

Rural Living Guide

Calumet County, Wisconsin January 2009

Introduction

The rural areas of Calumet County continue to experience growth as many people choose to live in a country setting while being close to urban amenities. The County welcomes new rural residents. Living in a rural area, however, differs in many ways from 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, and to raise their awareness about issues that may affect them when living in a rural area. Phone numbers for the County Departments mentioned in this guide are listed on Page 4.

Agriculture



Farm Operation

- Agriculture is an important part of the county's economy. Farm operations have both legal rights and regulations.
- Farmers often work around the clock, and farm operations commonly include dust, noise, odors, and farm chemicals. These typical activities may affect adjoining property owners.
- Farm vehicles are allowed on all roads and may back up traffic. Please watch for, and be patient with, slow moving vehicles.
- When fields or landscapes are changed, it can change the flow of water across neighboring properties. Generally, this is allowed for farms, but contact the town chairperson or clerk to determine any restrictions on altering water flow.

Manure

- While manure does not smell like 'roses' to some people, it is an important and valuable by-product of livestock. Manure improves soil quality by providing essential plant nutrients thus increasing crop yields. It also lessens the need for costly, high energy demanding commercial nitrogen fertilizers.
- There are a few situations when manure needs to be incorporated into the soil within 3 days, but in most cases, manure does not need to be worked into the ground.
- Some farmers implement a nutrient management plan. These plans are used to grow crops efficiently and reduce any environmental damage potentially caused by the nutrients.
- During certain times of the year, roads may be covered with mud or manure. When this happens, it is the farm operators' responsibility to clean up. Talk to the farmer or contact the County Sheriff's Department with concerns.
- The County Land & Water Conservation Department may be able to help answer other manure questions.

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. More information on this topic is listed on page 4.

Pesticide Application

- Farmers are not required to report their pesticide applications or post warning signs on recently sprayed fields. They are required to complete pesticide applicator training in order to purchase and use 'restricted use' pesticides. Most herbicides are not on the 'restricted use' list.
- If you suspect problems due to pesticide misuse, you may file a verbal complaint to the Department of Agriculture at 608-224-4500.

Emergency Services



911

- In case of emergency, dial 911. Calumet County has Enhanced 911 (E911), which displays the caller's location to the dispatch operator. Calls from cell phones provide less specific info than from landlines.

Law Enforcement

- The Calumet County Sheriff's Department is responsible for law enforcement in all the towns and villages within the County. Certain situations may warrant the assistance of police officers from nearby municipalities.
- Response times in rural areas can be longer than in urban areas and are affected by travel times, visibility of address signs, inclement weather, and road conditions.

Fire Protection

- Rural areas are served by local volunteer fire departments.
- Response time for calls depends on the mobilization of volunteers and travel time for mutual aid assistance.
- The level of protection depends on access to water, distance of a structure from a fire station, type and number of vehicles, and number of volunteers and training.

Ambulance Service

- Responses to calls for ambulance service are provided through ambulance service areas and community based first responders, backed-up from other available ambulance transportation organizations (Calumet Medical Center, Gold

Cross, Kiel Rescue, Valders Ambulance).

- Service may be affected by availability, distance, weather conditions, and condition of roads.

Rural Addresses

- Property owners are responsible for posting address signs at their own expense, in accordance with the Rural Numbering Ordinance, unless the town has assumed that responsibility and cost. Signs should be kept clear of obstruction and are to be perpendicular to the road for visibility in both directions. Prior to altering an address sign, contact the town chairperson.
- New address numbers are assigned by the County Planning Department.

Building & Development



Permits

- Prior to building in a rural area, contact the County Planning Department to find out what county permits (land use, sanitary, erosion control, stormwater management) are needed.
- Permits are also issued by the town in which the construction will occur.
- Waterfront and near waterfront properties have additional regulations and responsibilities to ensure resources are protected. Contact the County Planning Department prior to any construction, changing or adding to a use on a property.

Zoning and Subdivision

- Zoning regulations determine land uses, lot sizes, setbacks from roads, property lines, and other features. Subdivision regulations determine how much and how frequently land may be divided into smaller lots and roads.
- Towns in the County have different zoning regulations. Every town except Chilton and Stockbridge has some form of general zoning; check with your local town for further zoning info. However, County Shoreland and Floodplain Zoning and the sanitary and subdivision ordinances apply to all towns within Calumet County. For more information, contact the County Planning Department.

Septic Systems

- Private onsite wastewater treatment systems (POWTS) are used to treat wastewater from rural houses. Septic systems are the most common type of POWTS. Maintenance and care are a landowner's responsibility.
- All POWTS are required to be inspected every three years, and most will need to be pumped at that time at the homeowner's expense.
- Improper maintenance of your septic system could lead to premature failure of the system, expensive repairs, and contamination of your well water.
- For more information see "Care and Maintenance of Septic Systems," University of Wisconsin—Extension publication B3583 listed on page 4.

Wells and Drinking Water



- Drinking water for rural houses comes from private wells. State regulations only require that the water be tested for bacteria at the time of construction. Thereafter it is the responsibility of landowners to test their water.
- Owners are NOT required to replace wells if testing shows poor water quality.
- Water testing kits are available for a fee at the County Land and Water Conservation Department.
- The most common well contaminants in Calumet County are nitrates and bacteria, which come from animal waste, soil fertilizer, or failing septic systems. For more information, contact the County Land and Water Conservation Department.
- Unused wells must be abandoned because they pose a threat to groundwater. For proper abandonment procedures, contact the County Planning Department.

Utilities

- Propane, also known as LP, is the most common fuel used in rural settings. Propane tanks are set by the LP supplier and are filled on an "as needed" basis or on a "keep filled" basis.
- Natural gas is provided within village and city limits, with a few exceptions in rural areas. Contact WPS (1-800-450-7260) or WE Energies (1-800-242-9137) for serviceability.
- Electric service is provided by WPS (1-800-450-7260), WE Energies (1-800-242-9137), or New Holstein Utilities (920-898-5776) depending on location.
- Some rural residents may find it difficult to obtain internet service, especially high-speed. Same goes for cable TV.

Roads and Driveway Access

- Most rural roads are under public ownership. Maintenance of public roads is the responsibility of the Town, County or State. It is the responsibility of the owners along a private road/joint driveway to maintain and plow snow.
- A driveway permit is required for access to public roads and highways. Standards for driveway locations vary depending on jurisdiction. For a driveway permit on town roads contact the town; for county roads, contact the County Highway Department; for state highways contact WisDOT at 920-492-7734.



Mailboxes

- Mailboxes are to be on a level surface. The mailbox should be at least 46" high from the road to the bottom of the box and set back far enough not to be hit by a snowplow (approximately 6-8"). Contact your local postmaster to determine on which side of the road your mailbox should be placed.

Private Property Restrictions

- There may be private arrangements in addition to government regulations that can affect what you may do with your property.
- Easements may require you to allow construction and maintenance of roads, utilities, stormwater management facilities, etc. across your land.

- Many rural housing developments have associations with deed restrictions and covenants that restrict outbuildings, outdoor storage, and building design.
- Restrictions may be recorded with the property deed or the plat and should be checked carefully. For specifics, contact the County Register of Deeds.

Diggers Hotline

- Whether you want to plant a tree or dig a trench, call Diggers Hotline at 1-800-242-8511 well in advance to arrange to have the location of any buried lines marked.

Government Services

Town Government



- Places that aren't an incorporated village or city in Wisconsin are governed by a "town" form of government. This includes hamlets and other unincorporated places in Calumet County such as Darboy, Forest Junction, or Charlesburg.
- Town boards have three to five members elected in the spring of odd numbered years. Many town officials are nominated for office through a caucus process. Towns have an elected or appointed clerk and treasurer.
- Services offered by town government vary. Towns are rural in nature and do not provide a full range of services. Town government is typically responsible for road maintenance and snow removal. Some more populated towns have additional services.
- Town government in Wisconsin has an element of direct participatory democracy through the Annual Meeting each April at which residents vote on policy and budget issues.

County Government

- County government serves two purposes. It provides certain services at the local level for the state, and it is also a unit of local self-government.
- The Calumet County website www.co.calumet.wi.us is filled with information regarding the services county government provides to rural residents including: human services, law enforcement (sheriff), state circuit court system, highway department, tax administration and collection, planning and zoning, conservation, and other government related functions.

Snowplowing

- Snow plowing takes longer to complete in a rural area. Your road may not be plowed before you have to leave in the morning.
- If you live on a private road or joint driveway, snow plowing is your responsibility. Talk to your neighbor before it snows.

Garbage and Recycling

- Garbage collection and recycling program details vary by location. For a collection schedule, contact your town.

Each town in Calumet County provides roadside collection of garbage; all towns but Woodville also provide monthly collection of recyclables in accordance with state law. Woodville offers a recycling drop off site.

- Harrison provides its residents with a yard waste drop off site for composting leaves and grass clippings. Residents of other towns are encouraged to manage yard materials by leaving them on the lawn or by composting them at home.
- Special collections for hazardous waste are held annually in May. The number of locations depends on the amount of grant funds available. Contact UWEX for information.

Schools

- There are eleven school districts in Calumet County and each district has its own policies regarding bus service.
- The boundaries of the districts are extremely irregular. A school district map may be found at: <http://www.co.calumet.wi.us/uploads/document/InternetSchools8x11.pdf>

Fire Danger



Outdoor Debris Burning

- Wildfires happen most often during the months of April and May. A primary cause of these fires is debris burning.
- Permits are needed in some towns for outdoor debris burning whenever the ground is not snow covered. Burning permits may be obtained from the town if applicable. No permit is needed when the sole purpose is for cooking and warming.

Burn Barrels

- Once common practice, the DNR strongly discourages the use of burn barrels because the fumes created by burning modern wastes can be toxic and cause serious health problems. The only items that may be burned are leaves, plant clippings, paper, cardboard, and clean untreated wood.
- Burning materials such as tires, plastic, and rubber is prohibited because they generate toxic air emissions and hazardous ash residue. For more information see: <http://dnr.wi.gov/air/aq/burning/barrels.htm>

Outdoor Wood-Fired Boilers

- Outdoor wood-fired boilers (OWBs) are growing as an alternative heating source, especially in rural areas, leading to a corresponding increase in the number of smoke exposure complaints. Be aware that there may or may not be local regulations in your town governing these heating units. Contact your town for information.

Animals & Wildlife

Pets and Stray Animals

- Just like in cities, dogs are required to be licensed and have their rabies vaccinations. Animals must be under the owner's control at all times.
- For information about dog licensing and control of stray pets

contact your town. Contact the County Sheriff's Department for stray livestock.

Living with Wildlife



- Living in a rural area requires careful consideration and planning to deal with the potential effects of wildlife.
- Deer, although beautiful, can ravage a garden or expensive plants. Carefully consider which plants you will use in your landscaping or garden.
- Mosquitoes, deer flies and other biting insects are common and no control programs exist in rural areas.
- Raccoons are attracted to garbage and bird feeders as a food supply. Secure these items, especially at night, to prevent problems.
- To attract wildlife and improve habitat contact Wisconsin DNR at 920-662-5100.
- To report a deer carcass, contact the County Sheriff's Department. For all other animal carcasses, contact the County Highway Department when it's on a county or state highway or the town if it's on a town road.

Recreation



Parks and Harbors

- Properties owned by the County Parks Department are: Calumet County Park, Becker Lake Park, Ledge View Nature Center, Fox River Trail, Friendship Trail, Stockbridge Harbor and Brothertown Harbor.
- Other parks and natural areas in the county include High Cliff State Park, Brillion Nature Center, and Killsnake and Kiel Marsh State Wildlife Areas.
- Camping is available at Calumet County Park. Reservations are accepted six months in advance at 920-439-1008. Camping is also available at High Cliff State Park and private campgrounds.
- Boat launches are available at Brothertown Harbor, Stockbridge Harbor, Calumet County Park Harbor and High Cliff State Park Harbor. A small daily launch fee is required. Boat launches are also available at the end of some town roads that abut Lake Winnebago.

ATV, Snowmobile and Trail Use

- ATV use is allowed on private property; there are no designated public trails in the county.
- Hiking, biking, horseback riding, and snowmobiling are permitted on the Friendship and Fox River Trails.
- Snowmobilers can call the Calumet County Parks Activity Line at 920-849-1494 to get the latest information on snowmobile trails and their condition.

Hunting, Fishing and Trapping

- Hunting, fishing and trapping are rural traditions. There is a season for many species, some of which are open all year. Most hunting, however, is done in the fall. Wisconsin has hunter harassment laws that make it a crime 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 (this includes private forest lands open to public hunting/use). Respect private property and ask before you use.

Calumet County Department Phone Numbers

- In the Sherwood/Darbo area: 920-989-2700
- Highway Department: 920-849-1434
- Land & Water Conservation Department: 920-849-1444
- Planning Department: 920-849-1442
- Register of Deeds Department: 920-849-1441
- Sheriff's Department: 920-849-2335
- UW-Extension Department: 920-849-1450

Additional Resources

- For more information on Rural Living, contact the Calumet County UW-Extension Office, or see the following University of Wisconsin-Extension Publications at www.learningstore.uwex.edu/ (search by title or number).
- *Country Acres: A Guide to Buying and Managing Rural Property* (G3309)
- *Care & Maintenance of Residential Septic Systems* (B3583)
- *Fences in Agricultural Areas* www.uwex.edu/lqc/program/pdf/fact13.pdf
- *Outdoor Hazards in Wisconsin: A Guide to Noxious Insects, Plants, and Wildlife* (G3564)
- *Plants Not Favored by Deer* (A3727)
- *Landscape Plants That Attract Birds* (G1609)
- *Prairie Primer* (G3736)
- *Wildlife Management* (G3097)

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.



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