



# **Lander County, Nevada**

## **LIVING ON A FEW ACRES**

A few things to consider when moving into rural areas of  
Lander County

**Endorsed by the Lander County Planning Commission and  
The Lander County Board of Commissioners**

March 2007

*Adapted from Lincoln County, Washington*

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## **Introduction**

It is important for you to know that life in the country is different from life in town. County governments are not able to provide the same level of service that city governments provide. To that end we are providing you with the following information to help you make an educated and informed decision when purchasing rural property.

## **Access**

The fact that you can drive to your property does not necessarily guarantee that you have legal ingress/egress or that your guest or emergency services vehicles can achieve the same level of access at all times. Please consider the following:

1. If your road is unpaved, it is unlikely that Lander County will pave it in the foreseeable future, if at all. Check with the Public Works Department, (775) 635-2728 when a statement is made by the seller indicating that the County will pave the road.
2. There can be problems with the legal aspects of access, especially if you gain access across property belonging to others including the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). It is wise to obtain legal advice and understand easements that may be necessary when these types of questions arise.
3. You can experience problems with the maintenance and cost of maintenance of your road. Lander County maintains approximately 1,400 miles of road and many rural property owners are served by private roads, which are maintained privately. There are some county roads that are infrequently maintained by the County – very little grading and no snow plowing.
4. Extreme weather conditions can destroy roads. It is wise to determine whether or not your road was constructed with or has installed adequate drainage facilities and structure.
5. Many large construction vehicles cannot navigate small, narrow roads. If you plan to build, it is prudent to check out construction access.
6. School buses travel on maintained paved federal, state and county roads that have been designated as school bus routes by the Superintendent of Schools ((775) 635-2886). You may need to drive your children to the nearest county road with a bus stop so that they can be transported to school.
7. In extreme weather, even county maintained roads could become impassable. You may need a four-wheel drive vehicle with chains, to travel during these episodes and even then you may not be able to get out. Situations like this can last for several days.
8. Natural disasters especially flash flooding, can destroy roads. Lander County will repair and maintain adopted county roads, however some subdivision roads, private roads and public easements are the responsibility of the landowners who use those roads.
9. Unpaved roads generate dust. When traffic levels reach certain levels, it may be necessary to treat your road with a dust control material. Dust is a fact of life for most rural residents.
10. Unpaved roads are not always smooth and are often slippery when they are wet. You will experience an increase in vehicle maintenance costs when you regularly travel on unpaved rural roads.

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11. Mail and newspaper delivery may not be available in all areas of the county. Ask the local postmaster to describe the system for your area.

**12. A county standard road accessible to your property from a County maintained road shall be constructed before any building permits will be issued.**

## **Utility Services**

Water, sewer, electric, telephone and other utility services may be unavailable or may not operate at urban standards. Repairs often take much longer than in town.

1. Telephone communications can be a problem, especially in the canyon areas of Lander County. Cellular phone service may not be available in all areas.
2. A sewer system is most likely not available and you will need an approved septic system approved by the State of Nevada Health Department (800) 992-0900. The type of soil you have available for a drain field will be very important in determining the cost and function of your system. Your parcel must be a minimum of one (1) acre in the State of Nevada before well and septic system permits are issued.
3. A treated domestic water system is likely not available and you will need to hire a licensed, certified Nevada well-driller to drill a domestic well on your property. The State allows one domestic well per parcel, which allows for 1,800 gal/day. A water right from the State of Nevada (775) 684-2800 is required to water fields and livestock.
4. Per Nevada State Statue a permitted well is required before a septic permit may be issued.
5. Electric service may not be available to every area of Lander County. It is important to determine the proximity of electric power. It can be very expensive to extend power lines to remote areas.
6. Power outages can occur in outlying areas with more frequency than in more developed areas. A loss of electric power can also interrupt your supply of water from a well.
7. Trash removal can be much more expensive in a rural area. Your trash dumpster may be several miles from your home. It is illegal to create your own trash dump, even on your own land. It is also illegal to burn your trash during certain times of the year.

## **The Property**

There are many issues that can affect your property. It is important to research these items before purchasing land.

1. Not all lots are buildable. Check with the Lander County Building Department, (775) 635-2860 to verify that a building permit would be issued for the property.
2. Floodplains have been designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) within Lander County. Portions of the county have delineated floodways that prohibit construction. Other areas have special building considerations if located within the 100-year or 500-year flood zone. It is advisable to consult the Lander County Building and Planning Department, (775) 635-2860, before buying or building.

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3. Easements may require that you allow construction of public roads, power lines, water lines, etc. across your land. There may be easements that are not recorded.
4. Most property owners do not own the mineral rights under their property. Owners of the mineral rights have the ability to change the surface characteristics in order to extract their minerals. It is very important to know what minerals may be located under the land and who owns them. Much of Lander County can be used for mining and could cause a negative impact on your property.
5. You may be provided with a plat map of your property, but unless the land has been surveyed and pins placed by a licensed surveyor, you cannot assume that the plat is accurate.
6. Fences that separate properties are often misaligned with the property lines. A survey of the land is the only way to confirm the location of your property lines.
7. Lander County has adopted zoning and building codes. Check with the Building and Planning Department, (775) 635-2860 to verify allowed uses of the property you plan to purchase. Make sure you can live with those codes. Also, consider that a lack of zoning codes can cause problems between neighbors.
8. The surrounding properties will probably not remain as they are indefinitely and the view from your property may change.
9. Distance to your property may make response time for emergency services such as sheriff, fire suppression and ambulance hard to guarantee. Under extreme conditions you may find that emergency response is extremely slow and expensive.
10. The water flowing in a creek, river or irrigation ditch belongs to someone. You cannot assume that because the water flows across your property, you can use it. Water rights are required for any use of any surface waters.
11. It is important to make sure that any water rights you purchase with the land will provide enough water to maintain the uses you have intended to pursue.
12. Be advised that if you clear more land than you can manage, you will have a weed control problem and possible erosion problems.

## **Mother Nature**

Residents of Lander County usually experience some problems with the elements.

1. Fire season in Lander County normally runs from May until October, however depending on lack of moisture may run longer. This means there is a high chance of fire due to dry desert conditions, especially dry cheat grass. Some causes of fire are dry lightning strikes, automobile catalytic converters coming in contacted with desert grasses, illegal lighting of fireworks, burning weeds and illegal burn barrels.
2. Persons causing fire by illegal activity or carelessness will be charged with the damages caused by the fire and the costs to put the fire out.
3. Creating a 30 feet green defensible space around your buildings due to emergency response time would be a wise precaution.
4. You may be required to store enough water to contain a fire on your property by the County or your insurance company.
5. Flash flooding can occur in some parts of Lander County.

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### **Mining, Ranching, Agriculture and Wildlife**

Mining, ranching, agriculture and wildlife are an integral part of Lander County and add to the quality of life here. Lander County was founded on the mining and ranching industries and they continue to play a strong role today.

1. The Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW), (775) 635-5070 and the County Extension Office (775) 635-5565 are two good resources for information on what kind of animals you can expect to see on your property.
2. **Nevada is an “open range” state**, therefore if you do not want livestock on your property, it is your responsibility to fence your property to keep it out.
3. Antelope usually go under fences and deer usually jump fences, therefore you may wish to contact NDOW, (775) 635-5070 for information on construction of a wildlife friendly fence that also keeps cattle out.
4. Ranchers and farmers must be granted access to their water on your property if they hold the water rights.
5. Ranchers may have easements across your property to move their cattle from one grazing area to another.
6. If you choose to live among these industries and wildlife, do not expect county government to intervene in the normal day-to-day operations of these industries and nature.
7. Before buying land you should know if it has noxious weeds that you may be required to control. Some plants are poisonous to horses and other livestock. You may wish to contact the County Extension Office, (775) 635-5565 for more information.

### **In Conclusion**

Even though you pay property taxes to the County, the amount of tax collected does not cover the cost of the services provided to rural residents. In general, those living in town subsidize the lifestyle of those who live in the country by making up the shortfall between the cost of services and the revenues received from rural dwellers.

This information is by no means exhaustive. There are other issues that you may encounter that we have overlooked and we encourage you to be vigilant in your duties to explore and examine those things that could cause your move to be less than you expect.

We have offered these comments in the sincere hope that it can help you enjoy your decision to reside in the country. It is not our intent to dissuade you, only inform you.