

Recreation

Hunting, Fishing and Trapping

Killing game and fish through hunting, fishing, and trapping is a tradition. There is a season for many species, some of which are open the entire year. Most hunting however is done in the fall.

Wisconsin has hunter harassment laws that make it criminal to interfere with legal hunting. Respect those who partake in these activities or join a local sportsman club to learn how to participate yourself.



Trespass

You are criminally trespassing on private land unless you get permission from the owner. Land does not have to be posted with signs unless it is adjacent to public land (includes private forest lands open to public hunting/use). Respect private property and ask before you use.

ATV Use

Strict rules are in place for ATV use on public lands and roads. Check with your town for the rules where you live. The county has trail and forest use rules on their web site at: www.burnettcounty.com under County Departments-Forests and Parks.

Conclusion

This information is by no means all inclusive. There may be issues that you may encounter that we have overlooked. Look for the unexpected and surprises when purchasing rural property.



Burnett County Extension Office
7410 County Road K, #107
Siren, WI 54872
Phone: 715-349-2151
Fax: 715-349-2102

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Tribal Governments

Tribal Hunting, Fishing, Spearing

The St. Croix Tribe of Chippewa Indians has treaty rights that give tribal members different hunting and gathering rights than non-tribal members. Gun deer hunting may also occur outside of the typical 9-day hunt around Thanksgiving.



Tribal Police

Tribal police not only serve the reservation, but may also assist and work on off-reservation lands. All tribal policing on non-tribal lands is done according to state law and agreements with local units of government.

For more information on Rural Living, read the following University of Wisconsin-Extension Publications:

- Country Acres (G3309)
- Care & Maintenance of Residential Septic Systems (B3583)
- Outdoor Hazards in WI (G3564)
(a guide to noxious insects, plants & wildlife)

You can find the Rural Living Guide and the above publications on the internet at www.burnettcounty.com.



Introduction

Rural communities, especially in northern Wisconsin, are facing many changes. Many people from urban areas are choosing to spend more time in rural areas by purchasing a second home. This community welcomes secondary home and land owners. However, living in a rural area is in many ways much different than living in an urban community. This Rural Living Guide has been developed to inform those who are considering purchasing a rural property and those that already have. It is hoped that this information will help people consider issues that may affect them when living in a rural area.

Emergency Services

Law Enforcement and Rescue

Response time tends to be longer than in urban areas and can be affected by inclement weather, illegible address signs/fire numbers, travel time, and poorly maintained and designed private roads. The summer population in Burnett County almost triples and puts extra demands on deputies and other personnel. The Burnett County Sheriff's Department is responsible for responding to calls in most areas of the county. Village officers and St. Croix Tribal Police may respond and assist in some situations.



Citizen Patrol

Citizen patrols assist professional law enforcement by adding voluntary patrols and informing law enforcement of security situations throughout the community. However, not all towns have a citizen patrol. Contact your town chairman to find out if you have one in your area or would like to join.

Fire Protection

All fire departments are currently staffed by volunteer fire fighters. The level of protection provided depends on the access to water, distance of a structure from a fire station, type and number of vehicles, and number of volunteers and training. Your home owner insurance rates will be affected by these factors and/or the presence of a wood burning stove. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is responsible for fighting all forest fires.



Ambulance Service

Ambulance service is provided to all areas of the county by North Ambulance. Ambulances are based at Grantsburg, Webster, Danbury, and A & H. Staffing is varied at each base to serve the needs of that area. Service may be affected by

distance, weather conditions, and condition of public and private roads. Skilled EMT's and First Responders combine to provide emergency services.



Building/Development

Permits

Sanitary and building permits are needed in all towns prior to building. Permits can be obtained at the County Government Center and from your Town Board. Be aware that there is great variance in soil types that can restrict the type of septic/sewer system you must build. Not all soils are suitable for building. Some are significantly affected by heavy rains. New rules require that all buildings have certified inspections. Contact your town board for more information.

Zoning

Not all towns have zoning. If you live in an un-zoned town you may end up living next to a salvage yard or strip joint. Other uses incompatible to residential use may also occur. However, all lands within 1,000 feet of the lakes & rivers are zoned by county government. Minimum set backs are required for new & expanding construction.



Septic Systems

Where there is not public sewer, private septic systems are the responsibility of the landowner. Failure to properly use and maintain your septic system could lead to problems in your well water. Blue baby syndrome is just one problem that can occur when septic systems are not properly used and maintained. A free water test kit can be obtained from the County Health Department. A lab in Madison will test it for a small fee.

Public versus Private Roads

County or towns are responsible for the upkeep of public roads. It is the responsibility of the owners along a private road to build, maintain and plow snow. A road association may be a good idea to create, however most private roads do not have a body to coordinate services or collect funds.



Electric Service

Electric service is provided by Northwestern Wisconsin Electric Company, Rural Electric Association, and by Polk-Burnett Cooperative. They serve rural areas with many trees. Some interruptions may occur. Outages are being reduced by tree cutting in utility easements. Utilities have easements on each side of the land extending into the air. Branches of a tree outside of an utility easement may be legally cut.

Water, Sewer, and Natural Gas

Currently, public water, sewer, and natural gas can only be provided in villages. Unless you live in the villages of Grantsburg, Siren, or Webster you will be responsible for your own well water, septic system, and propane. Most often, two types of water wells can be installed: sand point and drilled. A sand point is usually cheaper but may result in poorer quality water. Drilled wells are drilled deeper and cost more.

Lake Associations vs. Lake District

Lake associations are private non-profit organizations that are involved in educational programming and information sharing. They have no power to enact building regulations or lake use rules. They may however suggest voluntary recreation use rules. Lake districts, however, are a special government district that can enact regulation and also has taxing authority. Depending on which lake you are on, you may be a part of either or both.



Wildlife

Driving

Enjoy "grilled venison?" You may get some if you don't pay extra attention when driving. Each year thousands of deer are killed and injured by motor vehicles. Extra caution is needed when driving, especially at night. Seasonally, deer activity increases starting in early October through November. During the rut (or mating season) bucks chase does more frequently and through all hours of the day and night.



Living with Wildlife

Living in a rural area requires a lot of consideration of wildlife. Deer, although beautiful, can ravage a garden or expensive plants. Carefully consider which plants you will use in your landscaping or if you want a garden. It's not the deer's fault that your rose bushes taste so good.

Bears are numerous in the county. Some weigh up to 600 pounds. Bears are omnivores and are known to eat bird food including the sugar water in hummingbird feeders. They especially love garbage. If your bird feeder gets raided by a bear, either hang it high enough where it can't be reached or remove the feeder completely. Each year a couple of dogs are killed by bears due to people luring bears to their homes.

Wood and deer ticks are parasites that suck blood from people and animals. The deer tick spreads Lyme Disease. The symptoms can vary in degree and may include a bulls eye bite and fatigue. It is usually treated with antibiotics but also can linger. Awareness is key and tick checks should be done daily on people and pets. Mosquitoes, deer flies, and black flies also are part of living in the area.



Pets and Stray Animals

Just like in cities, dogs need to be licensed and have their rabies vaccinations. Animals must be under control at all times. Be aware that bears or other varmints may injure or kill a pet if you do not keep your pet safe.

Stray animals can be taken to Lost, Found and Fostered (715-349-5446) or the Burnett County Humane Society (715-656-7177). Neither organization is affiliated with local units of government.

Government Services

Town Government

All unincorporated areas are governed under "town" government. A town government's primary responsibility is road maintenance and snow plowing. Some towns will plow private driveways for a fee. The road that services your property may or may not be scheduled for maintenance in the near future. Local governments will clear road right of way of brush and trees on a periodic basis. Check with your town board for more information.

Snow Plowing

Outside of the incorporated villages, snowplowing can take some time. Do not expect your road to be plowed before you have to leave in the morning. Snowplowing takes longer to get done in a rural area. Major roads such as state highways and county roads get first priority. If you live on a private road, snowplowing may be your responsibility. See the section under development for further explanation of public versus private roads.

Garbage and Recycling

Town governments generally do not provide garbage pickup at your residence. Private services are available for a fee. Some towns provide transfer stations where you can drop off both garbage and recycling while others do not. You may have to provide proof you live in a garbage service association. A private transfer station is available on Midtown Road in the Town of Meenon. You will pay a fee by bag or weight to use this facility.

Agriculture and Forestry

Agriculture and forestry are important businesses in Burnett County. Do not expect government to intervene in their normal business activities. "Right to farm" legislation has been passed to protect these activities.

Manure

Manure is an inevitable and valuable by-product of livestock production. Unfortunately the odor does not smell like money to some people. Most farmers have a nutrient management plan for their farms which is based on soil tests and the crops grown. The application spreadings are done to grow crops efficiently and reduce run off. Burnett County has a manure management ordinance which spells out procedures to deal with problems arising from poor manure management.

Fences

State law (chapter 90 of State Statutes) states that if livestock is present on one property, a fence must be maintained on the property line by BOTH property owners. Other accommodations can be made if both parties agree. Fences make good neighbors. See the Country Acres publication from University of Wisconsin Extension for more information.

Logging

Burnett County has over 150,000 acres of publicly owned forests and many more private forests. Both public and private woodland owners participate in logging for both revenue and habitat improvements. Your neighbor's mature woods may not be that way for long. Large trucks and increased traffic may also be associated with logging.

Slow Moving Vehicles

Farm vehicles are allowed on all roads and may back up traffic. Please watch for, and be patient with, slow moving vehicles. Most drivers of slow moving vehicles will wave you through when it is safe to pass.

Fire Danger



Housing in Forested Areas

Living in the forests of Burnett County is very rewarding. However, those trees are also threats to your home. When building or purchasing an existing home, maintain a buffer between your home and the forest to reduce the fire danger to your home. Contact your local DNR office for more information. More information can be found at www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/forestry/fire/index.htm.

Fireworks

Fireworks are restricted and require a permit from the Town Chair or Village President. Permits are not for personal use. Restrictions are needed to preserve homes and forests from fire. Each year fireworks cause many fires and threaten many homes.

Outdoor Burning

Wildfires happen most often during the months of April and May. The primary cause of these fires is debris burning. Permits are needed for all outdoor debris burning whenever the ground is not snow covered. Burning permits may be obtained from an emergency Fire Warden, Ranger Station, or DNR office. No permit is needed when the sole purpose is for cooking and warming.