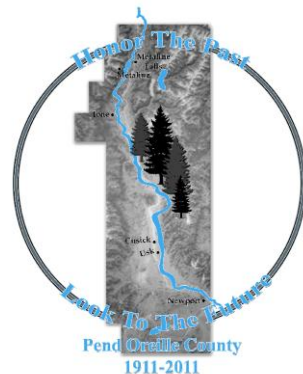


*A Guide to  
Modern Frontier Living  
in  
Pend Oreille County  
Washington*



*Presented by  
The  
Board of County Commissioners  
&  
Community Development Department*

## *A Guide to Modern Frontier Living in Pend Oreille County, Washington*

Zane Grey, the famous western author first chronicled the Code of the West. The unwritten laws of conduct governed the men and women who came to settle the lands west of the Mississippi in the westward expansion of the 1800's. Values like integrity, self-reliance, honesty and accountability guided their day-to-day decisions and lives. Survival depended upon their ability to cooperate with their neighbors. An attitude that encompassed sharing the good and the bad built the foundations of the society we enjoy today. In keeping with that spirit, we offer the following information with the hope that it will help people understand some of the differences between rural and urban living. We want to alert the reader to these realities and diminish the expectations some bring with them that life here in Northeast Washington is no different than where they came from.

### **Introduction**

“The County doesn't even plow the snow to our driveway,” she stated incredulously. With that, this couple from the city (actually, southern California in this case) put their brand new home up for sale without ever moving in. Given the actual location, this new home was not that remote. It was only a half mile from the end of the pavement and just over four miles from the nearest town. A family of old-timers lived a quarter mile downstream and within view. Nevertheless, she said “No way, this isn't what I expected so close to town.” While refusing to move in may be an extreme example, this type of reaction often happens in one form or another throughout the rural west. To help newcomers to Pend Oreille County make wiser real estate decisions and be more realistically prepared for a new situation, the County offers this pamphlet.

## **ACCESS**

- 1.1** Emergency response from law enforcement, fire departments, and ambulances is not as quick here in the County as in the cities. Obviously, distance is a big factor. Responding parties are generally within a mile or less of the need in a city but sometimes miles from the emergency in the County. The fact that you pay taxes to a fire district or the ambulance district will not change this distance factor. Fire departments, for the most part, are volunteer organizations. It is a risk you choose to accept when you live here. Weather conditions can also become a complicating factor with response vehicles.
- 1.2** Public roads within the County are maintained by the Pend Oreille County Public Works Department. Total road inventory amounts to slightly over 754 miles. Many private residences and subdivisions have private roads for which the county has no responsibility. There are approximately 82 miles of non-maintained County roads. Non-maintained means that the county does not plow, grade, gravel or perform any form of maintenance on these road miles. Owners themselves or Home Owners Associations generally maintain them. You will most probably be required to pay dues to the Association to help with the costs in a private situation.
- 1.3** It is important to note that the School Districts in Pend Oreille County generally will not travel on private roads. Parents may need to drive their children to a bus stop on the public road. The School District Offices in Newport, Cusick and at Selkirk can answer questions on this subject.
- 1.4** Dust is frequently a problem to homeowners on unpaved roads. Some roads are treated with a dust guard, but this doesn't solve the problem completely. Know what you are buying into!

- 1.5** Don't expect neighbors to sign a petition asking for improved service from the County. Costs are kept down by the willingness of people to go without many of the things suburban and urban people regard as necessities. People cherish their independence and willingness to take care of their own.
- 1.6** If your road is unpaved, it is highly unlikely that Pend Oreille County will pave it in the foreseeable future. \$250-500,000 per mile of construction money isn't easy for the County to find. A portion of your property taxes goes toward the maintenance of existing county roads. It does not cover new road construction. Road dollars are collected by the State on the sale of fuels and re-distributed to counties and cities. Generally the amount is enough to maintain and improve a road, but not to construct new, paved roads. However, county standards require developers of new residential subdivisions to build access roads that meet current standards. This helps relieve the County of the burden and places the cost on those that choose to buy the lots.

## **UTILITIES**

- 2.1** Electricity and telephone service is generally available in County subdivisions. Pend Oreille PUD, Frontier Telephone and Pend Oreille Telephone Company are the primary providers. Several wireless providers also serve Pend Oreille County residents.
- 2.2** Water and sewer are also municipal services not generally available in Pend Oreille County. You will be required to obtain a septic permit from the Northeast Tri-County Health District Office in Newport. A few subdivisions have central water systems, but most do not. Your water will be obtained from a permitted well which you may even have to drill. Permits from the Washington Department of Ecology are required. The permit will allow the following:
- Providing water for livestock (no gallon per day limit).

- Watering a non-commercial lawn or garden one-half acre in size or less (no gallon per day limit, however limited to reasonable use).
- Providing water for a single home or groups of homes (limited to 5,000 gallons per day).
- Providing water for industrial purposes, including irrigation (limited to 5,000 gallons per day but no acre limit).

### **2.3** Solid waste disposal is available at three County Transfer Stations.

- Deer Valley Road - near Gray Rd, 4 miles west of Newport
- Jared Road - near Usk on Calispel Rd and SR 211
- Sullivan Lake Road - east of the bridge just south of Ione.

There are two private trash hauling services that provide pickup service in the county. Check your local phone book or call 509-447-4513, the Solid Waste division of Public Works. Although the county itself has no curbside pickup for recyclables, each transfer station offers recycling and household hazardous waste drop off services. The county urges you to recycle and keep your waste stream at a minimum. Pend Oreille County waste is trucked to Spokane and then hauled by railcar to Roosevelt, Washington (about 330 miles south and west of us along the Columbia River, for final disposal at the Roosevelt Landfill. The monies to support this service are generated at the transfer stations by tonnage charges. No property taxes are collected for this effort. Remember, the more trash you create, the more you pay! It pays to recycle!

## **THE PROPERTY**

- ### **3.1** Owning a piece of land, especially a rural parcel, demands a certain level of care. Remember, you are only the present steward and eventually it will belong to someone else.

- 3.2** Learn about the easements that affect your property. They usually allow another party a use that you need to be aware of, even though you hold the title.
- 3.3** Fences are often misaligned and do not necessarily depict the property line. Always ask the seller to point out the survey pins and compare them with the plat.
- 3.4** Most subdivisions and planned unit developments are governed internally by a set of covenants (CC&R's) that lay out the restrictions and rules by which the property owners must abide. These are usually written by the developer's attorney and one should never buy a piece of property without thoroughly reading the set that goes with your development. The seller is obligated to provide you with a copy. Don't hesitate to ask or remind the seller or agent. Read and understand them completely. Make certain you can abide with the rules and restrictions before buying. Homeowner's Associations can change the CC&R's after the developer has sold his interest. The County does not enforce these internal rules.
- 3.5** Don't forget that as other development takes place around your home site changes may occur. Views change or can be blocked by new development. Traffic can increase. Peace and quiet can be affected. Be aware and don't take a seller's statement as factual without some proof or documentation on these types of issues.
- 3.6** Noxious weeds are a serious concern in Washington because of the threat they bring to natural and agricultural ecosystems. They have the ability to crowd out native and other desirable plants, taking over valuable agricultural land and natural habitats. They are generally avoided by wildlife and domestic stock, some are poisonous, and they can negatively affect property values. In addition, Washington State's Weed Law, RCW 17.10, dictates that it is a landowner's responsibility to control noxious weeds on their property. The County Weed Coordinator has the authority to enter

properties, take samples and ensure adequate control measures are implemented. Failure on the part of the landowner can result in the Weed Board assuming implementation and billing for the cost. However, the Weed Board is also available to help you design a weed management plan to fit your land management goals, has a cost-share program to help off-set the cost of control and has rental equipment to help you do the job that is necessary. Spotted knapweed, hawkweeds and oxeye daisy are the most common weeds in the county, others include Dalmatian toadflax, various thistles and leafy spurge – the worst weed. Educate yourself and do your part to keep Pend Oreille County as weed free as possible.

## **MOTHER NATURE**

**4.1** Pend Oreille County experiences the four distinct seasons. They also bring typical mountain weather. Summers can be extremely hot and dry. Late summer is usually the high fire danger season and sometimes thousands of acres of forests and rangeland go up in smoke. These events are dangerous and should be left to the professionals whose job it is to control them. Winter temperatures can fall below zero and heavy snowfalls are not unusual. A few warm spring days can change the snow to rushing torrents of water that damage shorelines, property frontages and sometimes remove small bridges and roads. Each of the seasons should be considered when you are choosing a home site. The County is not able to protect all private property from wild fires and flooding. Most of that protection has to be built into the site from the beginning. Likewise, there are some areas that should not be built on at all. Heavy timber can be a disadvantage during a forest fire. Dry grass and brush can become dangerous fuel if left to grow near your home. Designing your landscape to give your home a protected green envelope will help with wildfires. Advice on this subject is available from local fire departments and the WSU Extension Office.

**4.2** Country living and getting close to nature is a terrific idea. However, one should be aware that the wildlife you may encounter could wreak havoc on your life style. Deer love to dine on many of the bushes and small trees that decorate one's yard, especially expensive landscaping. Be prepared to see and deal with eagles, ravens, coyotes, foxes, mountain lions, squirrels, bears, and perhaps even a wolf. Small pets and pet food left unattended will attract many of these species. Skunks and raccoons frequently like to dine on whatever scraps are left lying around. Mountain lions, and coyotes like to dine on cats and small dogs whereas the bear likes your kitchen trash but, prefers your refrigerator if he can gain entry to the house.

## **AGRICULTURE**

Agriculture and natural resource uses are still actively pursued in this County. Even though many still think of farming as a romantic life, some facts need to be recognized and understood.

**5.1** Loggers and farmers often work long hours, especially during planting and harvest seasons. Those hours may not align with yours, especially after mid-night when the logger is sawing and the farmer and his bailer are just getting warmed up for the very early morning operation.

**5.2** Machinery like chainsaws, trucks, tractors, and bailers are very noisy and invariably cause large amounts of dust. If you locate near this occupation, you have to learn to live with it. State law says a farmer has a right to farm. Period.

**5.3** When necessary chemicals are sprayed from airplanes. They try to spray when the wind isn't blowing but there isn't any guarantee, especially during a wildfire. These sprays drift with the wind and



sometimes cause breathing difficulties or damage to neighboring crops.

- 5.4** Cattle and other herd type animals can be very noisy at times and can create objectionable odors, especially when large numbers are confined on a small area. Ask yourself if you can you handle it.
- 5.5** Wide open spaces are not a license for pets to roam. Dogs can quickly become a nuisance to livestock. Pets caught attacking or harassing livestock may be shot.

## **PERMITS**

- 6.1** Anyone living along a stream, river, lake or wetlands in Pend Oreille County needs to be aware that there are laws in place to protect the riparian nature of these areas and no disturbance is allowed without proper permits. Please call the Community Development Office at 509-447-4821 to inquire before attempting to alter a shoreline or stream bed.
- 6.2.** Building permits are required in all jurisdictions in the county, cities & towns
- 6.3** Septic permits are also required and may be obtained from the Northeast Tri-County Health District @ 509-447-3131, located in Newport.
- 6.4** New commercial businesses outside of the City and the Towns are required to obtain a Conditional Use Permit from the County. Please Contact the Community Development Department prior to opening a new commercial business.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is our sincere hope that your choice to live in Pend Oreille County will be a positive experience. If the tips offered in this publication prevent someone from making the mistake of a lifetime, they will have been worthwhile. We encourage people to read this, question their expectations, and ask themselves if this is really the life they want to live. Surprises aren't always fun! Prepare yourself with as much knowledge as possible about the area you have chosen to live in.

If you decide to buy and live here, we also invite you to learn some about the folks who came before you; the ranchers and miners who opened up this valley for settlement. To do that, visit our wonderful historical museums in Newport and Tiger.

## **INFORMATION RESOURCES**

[www.pendoreilleco.org](http://www.pendoreilleco.org)

<b>Pend Oreille County Community Development Department.....</b>	<b>509.447.4821</b>
<b>Northeast Tri-County Health District.....</b>	<b>509.447.3131</b>
<b>Pend Oreille County Weed Board.....</b>	<b>509.447.2402</b>
<b>WSU Extension.....</b>	<b>509.447.2401</b>
<b>Pend Oreille County Public Works Dept.....</b>	<b>509.447.4513</b>
<b>Pend Oreille County Commissioners.....</b>	<b>509.447.4119</b>
<b>Newport School District.....</b>	<b>509.447.3167</b>
<b>Cusick School District.....</b>	<b>509.445.1125</b>
<b>Selkirk School District.....</b>	<b>509.446.2408</b>