

Buying Country Property

Are you considering or have you recently purchased land in the country? It can be a really wonderful transition from city to country living, but before you buy, you might want to consider some of the following “realities” that come along with your new piece of rural paradise.

Winter weather: Snow, ice and downed trees happen here just like in the city. The difference is your driveway or road may be your responsibility to maintain. In other words, you have to plow it to get out.

Land Maintenance: Is your new country property a size that you can reasonably manage yourself? Do you have and know how to safely operate the equipment necessary to maintain it?

Water: Where does your drinking water come from? We are very fortunate in Hood River County in that most properties are served by a domestic water district or private water company. If the property has a well, be sure to have it tested for quality and obtain a copy of the well log.

Septic: Most rural properties have a septic system to handle waste water. In what condition are your septic tank and drain field? Before buying the property, have the tank pumped and inspected. If the tank has failed or is in poor condition it should be replaced prior to purchase.

Communications: Have you checked into the availability of internet, email and TV in the area you are planning to move? Does your cell phone work there?

Livestock: Do you have the resources and time needed to care for farm animals, fences, pasture, water and outbuildings? Do you have adequate space for the number and size of animals you want to keep? How will you manage odors and waste?

Orchards: If you live outside the city, chances are you will live close to a commercial orchard. Are you prepared to coexist with your neighbor’s farming activities? If you are buying orchard land, how will you manage it? Are there any existing agreements with neighbors about which you should know? See the chapter on “Living Among Orchards” for details.

Timberlands: Are you considering property adjacent to a forest? Be aware that logging may occur on the parcel next to you. There is no guarantee the trees will remain for your enjoyment. Review the chapters entitled “Living Among Timberlands” and “Small Woodland Management” for more information.

Building: Buying vacant land parcels requires a bit more homework. You need to be certain that the parcel was created legally and that access and utilities are available. The parcel must be approved for a septic system by County Environmental Health. You must also understand the land use laws that pertain to the property. Is the use you are proposing allowed?

Title Insurance: Title insurance provides you with protection against loss arising from problems connected to the title to your property. Before you purchase your property, it’s a good idea (and in many cases a requirement) to obtain title insurance. Title insurance covers the insured party for any claims and legal fees that arise out of problems with past transfers of the title.

Neighboring Land Use: Like many rural places, Hood River County is constantly growing and changing. Your neighbor might be planning to develop homes on his property. Talk to your potential neighbors about their plans for the future.

All of these questions should be answered to your satisfaction prior to purchasing the property.

*Article written in cooperation with:
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Before you buy ask yourself or a knowledgeable Realtor®:

- Is it a legal parcel?
- What is the zoning of the property?
- Is it in the National Scenic Area?
- Are there any easements on the parcel?
- Have the property lines been surveyed?
- Can I use the property as intended?
- Have all new buildings, additions, remodels and/or alterations of structures been permitted by the County Building Department? Check to be sure.

Resources

Hood River County: www.co.hood-river.or.us