

BUILDING AND LIVING ON THE LAND

Where To Begin: Finding a Way Through the Regulatory Maze

Before you move any earth or construct any building, first determine what regulations apply to your land. The regulatory process may seem like a maze, but it's easier if you figure out your goals for your land before entering the maze. By working through the *Landowner's Guide and Worksheet* on page 26, you'll have a pretty good idea of what you need to do to turn your goals into plans and your plans into reality.

To help you determine whether your goals are feasible for your property, you can ask for a site analysis from the Okanogan County Office of Planning and Development (509-422-7160) or from the Colville Tribal Planning Department (509-634-2570). The analysis determines if development plans—whether for a residential, commercial or industrial use—are suitable under county, tribal and state regulations, including the county zoning code, shoreline management program and flood ordinance.

County or Tribal Jurisdiction?

If your land is on the Colville Reservation, you have the option of going through either the county or tribal planning departments, which operate under a cooperative agreement. Both agencies review applications weekly to determine which will be the “processing” and which the “commenting” agency. The processing agency is responsible for processing the application, accepting fees and notifying the applicant. The commenting agency may make written comments or recommendations.

State regulations may apply both on and off the reservation, but there are differences concerning archaeological matters, water use and building codes.

Public Services and Utilities

Living in a rural area with fewer people around also means there are fewer people to support an infrastructure of public services. The amenities that city dwellers and even suburbanites take for granted can be expensive, hard to come by and even impossible to get in far reaches of the Okanogan. That includes electrical power, delivery services, garbage pick-up and telephone.

There are alternatives. Some homeowners in the Okanogan have chosen to live “off the grid,” relying on alternative power sources such as generators and solar panels.

Some remote families opt for home-schooling when the school bus stop is too far away or children face bus rides of an hour or more, one-way.

Advances in satellite and cellular communications have allowed many rural residents to become connected with the outside world. The mountainous topography, however, means availability of wireless services is highly variable.

CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

The benefit to burying power, telephone and TV cables is that you don't have to look at them—and that's also the drawback. An out-of-sight electrical line could be lethal when struck by a shovel. The Okanogan County PUD urges landowners to call for underground locator service before moving earth in any way—even the simplest projects such as installing a fence, mailbox post, deck footing or sprinkler system. The phone number is 1-800-424-5555.

THE REGULATORY PROCESS, STEP BY STEP

1. PLANNING. Begin by contacting the Okanogan County Office of Planning and Development (509-422-7160) or, if you're on the Colville Reservation, you can begin either with the county or Colville Tribal Planning Department (509-634-2570).

2. ROAD APPROACH PERMIT. If you are building a road that will connect with a county road, you'll need a permit from Public Works (509-422-7300), or on the Colville Reservation, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (509-634-2552).

3. SITE ANALYSIS, THEN PHYSICAL ADDRESS. Okanogan County Office of Planning and Development (509-422-7160—see information in "Where to Begin," page 14). The site analysis is needed first to get an "E-911" address assigned.

4. SEPTIC SYSTEM APPROVAL. Okanogan County Public Health (509-422-7140), or Colville Confederated Tribes (509-634-2585).

5. ROAD APPROACH CONSTRUCTION AND APPROVAL. Back to Public Works (509-422-7300) or on the Colville Reservation, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (509-634-2552).

6. WELL DRILLING. Your privately contracted well-driller generally will provide permitting paperwork.

7. DETERMINATION OF WATER ADEQUACY AND POTABILITY. County or tribal officials determine adequacy based on a well log, pump test or a copy of a water right. Tests for coliform bacteria and nitrate can be done by the health departments. Okanogan County Public Health (509-422-7140); Colville Confederated Tribes (509-634-2430).

8. SIGN UP FOR ELECTRICAL SERVICE. Okanogan County Public Utility District (509-422-3310); Nespelem Valley Electric (509-634-4571; generally serving the Colville Reservation), and in the Bonaparte–Wauconda–Toroda Creek area, Ferry County Public Utility District (509-775-3325).

9. APPLY FOR BUILDING PERMIT. Okanogan County Building Department (509-422-7110) or, if within city limits, at respective city halls, or Colville Confederated Tribes (509-634-2570, 71 or 77).

10. APPLY FOR ELECTRICAL PERMIT. Labor and Industries (1-800-753-6506).

Household Waste

Careful disposal of household waste is vital to limit pollution issues and prevent wildlife conflicts. On-site dumps are illegal. The county operates a landfill at Okanogan and transfer stations at Twisp, Bridgeport Bar and Ellisforde.

Trash disposal is of special concern during construction. Pressure-treated lumber and plywood must be disposed of properly because they contain glues and chemicals that cannot be burned safely, even in an outdoor burn pile. Some materials, such as paints, insulation, vinyl, adhesives and fluorescent light tubes also generally contain hazardous substances and must be segregated for proper disposal. More information about disposing of

hazardous materials is available by calling the central landfill (509-422-2602).

Septic systems are common to nearly all rural landowners and should be installed and maintained properly to protect water quality. If you're installing a septic system, you need to use a licensed sewage system designer and submit the design to Okanogan County Public Health (509-422-7140) or the Colville Tribal Health Department if you're on the Colville Reservation (509-634-2585) before installation. Good wastewater habits will greatly extend the life of your septic system. Advice is available from the public health office.

Roads, Primitive Roads and Your Roads

The Okanogan's network of public roads, many of which are primitive, is maintained by a number of agencies, including the county, state Department of Transportation, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs and state Department of Natural Resources, not to mention local municipalities. Many public roads get only limited maintenance.

When you see a "Primitive Road" sign, it means you'll be driving on gravel or even compacted earth. Daily traffic on the road is 100 or fewer vehicles. The road is not required to meet standards of design, signing, maintenance or snowplowing. Dust is another issue. The county applies a chemical soil binding agent on some—but not all—unpaved roads to suppress dust. If you want a road by your property treated, the county will provide labor. You pay for the material.

Private roads may cross someone else's property and often require an easement. It's important to know what limitations and requirements accompany easements on your road, and what easements accompany roads crossing your land. Some private roads are shared by neighbors, who also share the cost of maintenance. That may include plowing, grading, resurfacing and cleaning culverts. The best way to avoid disputes is to have duties and cost-sharing in writing.

Building Your Road

The road or driveway to your home requires just as much skilled design and construction as your home itself. A good road, correctly located and designed, will make driving easier and safer, be less susceptible to erosion, and will require less maintenance and weed control.

A GOOD ROAD BY DESIGN

A bonded, experienced contractor can help you design a road that conforms to the lay of your land. Here are characteristics of a good road:

- ✘ **Adequate width with turn-around space for emergency vehicles, such as fire trucks**
- ✘ **Culverts and drainage ditches control runoff**
- ✘ **Location follows the contours of the natural landscape to minimize excavation and run-off**
- ✘ **Stream crossings are properly designed and permitted**
- ✘ **Road blends in with the surrounding area**
- ✘ **Banks are stabilized during construction and reseeded frequently to discourage the spread of noxious weeds**
- ✘ **Grade does not exceed 8 percent**

Connecting a private road with a public road requires a "road approach permit." Who issues that permit depends on which agency controls the roadway you're connecting with. Okanogan County Public Works Department (509-422-7300) is the starting place for determining the permit procedure.

Building a road on forested land may require a Forest Practices permit from the state Department of Natural Resources (509-684-7474). If the road crosses a stream, you'll need a hydraulic permit from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (509-754-4624), or on the reservation from the Colville Confederated Tribes Environmental Trust Program (509-634-2430).