



ANCHORAGE'S  
Large Animal  
ORDINANCE



ANCHORAGE SOIL & WATER  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT





## Ordinance imposes conditions, usage limits

The Anchorage Assembly passed the “Large Animal Ordinance” (LAO) in February of 2006, amending Anchorage Municipal Code, Title 21 (land use code). The Ordinance established new limitations and legalized commercial boarding in the rural and suburban areas of the Municipality. Before the LAO, commercial boarding was only allowed on properties with zoning of Public Lands & Institutions.

The equestrian community worked hard on the LAO, along with Assembly members and many Municipal Departments. The Assembly’s intent was to fashion an ordinance that balanced private property rights with the growing urbanization (and population) of the Municipality. The process took three years to complete and included extensive community input.

The collaborative process produced an ordinance that liberalized setback standards, allowed larger accessory structures than first proposed and legalized boarding on R-5, R-6, R-7, R-8, R-9, R-10 and R-11 properties, ending the cycle of countless citations by the Municipality for a use that had existed in these areas of the Municipality since before Borough days.

**ASWCD MISSION:** Supporting self-governance and private property rights, to assist landowners and land managers with conservation and development through technical, financial, and educational programs.



## NEW RULES UNDER THE LAO

- The LAO classifies all properties with four or more qualifying animals as “Large Domestic Animal Facilities” (LDAF) and establishes rules for those properties. Any properties exceeding one animal per 10,000 square feet of land must obtain a “Conditional Use Permit” (CUP). If your property is zoned R-8 or R-9, you do not need a CUP and can have as many animals as you want as long as you comply with the other provisions of the LAO.
- The LAO limits the size of any structures connected with LDAFs to 10 percent of lot size, up to a maximum of 8,000 square feet. If you wish to exceed these limitations, you must obtain a CUP.
- All properties with four or more large animals must have a Conservation Plan created or approved by the Anchorage Soil & Water Conservation District (ASWCD). (More details later).



- Prior to the LAO, all animals and their enclosures had to be 25 feet from all property lines. Now there is flexibility:
  - 25 feet from all property lines.
  - Uncovered animal enclosures at least 75 feet from residences on adjacent properties.
  - 10 feet from your property line if the 10 feet is a vegetative buffer per Anchorage Municipal Code 21.45.125(c)(2). (See section on buffer landscaping).
- To meet square footage requirements in the land vs. animals ratio, a “Joint Use Agreement” may be established between you and your neighbors.
- If you provide arena seating within your facility, you are required to provide sufficient parking for vehicles: one parking space for every four seats, or one parking space per stall, whichever is greater.

## CONTINUING RULES YOU SHOULD KNOW

- All animal enclosures have to be at least 50 feet from all wells.
- Animal enclosures are prohibited within creek easements and/or setbacks.
- If you have four or more animals of one species, or seven or more combined species, you are required to obtain a license from Municipal Animal Control.

## Questions & Answers

**Q: Does a typical 1.25-acre lot with two regular-size horses and four miniature horses need a CUP?**

A: Yes. The LAO, as currently written, does not distinguish between a Clydesdale and a mini. A 1.25-acre property can legally have up to five animals or more with a “Joint Use Agreement.”

**Q: What is a large domestic animal?**

A: The LAO defines domestic or semi-domestic animals as horses, cows, pigs, llamas and other similar animals, but not dogs.

**Q: I heard that the ASWCD will not report a property that has something undesirable or illegal, or has issues. Is that true?**

A: Yes that is true. Doing so would defeat the ASWCD’s purpose. The ASWCD seeks to help property owners address those issues and give you the information and expertise you need to better plan and address your specific issues. All information is completely confidential so that you can honestly and openly address the issues you have or land use/code challenges you face. The ASWCD Conservation Planning process is based on the premise that property owners make good decisions if they are given accurate information and reliable technical support. There is no need for heavy-handed government or undue regulation. The ASWCD currently utilizes DOWL Engineers, hydrologists and other experts to assist you with your Conservation Planning.

*More Questions & Answers on back side*



**Q: Is the ASWCD the same as the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)?**

A: No. The ASWCD is a state entity operated by property owners. The NRCS is a federal agency under the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The ASWCD must approve all Conservation Plans in the Municipality, including any plans by NRCS. There may be significant differences between the two plans and the ASWCD cannot guarantee the effectiveness or completeness of any NRCS practice or recommendation, nor their applicability and/or lawfulness within the Municipality.

## Conservation Plans and the ASWCD

The ASWCD is one of 12 Alaska Soil & Water Conservation Districts, organized by property owners and managers (Cooperators), under State Charter. The ASWCD is an entity of the State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources, and operates under Alaska Statute 41.10, the Alaska Soil and Water Conservation Law.

Policy for the ASWCD is established by a five-person Board of Supervisors who are Cooperators, elected by the other Cooperators of the District. Cooperator is a legal term used to describe a property owner who works with their local District.

Conservation Plans are confidential documents created and/or approved by the ASWCD, per your wishes and goals, to help you effectively use your land within its limitations and/or implement Best Management Practices



to allow better usage of your land. The ASWCD adheres to strict confidentiality protocols. Conservation Plans can be amended at any time.

The ASWCD provides you with a certificate once you have implemented your Conservation Plan. This certificate is all the Municipality requires for proof of compliance with this provision in Municipal Code. You are free to share your Conservation Plan but the ASWCD will never release a copy of it without your written permission.

ASWCD Conservation Plans are created in partnership between a Cooperator and the ASWCD. Each plan is individualized to incorporate the property owner's intentions for the land, to conserve natural resources and to implement Best Management Practices. These practices help the property owner to better utilize the land, protect adjacent properties and waterways and assist in future land use planning.



## Municipal Code 21.45.125(c)(2) - Buffer landscaping



Buffer landscaping consists of new landscaping or the retention of natural vegetation to separate two land uses and minimize the effects of one land use on another.

Buffer landscaping must conform to the following:

- a. The planting bed width shall be an average of 10 feet with a minimum width not less than 8 feet, except for buffer yards required under Section 21.45.200.
- b. Evergreen trees must be a minimum of 5 feet with a ratio of height-to-spread no less than 5 to 3, and deciduous trees a minimum of 8 feet in height (1 1/2-inch caliper) with no more than 50 percent being deciduous, planted at average intervals no greater than 10 feet on center.
- c. Shrubs must be a minimum of 18 inches in height and ground cover or mulches placed so that the ground will be covered within three years.
- d. Natural vegetation, which is sufficient to meet the intent of the standards set out in this subsection, may be retained in place of all or part of any required landscaping.



**ANCHORAGE SOIL & WATER**  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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