may prescribe for the benefit of the county or counties in which the lands producing such moneys are located: Provided, That if any leased tract is in more than one State or county, the distributive share to each from the proceeds of said leased tract shall be proportional to its area in said leased tract.

Sec. 315j. Appropriation of moneys received; application of public-land laws to Indian ceded lands; application for mineral title to lands

When appropriated by Congress, $33\frac{1}{3}$ per centum of all grazing fees received from each grazing district on Indian lands ceded to the United States for disposition under the public-land laws during any fiscal year shall be paid at the end thereof by the Secretary of the Treasury to the State in which said lands are situated, to be expended as the State legislature may prescribe for the benefit of public schools and public roads of the county or counties in which such grazing lands are situated. And the remaining $66\frac{2}{3}$ per centum of all grazing fees received from such grazing lands shall be deposited to the credit of the Indians pending final disposition under applicable laws, treaties, or agreements. The applicable public land laws as to said Indian ceded lands within a district created under this subchapter shall continue in operation, except that each and every application for nonmineral title to said lands in a district created under this subchapter shall be allowed only if in the opinion of the Secretary of the Interior the land is of the character suited to disposal through the Act under which application is made and such entry and disposal will not affect adversely the best public interest, but no settlement or occupation of such lands shall be permitted until ninety days after allowance of an application.

Sec. 315k. Cooperation with governmental departments; coordination of range administration

The Secretary of the Interior is authorized to cooperate with any department of the Government in carrying out the purposes of this subchapter and in the coordination of range administration, particularly where the same stock grazes part time in a grazing district and part time in a national forest or other reservation.

Sec. 315l. Lands under national-forest administration

The President of the United States is authorized to reserve by proclamation and place under national-forest administration in any State where national forests may be created or enlarged by Executive order any unappropriated public lands lying within watersheds forming a part of the national forests which, in his opinion, can best be administered in connection with existing national-forest administration units, and to place under the Interior Department administration any lands within national forests, principally valuable for grazing, which, in his opinion, can best be administered under the provisions of this subchapter: Provided, That such reservations or transfers shall not interfere with legal rights acquired under any public-land laws so long as such rights are legally maintained. Lands placed under the national-forest administration under the authority of this subchapter shall be subject to all the laws and regulations relating to national forests, and lands placed under the Interior Department administration shall be subject to all public-land laws and regulations applicable to grazing districts created under authority of this subchapter. Nothing in this section shall be construed so as to limit the powers of the President (relating to reorganizations in the executive departments) granted by sections 124 to 132 of title 5.

Sec. 315m. Lease of isolated or disconnected tracts for grazing; preferences

The Secretary of the Interior is further authorized, in his discretion, where vacant, unappropriated, and unreserved lands of the public domain are so situated as not to justify their inclusion in any grazing district to be established pursuant to this subchapter, to lease any such lands for grazing purposes, upon such terms and conditions as the Secretary may prescribe: Provided, That preference shall be given to owners, homesteaders, lessees, or other lawful occupants of contiguous lands to the extent necessary to permit proper use of such contiguous lands, except, that when such isolated or disconnected tracts embrace seven hundred and sixty acres or less, the owners, homesteaders, lessees, or other lawful occupants of lands contiguous thereto or cornering thereon shall have a preference right to lease the whole of such tract, during a period of ninety days after such tract is offered for lease, upon the terms and conditions prescribed by the Secretary: Provided further, That when public lands are restored from a withdrawal, the Secretary may grant an appropriate preference right for a grazing lease, license, or permit to users of the land for grazing purposes under authority of the agency which had jurisdiction over the lands immediately prior to the time of their restoration.