

CHAPTER 11.18

GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT  
AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT (GMAAD)

SECTIONS:

11.18.010	Applicability
11.18.020	Purpose
11.18.030	GMA Agricultural District
11.18.040	Maps
11.18.050	Allowable Uses
11.18.060	Uses Requiring Permits-Director Review and Approval Required-Subject to Appeal to the Benton County Board of Adjustment
11.18.070	Uses Requiring Permits--Conditional Use Permit Required
11.18.080	Lot Requirements
11.18.090	Lot Requirements--Exceptions
11.18.100	Building Requirements
11.18.110	Setback Requirements
11.18.120	Setback Requirements--Exceptions
11.18.130	Effective Date

**11.18.010 APPLICABILITY.** This chapter shall apply to lands and activities located in unincorporated Benton County and designated in the Zoning Map of Benton County as in the GMA Agricultural District, unless otherwise specifically provided. [Ord. 265 (1995) ' 1; Ord. 445 (2007) § 1]

**11.18.020 PURPOSE.** The purpose of this chapter is to meet the minimum requirements of the State Growth Management Act (Chapter 36.70A RCW) that mandates the designation and protection of agricultural lands of long term commercial significance. The chapter protects the GMA Agricultural District (GMAAD) and the activities therein by limiting non-agricultural uses in the district to those compatible with agriculture and by establishing minimum lot sizes in areas where soils, water, and climate are

suitable for agricultural purposes. The chapter encourages the siting of allowable residential density into clustered enclaves to afford land owners economic value from non-farm residential development. This chapter is intended to work in conjunction with Chapter 14.05 BCC entitled "Right to Farm" which protects normal agricultural activities from nuisance complaints.

The authorization of new fully contained communities as provided for under RCW 36.70A.350 is not prevented by this chapter.

[Ord. 265 (1995) ' 2; Ord. 445 (2007) § 2]

**11.18.030 GMA Agricultural District.** The GMA Agricultural District shall include those areas identified in the official Zoning Map of Benton County and in the Benton County Comprehensive Plan as having Critical Agricultural Resources (soils, climate, and water). The minimum parcel size shall be twenty (20) acres, with exceptions as provided by this chapter. Commercial agricultural activities are most appropriately conducted on large parcels of land with significant separation between uses that conflict with agricultural practices.

[Ord. 265 (1995) ' 3; Ord. 445 (2007) § 3]

**11.18.040 MAPS.** The location and boundaries of the GMA Agricultural District are hereby established as set forth on the official Zoning Map of Benton County. The original of the official Zoning Map, signed by the chairman and the clerk of the Board of County Commissioners, shall be maintained in the records of the Planning Department.

[Ord. 265 (1995) ' 4; Ord. 445 (2007) § 4]

**11.18.050 ALLOWABLE USES.** Except as set forth in BCC 11.18.060 and BCC 11.18.070, only the following uses are determined consistent with the purpose of the chapter and are allowable uses in the GMA Agricultural District.

The following are allowable uses:

- (1) Agriculture, floriculture, horticulture, nursery and general farming; except commercial dairying, poultry raising, commercial hog ranches, animal feedlots and stockyards.
- (2) Accessory buildings, uses and structures appurtenant to the conduct of the agricultural use and customarily provided in conjunction with an agricultural operation.
- (3) On any tract of land having an area of five (5) acres or less, the following uses are allowable as accessories to a family dwelling: the keeping of one head of grazing stock per one-half acre of ground, exclusive of suckling animals; provided, that all barns, barnyards, or corrals shall be located not less than seventy-five (75) feet from any public road, street, or highway and not less than thirty (30) feet from any property held under different ownership.
- (4) Agriculture buildings: as defined under Chapter 11.04 BCC.
- (5) Agricultural related industries as defined under Chapter 11.04 BCC, including but not limited to wineries/breweries.
- (6) Agricultural stands as defined under Chapter 11.04 BCC.
- (7) Bakeries, on parcels with eighty (80) percent of its acreage planted with a producing commercial grain crop or on a parcel in common ownership with an adjacent parcel that has eighty (80) percent of its acreage planted with a producing commercial grain crop.
- (8) Hazardous waste treatment and storage facilities (on site) as an accessory use to an allowable or conditionally permitted use; provided, that such facilities must comply with the state siting criteria adopted in accordance with RCW 70.105.210.
- (9) Single family dwelling or factory assembled structure.

- (10) Agricultural signs commonly associated with or accessory to agricultural activities.
- (11) Commercial specialty/exotic domesticated animal raising, including but not limited to miniature horses, cattle, goats, llamas, alpacas, ostrich, and emu.
- (12) Aquaculture.
- (13) Adult Family Homes.
- (14) Community club houses, grange halls and other agricultural nonprofit organization halls.
- (15) Commercial establishments that primarily provide custom agricultural land grading, plowing, planting, cultivating, harvesting and soil preparation services.
- (16) Airstrips (personal).
- (17) Public or quasi-public buildings and yards and utility buildings, such as: pumping stations, fire stations, substations and telephone exchange and distribution facilities.
- (18) Hunting Preserves; provided, the hunting activities are an accessory use to the agricultural use of the parcel or parcels.
- (19) Guest ranch; provided, the guest activities are an accessory use to the agricultural use of the parcel or parcels.
- (20) Schools and churches.

- (21) Kennels, both commercial and private.
- (22) Communication facilities described in BCC 11.65.030(b), BCC 11.65.030(c), BCC 11.65.030(d), or BCC 11.65.030(e).
- (23) Any accessory equipment structure ancillary to a legal communication facility.
- (24) Accessory buildings commonly appurtenant to site built homes, manufactured homes, or factory assembled structures.
- (25) No more than one (1) wind turbine and related support structures and other improvements per parcel for private use; provided, the wind turbine height must be less than sixty (60) feet and the wind turbine must be set back from all property lines a distance equal to one (1) foot for every foot in height of the wind turbine.
- (26) One (1) wind turbine with a wind turbine height of sixty (60) feet or more or a wind turbine farm and related support structures and other improvements under the following conditions:
  - (i) the lowest point on all rotor blades must be at least thirty (30) feet above ground level;
  - (ii) no wind turbine(s) height exceeds three hundred and fifty (350) feet;
  - (iii) all wind turbine tower bases must be set back from all dwellings not located on the same parcel at least one thousand (1,000) feet;
  - (iv) all wind turbine tower bases must be set back from all property lines a distance equal to the associated wind turbine height, except that, where contiguous properties are leased for an identical duration for development of a wind farm, the tower bases set back from the property lines common with such leased properties may be eliminated so long as no part of any wind turbine

extends past any such interior property lines and the above-required setbacks are maintained from the property lines comprising the exterior boundaries of the wind farm;

- (v) all wind turbine tower bases must be set back from the closest edge of a state, county, or city road right-of-way a distance equal to the wind turbine height;
- (vi) all wind turbine tower bases must be set back a distance equal to the wind turbine height from all borders of the GMA Agricultural District, except for GMA Agricultural District borders adjacent to the Hanford Reservation owned by the Department of Energy or adjacent to another zoning district adopted by another county that contains a general minimum parcel size of at least twenty (20) acres per parcel;
- (vii) for wind turbine(s) proposed to be located within four (4) miles of the nearest point of the nearest runway of the nearest airport available for public use, the applicant for a building permit must comply with all the requirements imposed by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and provide a written statement from the FAA that sets forth the FAA's comments and requirements, if any, for the proposal;
- (viii) all wind turbine(s) must comply with the Federal Aviation Regulations Part 77, *Objects Affecting Navigable Airspace*, including but not limited to, providing such notices to the FAA as required thereunder and compliance with all requirements or prohibitions imposed by the FAA on the applicant's proposal;
- (ix) All wind turbine tower bases shall be located at least forty (40) feet for every one (1) foot of tower height or one mile, whichever is greater, from the ends of and at least five thousand (5,000) feet from the sides of all runways which

are available solely for private use and identified on the most current edition of the *Sectional Aeronautical Charts* produced by the National Aeronautical Charting Office (NACO);

- (x) If the use of any wind turbine or wind turbine farm is discontinued for a period of one (1) year or more, the owner of such facility shall remove the facility within ninety (90) days of written notification by the Planning Department. If such facility is not removed within said ninety (90) days, the County may refer the issue to the code enforcement officer for appropriate action pursuant to Chapter 11.54 BCC; and
  - (xi) The wind turbine(s) and all associated service roads may not displace more than five (5) percent of the area of that parcel(s) on which they are located.
- (27) Meteorological towers used to gather data to assess wind energy potential; provided, that the towers
- (i) shall be located at least forty (40) feet for every one (1) foot of tower height or one mile, whichever is greater, from the ends of and at least five thousand (5,000) feet from the sides of all runways which are available solely for private use and identified on the most current edition of the *Sectional Aeronautical Charts* produced by the National Aeronautical Charting Office (NACO); and
  - (ii) must comply with the Federal Aviation Regulations Part 77, *Objects Affecting Navigable Airspace*, including but not limited to, providing such notices to the FAA as required thereunder and compliance with all requirements or prohibitions imposed by the FAA on the applicant's proposal.

(28) Solar power generators.  
 [Ord. 265 (1995) ' 5; Ord. 341 (1998) ' 1; Ord. 371 (2001) § 4; Ord. 373 (2001) § 3; Ord. 380 (2002) § 3; Ord. 381 (2002) § 1; Ord. 435 (2006) § 1; Ord. 445 (2007) § 5; Ord. 469 (2009) § 1]

**11.18.060 USES REQUIRING PERMITS-DIRECTOR REVIEW AND APPROVAL REQUIRED.** (a) The following uses shall be allowed in the GMA Agricultural District only when carried on as an operation which is clearly ancillary, and not in direct conflict with, the primary agricultural operation identified in BCC 11.18.050. The following uses are subject to the review and approval of the Planning Director pursuant to Benton County Code provisions as now in effect or hereinafter amended:

- (1) Temporary dwellings. BCC 11.52.091 through BCC 11.52.0941.
- (2) Two (2), three (3), and four (4) detached single-family dwellings per lot, including manufactured homes or factory assembled structures, subject to the provisions of BCC 11.52.065.
- (3) Child Day Care Facility-Type A, subject to the provisions of BCC 11.52.067.
- (4) Commercial sand and gravel pits, and stone quarries and other mineral extraction, subject to the provisions of BCC 11.52.065(b)(1), (b)(2), and (b)(5), BCC 11.52.065(c) through BCC 11.52.065(g).
- (5) Seasonal outdoor retail sales, subject to the provisions of BCC 11.52.095.
- (6) Home occupations meeting the criteria set forth in BCC 11.10.090 through BCC 11.10.120.
- (7) Communication facilities, subject to Chapter 11.65 BCC. [Ord. 265 (1995) ' 6; Ord. 341 (1998) ' 2; Ord. 371 (2001) § 5; Ord. 445 (2007) § 6; Ord. 499 (2011 ) § 1; Ord. 548 (2014) § 1]

**11.18.070 USES REQUIRING PERMITS--CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT REQUIRED.** Upon issuance of a conditional use permit by the Hearings Examiner, the following uses shall be permitted within the GMA Agricultural District; provided that they are located in a manner that minimizes adverse impacts to agricultural productivity on adjacent lands:

- (1) Slaughterhouses, commercial meat-packing plants, animal feedlots; provided, that they are not located in the floodway and floodplain as shown on the FEMA maps, or within two hundred (200) feet of a naturally occurring body of water, or a well used for domestic or municipal purposes and shall be designed to prevent infiltration or other movement of livestock wastes into the aquifer, or directly into surface waters.
- (2) Commercial dairy, hog, poultry, and rabbit operations, propagation of fur bearing species for commercial purposes, or livestock auction yard; provided, that at least the following setbacks are met as well as all other conditions imposed in connection with the issuance of the conditional use permit: one hundred (100) foot setbacks from any lot line to any animal enclosure, except for fenced pasture; and a five hundred (500) foot setback from any existing residential structure on adjacent property not under applicant's ownership.
- (3) Commercial establishments for the transportation of agricultural products other than those produced on the premises, or agricultural supplies or equipment, together with the maintenance, storage, repair and servicing of the necessary trucks and equipment.
- (4) The following agriculturally based recreational and sales facilities: covered arenas, rodeo events, livestock sales rings, and working animal events. The following accessory uses may be permitted during one or more of the above events: veterinary service, food concessions, R.V. parking area, and event related novelty/accessory sales.

- (5) Airstrips (commercial crop dusting).
- (6) Facilities for treatment of industrial solid wastes with associated spray fields related to the on-site processing of agricultural products.
- (7) Solid waste disposal site; except on lands designated as having less than 160 acre minimum parcel size.
- (8) Off-site hazardous waste treatment and storage facilities may be allowed by special permit issued by the Benton County Hearings Examiner after notice and public hearing as provided in BCC 11.52.090; provided, that such facilities must comply with the state siting criteria adopted in accordance with RCW 70.105.210.
- (9) Asphalt manufacture in conjunction with rock, sand and gravel mining.
- (10) Facilities for power generation, other than nuclear fueled, wind fueled or solar fueled.
- (11) Child Day Care Facility, Type B, subject to the provisions of BCC 11.52.068.
- (12) Farm labor housing, to the extent that the farm laborers are needed for the agricultural operation on premise.
- (13) Manufactured (mobile) home and factory assembled structure parks occupied by farm laborers and their families and pursuant to Chapter 3.22 BCC (Manufactured Home Park Ordinance).
- (14) Recreational vehicle parks occupied by farm laborers and their families).
- (15) Off-premise directional signs.
- (16) The production of bio-diesel and alcohol fuels from agricultural products.

- (17) The commercial maintenance, repair, servicing, and storage of agricultural machinery, implements, and equipment for use off the premises.
- (18) Commercial establishments for the storage, sale and off-site application of agricultural chemicals, including but not limited to herbicides, fertilizers, insecticides, and pesticides.
- (19) Underground natural gas storage facilities.
- (20) One (1) wind turbine or a wind turbine farm with turbine heights of more than three hundred and fifty (350) feet and related support structures and other improvements meeting the conditions set forth in BCC 11.18.050(27)(i) and BCC 11.18.050(27)(iii) through BCC 11.18.050(27)(x) and all other conditions that may be imposed by the Hearings Examiner.
- (21) Non-agricultural accessory uses that promote or sustain the continuation of the agricultural uses of a parcel if the accessory uses meet the following criteria as well as any other conditions required by the Hearings Examiner:
  - (a) The non-agricultural accessory use shall be located, designed, and operated so as to not interfere with, and to support the continuation of, the overall agricultural use of the parcel;
  - (b) The non-agricultural accessory use must be consistent with the size, scale, and intensity of the existing agricultural use of the parcel and the existing buildings thereon;
  - (c) The parcel on which the non-agricultural accessory use is located meets one of the following:

- (i) the parcel is no less than twenty (20) acres in size with eighty (80) percent of the acreage primarily committed to agricultural use and has produced gross income equivalent to two hundred (200) dollars or more per acre each year for three (3) of the five (5) calendar years preceding the date of application;
  - (ii) the parcel is currently enrolled in the County's Agricultural Open Space program pursuant to Chapter 84.34 RCW; or
  - (iii) the parcel is not less than one hundred (100) contiguous acres that has been in agricultural use for three (3) of the last five (5) years.
- (d) The non-agricultural accessory use, including any new buildings, parking or supportive uses associated therewith, shall be located within one thousand (1000) feet of the nearest existing buildings or residential structures and shall not otherwise convert more than one (1) acre of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses;
  - (e) The non-agricultural accessory uses, including any storage space associated therewith, shall not collectively occupy more than fifteen thousand (15,000) square feet of building space;
  - (f) No more than three (3) vehicles marked to identify the non-agricultural accessory use(s) may be on the parcel at any time. No other on-site outside storage of vehicles, equipment and/or supplies is allowed in connection with the non-agricultural accessory use;
  - (g) No person may possess more than one valid permit at a time under this section and all non-agricultural accessory use permits issued under this section for any given parcel must be authorized in one permit;

- (h) No more than two (2) signs of a size determined by the Hearings Examiner shall be permitted in connection with the non-agricultural accessory use. Illumination of a sign shall be only by hooded directional lighting so that only the sign surface is illuminated. The posting of such sign is limited to the parcel on which the non-agricultural accessory use is located. On-street (inside the road right-of-way) sign posting is prohibited, and no sign outside of a road right-of-way may interfere with the line of sight for road intersection;
- (i) The parcel and non-agricultural accessory use owner shall comply with all requirements of the Benton County Building Department, the Benton County Fire Marshal, the Benton-Franklin Health District, and all other local, state, and federal regulations pertinent to the non-agricultural accessory use being pursued. The requirements of or the permission granted by the Hearings Examiner shall not be construed as an exemption from such regulations;
- (j) Adequate off road parking, as determined by the Hearings Examiner, must be provided;
- (k) Any waste created as a result of the non-agricultural accessory use must be disposed of off-site in compliance with all local, state, and/or federal regulations; and,
- (l) The days and hours of operation shall be determined by the Hearings Examiner with the granting of a Conditional Use Permit.

[Ord. 265 (1995) ' 7; Ord. 341 (1998) ' 3; Ord. 371 (2001) § 6; Ord. 373 (2001) § 4; Ord. 424 (2005) § 1; Ord. 439 (2006) § 1; Ord. 445 (2007) § 7; Ord. 469 (2009) § 2; Ord. 499 (2011) § 2; Ord. 548 (2014) § 2]

11.18.080 LOT REQUIREMENTS. All lands, structures and uses in the GMA Agricultural District shall conform to the following lot requirements unless otherwise excepted as provided in BCC 11.18.090:

(a) The size of a lot in the GMA Agricultural District shall be a minimum of twenty (20) acres (1/32 of a section).

(b) Each lot in the GMA Agricultural District shall have:

(1) a minimum width of one hundred sixty-five (165) feet within 35 feet of the front of the structure;

(2) a minimum depth of one hundred sixty-five (165) feet;

(3) a minimum frontage of ninety (90) feet on a road or access easement to a public road right-of-way.

[Ord. 265 (1995) ' 8]

11.18.090 LOT REQUIREMENTS--EXCEPTIONS. The following exceptions shall apply to all lands, structures and uses in the GMA Agricultural District, unless otherwise specified:

(a) The creation of lots less than twenty (20) acres may be approved by the Planning Director, on land to which one of the following applies; subject to appeal to the Board of Adjustment:

(1) The lot to be created is to be conveyed exclusively to a child or parent or such child or parent and his or her spouse of any of the present owners; the lot of record located in the GMA Agricultural District before division contains a minimum of twenty (20) gross acres; only one (1) lot may be created per related person; and only one (1) new lot is created per each twenty (20) acres in the GMA Agricultural District owned by the person conveying property hereunder. If at any time an owner of real property conveys any lot to any person other than a child or parent, no additional lot may be created under this provision for the family member who reconveyed the property.

(2) The present owner owned the property prior to the effective date of this ordinance and wishes to retain a parcel of land on such property with his or her private residence

located thereon, and conveys the remaining portion of said property.

(3) The owner of record wishes to retain one (1) portion of the lot with his or her private residence located thereon, and conveys the remaining portion of said lot to the owner of record of abutting property.

(4) To accomplish the clustering of residential density; provided, the total acreage of the cluster shall not exceed fifteen (15) percent of the total land area over which the density is calculated and the number of lots allowed is two (2) per each twenty (20) acres in the GMA Agricultural District.

(5) The transfer, sale, or lease of a parcel that is at least a two (2) acre portion of a lot that is at least twenty (20) acres and the lot created has a habitable single family dwelling that has existed at least five (5) years or has a site built commercial agricultural structure.

(b) The creation of a lot of any size may be approved by the Planning Director, subject to appeal to the Board of Adjustment on a parcel of record which is divided by a physical barrier such as a railroad, canal, or other permanent barrier which interferes with the unified agricultural operation of the land; provided, the boundary of the lots created are divided solely as a result of and pursuant to the physical barrier.

(c) In the GMA Agricultural District, parcels of less than the minimum size may be permitted where the Planning Director finds that the land division is for agricultural purposes only. Parcels created under this provision shall not result in a residential density greater than would have otherwise been permitted on the undivided acreage.

[Ord. 265 (1995) ' 9; Ord. 415 (2005) § 1; Ord. 445 (2007) § 8]

**11.18.100 BUILDING REQUIREMENTS.** All lands, structures and uses in the GMA Agricultural District shall conform to the following building requirements:

(a) No residential building shall have a height greater than thirty-five (35) feet.

(b) Development on land containing a natural slope exceeding ten (10) percent shall be developed in accordance with the recommendations set forth in the Hillside Development Standards Report of March 1979 or as provided by subsequent ordinances enacted pursuant to that study.

[Ord. 265 (1995) ' 10]

11.18.110 SETBACK REQUIREMENTS. All lands, structures, and uses in the GMA Agricultural District shall conform to the following minimum setback requirements; unless otherwise excepted as provided in BCC 11.18.120:

(a) Each structure on a lot shall have a front yard setback of fifty-five (55) feet from the centerline of any city, county, or state road right of way of sixty (60) feet or less in width, twenty-five (25) feet from the property line bordering any road wider than sixty (60) feet, and twenty-five (25) feet from the legally-established boundary line of any access and/or combined access and utility easement adjacent to or within the property.

(b) Each structure on a lot shall have a setback of twenty (20) feet from its rear and side lot line(s).

(c) Those enclosures used in commercial dairy, hog, poultry, and rabbit operations, the propagation of fur bearing species for commercial purposes, or livestock auction yard shall have setbacks of one hundred (100) feet from all property lines; and a five hundred (500) foot setback from any existing residential structure on adjacent property not under common ownership with the operator of the facility.

[Ord. 265 (1995) ' 11]

11.18.120 SETBACK REQUIREMENTS--EXCEPTIONS. All lands, structures, and uses in the GMA Agricultural District shall have the following exceptions to setback requirements:

(a) The following architectural features shall not be subject to required setbacks:

(1) Cornices, eaves, belt courses, sills, fireplace chimneys, and open, unenclosed stairways or balconies not covered by a roof or canopy, may extend or project from a building three (3) feet into the setback area;

(2) Uncovered, unenclosed porches, platforms or landings, which do not extend above the level of the first floor, may extend or project from a building six (6) feet into the setback area.

(b) Animal feedlots and livestock may be excepted from setback requirements in the following instances:

(1) When it is found that prevailing wind patterns and natural land formation such as banks, ridges, slopes, etc., would reduce the impacts to adjacent residents to insignificant levels, or where the adjacent residents are accessory to the same type of agricultural use a minimum of three hundred (300) feet can be allowed as the setback requirement;

(2) In the case of livestock animals exhibited by youth groups such as Future Farmers of America and 4-H who cultivate livestock projects for their educational value.

[Ord. 265 (1995) ' 12]

**11.18.130 EFFECTIVE DATE.** Ordinance 499 shall take effect and be in full force on September 1, 2011.

[Ord. 499 (2011) § 4]