

Introduction

What is the Hood River County Rural Living Handbook?

The Hood River County Rural Living Handbook is intended to introduce current and prospective rural landowners to available resources in our county. It will address general questions on land use planning, gardening, livestock management and other land management concerns. The increased independence and self-sufficiency of rural life demands a heightened need for self-reliance and good relationships with neighbors. Often, newcomers accustomed to readily-available services offered in urban environments are surprised by the hard work required to manage rural property. This can lie in stark contrast to idyllic images of country living.

Is rural living for you?

Encountering the unexpected can be disheartening:

- You discover that you don't have access to the irrigation water that runs across your own land.
- You lose a pet or livestock to a predator.
- You are responsible for a fire that starts on your land and spreads to other properties.
- The deer, voles and gophers eat everything you just planted.
- You wake at 3 a.m. to the sound of frost fans in the surrounding orchards.
- You don't have enough time or energy to mow fields, maintain fences, spray weeds, feed livestock, deal with muddy facilities, doctor sick animals, vaccinate healthy animals, etc.
- Your neighbor sprays his orchard in the middle of the night to avoid winds during the daylight hours.
- You spend more time and money driving to town than you ever expected.
- You must spend time learning about and maintaining pumps, septic systems, irrigation systems, ditches, handlines, etc.
- You discover that your property's access road is not publicly maintained and is your responsibility.
- You learn that the forested land next to yours will be logged.

Management Plan

Whether you are still in the process of deciding if rural life is for you or have already acquired land, developing a management plan can help you. It can be easy to design, starting by simply spending time on the property looking around, making a sketch and taking notes as you inventory the features on property. The Hood River Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) staff can assist you in develop-



WHAT IS YOUR IDEA OF “RURAL LIVING”?



ing forestry, range, farm, wildlife and wetland management plans.

Questions or comments about this handbook should be directed to the Hood River SWCD. The handbook is meant to serve as a reference for everyone, so please pass it around and share its information. There is also a resource directory with the agency contact information on the inside cover of this guide.