

The Code of the West...
the Realities of Rural Living
A Primer for Living in
SISKIYOU COUNTY, CALIFORNIA



2005 Edition

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The idea for “The Code of the West...the realities of rural living” originated from counties in Colorado. Some of the information in the Siskiyou County “code” is taken directly from those publications and some has been adapted to address specific local issues. Should another county think our “code” is a good idea, they are welcome to “appropriate” from it.

The Code of the West was first chronicled by the famous western writer Zane Grey. The men and women who came to this part of the country during the westward expansion of the United States were bound by an unwritten code of conduct. The values of integrity and self-reliance guided their decisions, actions and interactions. In keeping with that spirit, we offer this information to help the citizens of Siskiyou County who wish to follow in the footsteps of those rugged individuals by living outside city limits.

EXPECTATIONS

The purpose of the Siskiyou County Code of the West is to inform newcomers about the “realities of rural life.” Expectations are a key to successful living in the Siskiyou part of paradise. If a newcomer’s expectations are urban, disappointment may follow. The rural setting is different and requires one to want to live here. It takes effort, tenacity, a sense of humor and some preparation to enjoy living in rural Siskiyou County. Folks who like it here often consider city conveniences and amenities to be nuisances or worse. Some new residents only see a wonderful, idyllic, rural, summer mountain or valley setting. So they may be shocked a bit later when a bear destroys the BBQ grill on the deck, deer munch the marigolds, a coyote feasts on the family pet, and the driveway disappears under snow. Then they become disenchanted and expect someone else to “do something” about it. Thus, the Code of the West is intended to touch on some key notions to help prospective or new residents match Siskiyou County reality with expectations.

INTRODUCTION TO PARADISE

Locale

Siskiyou County is located halfway across California and borders the state of Oregon to the north, Modoc County to the east, Del Norte and Humboldt Counties to the west and Trinity and Shasta Counties to the south. It is the fifth largest county in California in area--6300 square miles--but has a population of approximately 44,350. That’s only seven people per square mile!

Terrain

The elevation of Siskiyou County ranges from 520 feet to 14,162 feet atop majestic Mt. Shasta, a vast land of mountains, forests and valleys with clear sparkling streams and lakes. The county encompasses parts of five National Forests, six scenic rivers (Klamath, Sacramento, Salmon, Scott, Shasta and McCloud) as well as numerous lakes, streams and creeks.

There are 4,038,843 acres in Siskiyou County. Of that figure, 1,153,246 acres are farmland and 2,525,216 are rangeland/woodland. Only 12,381 acres are urban. Much of this land is privately owned and serves an economic purpose as the foundation for the livelihood and rural lifestyle of many year-round residents. These farm and rangelands are, in fact, commercial properties, and newcomers should not be appalled when seasonal or cyclical economic activity occurs on them attendant with noise, dust, large vehicles and landscape changes. The fact that they provide recreation, open space, habitat or aesthetic value to the general population is merely a free ancillary bonus.

Scott Valley, Shasta Valley, Butte Valley and Tulelake are areas where agriculture and timber harvest are primary economic activities. Mining activity and some timber harvest takes place in the Happy Camp and Salmon River areas, and timber harvesting is also done in the southern part of the County including McCloud.

THE FOUR CORNERS OF THE COUNTY AND POINTS BETWEEN

Butte Valley/Tulelake/Medicine Lake Highlands

Butte Valley covers over 80,000 acres and is found at the northeastern edge of Siskiyou County, nestled between the slopes of magnificent Mt. Shasta to the south and the great Klamath Basin to the north. Wildlife is abundant throughout the area. Large herds of pronghorn antelope can be seen, as well as an abundance of red-tailed hawk, peregrine falcon, Canadian geese, mallards, widgeon, green-winged teal, tundra swans, pelicans and the largest congregation of bald eagles in the continental United States. Long recognized as a paradise of spectacular beauty, Butte Valley offers abundant recreational opportunities for both the adventurous and the more sedentary. The Wildlife Refuges of the Butte Valley State Wildlife Area, Lower Klamath Refuge and Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge are famous for the massive flocks of waterfowl that congregate there.

Close to Medicine Lake and the Butte Valley area is the Lava Beds National Monument with many fascinating sites to discover. Adjacent to the monument are excellent camping facilities for those exploring this vast area of lava tube caves. Captain Jack's Stronghold is located in the Monument and is the site of the only major Indian war in California and the only Indian war in which a general was killed. Geology of the area is dramatic and heart stopping, showing the volcanic action of the not-so-distant past. Potato, onion and alfalfa farming dominate the area.

Happy Camp/Klamath River

Happy Camp is a small, friendly, rural, mountain community on Highway 96 midway between I-5 and the Pacific Coast. This rustic community on the “Wild and Scenic” Klamath River is in northwest Siskiyou County approximately 20 miles south of the Oregon border. Happy Camp is surrounded by the Red Buttes, the Siskiyou and the Marble Mountain Wilderness areas. Happy Camp is located in the center of the ancestral territory of the Karuk Tribe, which has resided along this part of the Klamath River since time immemorial. Karuk people are recognized throughout the world for the quality of their basketry, and their traditional culture continues to be an important part of everyday life.

The Happy Camp/Klamath River/Hamburg/Seiad Valley Area is an important part of early California gold mining history. In the early 1900's more than 5,000 people were in and around the village of Hamburg trying to “scratch out” a living at hundreds of placer mines. By the 1860s most of the mines were “worked out” and the few hardy souls that remained worked in logging or ranching. Small stores survived in the area as supply centers for remote ranches and logging camps.

The Klamath River area is renowned as a bird watcher’s paradise with scores of birds able to be seen in a remote, scenic habitat. This area is great for the outdoor enthusiast who wants to “get away from it all” and is one of the best locations for fishing, hunting, golfing, wilderness horse packing, rafting, kayaking, boating, hiking, camping, recreational gold mining, rock hounding and mountain biking.

Scott Valley and the Salmon River

Your first view of Scott Valley from Forest Mountain Summit on Highway 3, a few miles southwest of Yreka, is of a deep trough of a valley entirely surrounded by giant mountain ranges laced with snow. Scott Valley provides prime fishing streams and hunting grounds just minutes away. Two great primitive areas adjoin Scott Valley on the west and south. The Marble Mountain Wilderness lies west of Greenview and Quartz Valley and the deep canyon of Scott River. This magnificent range is transversed by breathtaking trails for the most avid and hearty nature lovers. To the south lies the extremely rugged Salmon-Trinity Alps Primitive Area. The Salmon River is one of the last undamaged rivers in California and has exceptional white-water recreational opportunities. Sawyer’s Bar boasts the oldest Catholic Church north of San Francisco. Built in 1855 and still in use, the church sits atop an estimated \$200,000 in placer gold, surrounded by huge hydraulic cuts and preserved from undermining by the tiny historic cemetery adjoining it.

Dunsmuir

Dunsmuir, located on I-5 at the south end of the County, is one of Northern California’s last unspoiled mountain towns. Nature provides a bounty of fresh air, pure water and scenery that is grand, varied, solitary and sublime. Located deep in the Sacramento River Canyon, the town is bordered by vaulting, tree-covered mountains. Dunsmuir has a century-long history as a

railroad division point. One can browse picturesque downtown and visit the Dunsmuir Museum, Railroad Park, tube the Sacramento River or explore the trails to Mossbrae and Hedge Creek Falls.

Mt. Shasta

The alpine village of Mt. Shasta is nestled at the base of majestic Mount Shasta. Surrounded by forested mountains, the town has a wide variety of lodging and restaurant facilities. On the outskirts lies Lake Siskiyou, a popular fishing, boating, swimming, wind-surfing lake and the location for the Mount Shasta Resort/Golf Course which includes tennis courts and convention facilities. Hiking, fishing and mountain climbing all are popular activities in the surrounding wilderness. In winter, Mount Shasta's Ski Park provides alpine skiing, cross-country skiing, snowboarding and snowmobiling. The Mount Shasta Fish Hatchery, one of California's oldest fish hatcheries, is located next to the Sisson Museum.

McCloud

On the south slope of Mt. Shasta, McCloud sits as a retreat in the shadow of mountains and natural beauty. It is a company-built mill town with a rich past. In the 1890s construction began on the saw mill that brought in the McCloud River Railroad and the McCloud River Lumber Company giving the town its name. Here you can experience the scenic beauty of photogenic Mt. Shasta to the north, tall pines, pure mountain air and crystal clear lakes and streams. Sportsmen will find year-round activities such as excellent trout fishing at Lake McCloud and on the famous McCloud River and many other nearby streams and lakes. Winter sports include cross-country skiing, snowmobiling and sledding. You may also want to visit natural wonders such as the Three Falls of the McCloud River.

Weed/Lake Shastina/Edgewood

Weed, a colorful mountain community, was established in the late 1800s. Spring offers breezy days for an enjoyable round of golf. Lake Shastina offers a variety of water activities and picnic area. Southwest of Lake Shastina, off I-5, is Edgewood, an early stagecoach stop and picturesque area of ranches and historical country store. Nearby lakes offer the most scenic waterskiing you could imagine with Mt. Shasta towering above you. Fall brings out gorgeous colors to photograph and excellent hunting in the mountains. Thirteen miles north of Weed on Highway 97 lies The Living Memorial Sculpture Garden a unique memorial dedicated to the lives and service of American veterans. Here, sculptures are displayed that focus on the various aspects of war and the men and women who served their country. An air museum and firefighters' memorial are being constructed at the Weed Airport.

Yreka/Montague/Shasta Valley/Little Shasta/Hornbrook

Located at the northern end of the Shasta Valley, Yreka is the county seat of Siskiyou County. The Historical District of Yreka offers a unique opportunity to view the 19th century with its over 75 Victorian homes, its historic Miner Street and its incredible gold display at the Siskiyou

County Courthouse. The historic town of Montague offers a variety of restaurants, grocery stores and a gas station in an 1887 setting. Montague also holds an annual Siskiyou Balloon Faire the last weekend in September drawing hot air balloon enthusiasts from afar. To the north, Hornbrook and Hilt offer small residential communities; a legacy of former boom times during the hay days of logging. A community of lush cattle ranches and farms populate the rolling hills of the Shasta Valley that were formed by Mt. Shasta's ancient mud flows. The Little Shasta Valleys school, church and cemetery date from the 1800s. Rural roads through Montague and the Shasta Valley offer a quiet alternative to Interstate 5 and also provide numerous bicycle and motorcycle routes.

CLIMATE

The climate of Siskiyou County varies greatly under the influences of elevation topography and proximity to the Pacific Ocean. The low valleys have hot summer days, cool summer nights and mild winters with little snow. The higher elevations have cool summers and severe winters. The humidity and precipitation drop rapidly from west to east. In the Siskiyou Mountains on the western boundary, the annual precipitation is 50 inches, but around Tulelake it is only 10 inches. At Montague, near the center of the County, the average January temperature is 34 degrees, the average July temperature is 73 degrees and the average annual precipitation is 12 inches. Shasta Valley, at 2,640 feet elevation, has 143 growing days above freezing and receives about 9 inches of snow annually; Scott Valley, at 2,747 feet elevation, has 100 growing days above freezing and receives about 30 inches of snow annually; Butte Valley, at 4,250 feet elevation, has 60 - 90 growing days above freezing and receives about 28 inches of snow annually; and the Tule Basin, at 4,036 feet elevation, has 82 growing days above freezing and receives about 24 inches of snow annually.

HIGH COUNTRY REALITIES

The Right to Be Rural

Fundamental to the theme of "The Code of the West" is this concept: the right to be rural. Although self-reliance is required, rural neighbors need each other. A horse or two may live next door and there are wild animals living in the woods. Clean water, sanitation and access are your responsibility.

Open Range Law

Siskiyou County is among the counties of California that have an open range law. This means if you do not want cattle, sheep or other livestock on your property, it is your responsibility to fence them out. It is not the responsibility of the rancher to keep livestock off your property. The exception to this is a property adjacent to federally managed land. An owner must fence his cattle out of federally managed land or face trespass. The costs are his or hers to bear.

Farm Life...Cows & Other Critters

The County has a large percentage of commercial farming and livestock raising. Where it exists it is there first by right and deserves not to be condemned by urban development. If you buy or build next to a farm or ranch, expect agricultural activity. The "right to be rural" applies. Love it or avoid it.

Ranchers often work around the clock, especially during irrigation and harvest time. It is possible that adjoining agriculture uses can disturb your peace and quiet. Operations can cause dust, especially during windy and dry weather. Farmers sometimes burn their ditches to keep them clear of debris, weeds and other obstructions. This burning creates smoke that you may find objectionable. Use of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers are normal practice. Animals can cause objectionable odors. What else can we say? Agriculture is an important business in Siskiyou County. If you choose to live among the ranches of our rural countryside, do not expect county government to protect you from the normal day-to-day operations of your agri-business neighbors.

Right to Farm Ordinance

Siskiyou County has adopted a "Right to Farm Ordinance." It is the declared policy of the County to enhance and encourage agricultural operations. Section 10-11.02 of the ordinance states: "It is the purpose and intent of this section to reduce loss to the County of its agricultural resources by limiting the circumstances under which agricultural operations may be considered a nuisance." Section 10-11.03 states: "No agricultural activity, operation or facility or appurtenances thereof, conducted or maintained for commercial purposes, and in a manner consistent with proper and accepted customs and standards and with all chapters of Siskiyou County code, as established and followed by similar agricultural operations shall be or become a nuisance, public or private, pursuant to the Siskiyou County Code after the same has been in operation for more than three years, if it was not a nuisance when it began."

This means, don't move next to a dairy and complain about the smell. Don't move next to a hay farmer and complain about dust, tractor noise, chemicals or late night lights. Don't move next to a commercial forest and complain when the time comes to cut it or when logging trucks come down the road.

Growth

Population of Siskiyou County is approximately 44,850. It is anticipated this number will increase slightly but at a slower rate than the State. Residents over sixty make up a higher percentage of the population in the County than the state average. Projections are that this trend will continue.

REAL ESTATE, LAND & JUST PLAIN DIRT

Given the reality of the rural setting, "buyer beware" takes on a whole new meaning. Any reputable seller or sales agent will welcome your seeking a second opinion and your checking out the facts yourself.

Water, the Real Gold

Water is the real gold in the West. These facts are critical. First, Western Water Law determines who owns and controls every drop of water. Secondly, preservation of water quality is paramount, which is why the next section on sanitation is so long. Most potable water in the County is produced by a well located on each property. Water conservation is a rural way of life. Low-flow devices and appliances are prudent and sometimes necessary, for it costs to pump water up 200 plus feet, and some wells, particularly in dry years, do not produce more than a few gallons per minute. Protection of the purity of well water, your drinking water, requires proper installation of wells. Protection from ground water pollution is vital, and most critical is protection of wells from failed septic systems. If your water supply fails you just lost the ability to live comfortably in paradise, for the average home uses about 250 gallons of water per day per household. Prospective owners should make sure the well produces a quantity of water that will support their intended use of the property. A well producing 5 gallons per minute is sufficient to support a couple, small lawn and garden, but it will not accommodate the family of six with a horse pasture and a large garden without a water storage tank. Water rights on several rivers are governed by court decree. Even though a property may be physically adjacent to a stream, the landowner may not have the right to use, divert or impound the water.

Sanitation

Nearly all residences outside the towns have an ISDS (Individual Sewage Disposal System), often called a "septic system." Again, Expectations. The urbanite expects whatever they flush to go away. Locals expect the flush to end up underground in the back yard. In the yard will be a 1000-gallon or larger tank in which bacteria digest liquid and solid waste. Undigested solids settle to the bottom of the tank. From the tank the remaining "black" water flows to a leach field where it soaks into the ground and the earth filters out some impurities. Thus, 90% to 95% of the septic water is returned to the earth where it (hopefully) is pure and reusable. Your wastewater will be used again, and you may not be the first in line.

Due to the importance of clean water and the growing population that is placing wells and septic systems closer and closer, and also due to some poor soil conditions, Siskiyou County may require an "enhanced/alternative" septic system for many new or replacement systems. Wells must be a minimum of 100 feet from the leach field. The County does not set standards for wells that are more than 100 feet away. Make certain all wells and sewers are separated by a minimum of 100 feet, including your neighbor's. If located closer than this, it will undoubtedly cause you problems in the future. Your water supply may become undrinkable, and banks will

not lend money to you or prospective buyers. When building a new house you will need to obtain the appropriate permits to ensure you don't end up with future problems.

ISDS systems work when cared for and fail when: 1) they are not pumped regularly, 2) bacteria-killing chemicals are introduced, 3) non-biodegradables are flushed, 4) overload floods the field, and/or if, 5) the field is compacted. Thus: 1) pumping every 7 to 10 years is recommended, 2) bleach, drain cleaner such as Drano, paint thinner, etc., down the drain is a no-no, 3) flushing plastics, cloth-based paper or diapers is a big mistake, 4) too many people using too much water will flood the leach field, and 5) driving or playing on the leach field will compact it. New ISDS systems are inspected and likely are properly installed. If the system is older than 20 years, expect to replace it sooner rather than later.

Access

Just because there is a road or driveway does not mean a property has legal access, especially if the access is across property belonging to others. It is wise to get legal advice and to fully understand and document easements that may exist or are necessary to insure access. Do not accept the word of a seller or agent, especially if they tell you you can't be kept off your property. The "right" of access could require thousands of dollars in legal costs plus delay upon delay. There may be unrecorded power or other easements across your land, and land "behind" yours may require you to permit an easement. Easements may require you to allow construction of roads, power lines, water lines, sewer lines, etc., across your land. There may be easements that are not of record. Check these issues carefully. The County does not have deeds for many of our County roads and old roads may not be depicted on title searches. Many County roads have a prescriptive right for use. Some neighbors are just plain rotten and some are saintly, but for either, nail down the legal access in writing before your property purchase closes.

There may be road or driveway maintenance issues, especially during winter months, so it is wise to see that your driveway was properly engineered and constructed. Property owners are responsible for maintenance and snow plowing of all private roads and driveways. Heavy rains and rapid snow melt can wash out or severely damage your driveway or private road. You may need to buy a snowplow or contract to maintain your driveway. Natural disasters, especially floods, can destroy roads. A dry creek bed can become a raging torrent and washed out roads, bridges and culverts. Residents served by private roads and/or bridges have been hit with large bills for repairs and/or reconstruction after floods. You may need to contract for maintenance and snow removal. Don't assume a neighbor will cooperate or share expenses. And don't wait until the snow flies to make these arrangements. Be aware that the County does not clear the snow berm created across your driveway when public roads are plowed. The big snow plow's job is to keep public roads open. Clearing the end of your driveway is your responsibility and one of the joys of rural living. It is easier, too, if the berm is removed before driven over or packed into a wall of ice. Also, residents should take care in the placement of

new fences to not build them too close to the traveled way. Snow removal and general maintenance may damage fences.

Gravel roads generate dust. When traffic levels reach specific levels, Siskiyou County may treat certain County roads to suppress the dust near houses, but dust is still a fact of life for most rural residents. If your road is gravel it is highly unlikely that Siskiyou County will pave it in the foreseeable future. Check carefully with the County Road Department when any statement is made by the seller of any property that indicates any gravel roads will be paved. Unpaved roads will often times become washboarded and grading will only be done when conditions and resources are available. This is a rural area and many residents like solitude which includes no glaring street lights on rural corners. Do not expect lighted corners on your subdivision intersections.

Property Boundaries

You may be provided with a parcel map of your property, and there may be survey pegs, pieces of rebar or water pipe, fences, blazes on trees, or piles of rock marking alleged property boundaries, but unless you get a real survey by a licensed surveyor you risk disappointment and grief. Your home, outbuildings, well and septic must be sited within specific distances of property boundaries and neighboring structures. Fences that separate properties are often not built on the boundaries. A survey of the land is the only way to verify the location of your property lines. This is not a place to save a few dollars.

Mineral Rights

Property may or may not have the mineral rights included with the land. Owners of mineral rights have the right to mine, which may change the surface on or near your property. Although a use permit and reclamation plan are required to mine, you need to know what minerals could be mined on or near your dream home. Much of the rural land in Siskiyou County can be used for mining, however a special review by the Planning Commission is usually required. Be aware that adjacent mining uses can expand and cause impacts. Impacts can often be mitigated. Check it out.

Homeowner Associations

Some sub-divisions have Homeowner Associations (HOAs) and most homeowner associations have Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions (CC&Rs). If so, it is important to obtain a copy of the CC&Rs (or confirm that there are none) and make sure that you can live with those rules. You need to understand the covenants and any specific conditions that may come with living or building there. Some association membership is voluntary, some control architecture, some have dues, and some control or prohibit animals. Know the covenants before you buy. Homeowner Associations usually are required to take care of common elements, roads, open space, etc. Road maintenance costs can be significant. A dysfunctional HOA can cause problems for you and even involve you in expense and litigation. Dues are almost always a

requirement for those areas with an HOA. The by-laws of the HOA will tell you how the organization operates and how the dues are set.

Land Uses Change

Zoning for residential, commercial or other uses tends to be stable. However, land use and density may change over time. You can check with the Siskiyou County Planning Department to find out how the property you invested in and adjacent parcels are zoned. You can also find out what future developments may be in the planning stages. When you move in, the neighborhood changes for your neighbor, and the same will apply for you when the next new resident builds on the adjacent parcel.

Buildability vs. Livability

Not all lots are buildable. Access, slope, septic and well distances may be inadequate. Be cautious before you buy. You must check with the Siskiyou County Planning Department to be certain that a piece of land can be built on. Check with folks living in the area, for even if a site is buildable, many factors affect livability.

Construction

Building your dream home in a rural area is different from building in the city or the suburbs. Your past building experience may not be adequate. The abbreviated building season, delivery surcharges, worker travel times, local labor and contractor availability and ever-increasing material costs drive up the per-square-foot figure.

Access and utility easements may require time and cost. If you plan to build it is prudent to check out construction access. Can big trucks get to the site? Check the zoning requirements. Many large construction vehicles cannot navigate small, narrow roads and bridges.

Get real about costs. For example, in addition to the price of concrete per yard there is a truck time surcharge per minute to and from the origination point which can be an hour or more away. Delays are inevitable. Pick a contractor carefully and write an ironclad contract.

Site design is important. For example, the driveway needs to work both in summer and winter and must be adequate for emergency vehicle access. An encroachment permit from the Road Department is required if you are adjacent to a County-maintained road. There may be rural interface requirements regarding driveway sizes and water storage; the California Department of Forestry can provide information on this. Some housing described as "affordable" may have inferior materials and workmanship and may be inadequate for the area and/or harsh weather. Often "affordable" is an euphemism for what was called a "cracker box" shortly after WW II. Get the facts before you start. building, special use, excavation, septic and other permits are required for the protection of old- and newcomers. To protect adjacent uses from impingement we have regulations, bureaucracy, inspectors and permits. Demand and verify that your builder gets the proper permits and inspections.

Internet Usage

Most areas of Siskiyou County can only access the Internet over dial-up modems. Depending upon your location, this access may be slow. Broadband access and wireless hot spots are still rare, but both are becoming more frequently available.

Most areas of the County are served by regional Internet Service Providers, while some areas are served by nationwide providers. Make sure the provider you choose has local access numbers so you don't have to pay long distance charges for access.

Utilities

Summer storms or heavy winter snows may knock out power and phones. Usually service is back on within a few minutes. However, it is possible to lose service for several hours or up to several days, in which case frozen foods are at risk, the well won't pump, the furnace may not heat and the kitchen stove may not cook. Having a Plan B to compensate for the loss of power may require a small generator and alternative light and heat sources. Make sure that your generator is operated safely outside and is properly installed to prevent dangerous feedback on the power lines. It's also a good idea to keep at least 72 hours to a week's supply of non-perishable food and water on hand. Remember, when the lights go out, you are responsible.

Part of the County has three-phase power, but not all. Electric lines are not run to every lot or property and doing so can get very expensive. Sometimes easements from private property owners may be needed to bring power to remote areas. Again, check it out. A battery back-up and surge protector is a wise investment to protect computers and other delicate electronic equipment. Be sure your needs can be met. Note: Salmon River Country has no commercial power available.

Natural gas is not available in Siskiyou County. Cable TV is not available everywhere and satellite services are not always optimal in canyon areas. Cell phone reception may be nonexistent on the wild frontier.

Deliveries

Not all of the County has U.S. mail delivery at roadside mailboxes. Mail delivery may not go into all sub-divisions. In addition to those who must, many residents choose to use post office boxes in town where the local service is personalized and the mail is secure.

Commercial express carriers deliver to most parts of the County, weather permitting. If this is important to you, check it out. "Next day" and "Overnight" delivery often translates to "Give it a few days."

Newspapers from the metropolitan area can be delivered to subscribers at most roadside mailbox locations. Local newspapers are the Siskiyou Daily News, Pioneer Press, Butte Valley Star, Weed Press, Dunsmuir News and Mt. Shasta Herald and are available at various

locations, via U.S. mail or delivery. Subscribing to a local newspaper is a good way to help you learn more about community activities.

The View

One of the reasons to live in Siskiyou County is to enjoy the spectacular views. Be aware that your view may change as neighbors near and far build their dream homes. Two notions to keep in mind: first, what you do on your property will likely be in someone else's view, so be aware and considerate. And second, you do not own your view. If you want to control the view, you need to buy the land. Folks should know that their view or "setting" is often borrowed from their neighbors who may manage the resources on the property as a commercial family business. The forest around you may be part of an agricultural business that may be ripe for harvesting sometime in the future. The gravel may be mined and the pasture populated by cows.

Property Taxes

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. Schools receive approximately 66%, the County 23%, cities 6% and special districts 5%. The County Road Department receives no funding from property taxes.

MOTHER NATURE

Nature can provide you with some wonderful neighbors. Most are positive additions to the environment. However, there are some others that you need to be concerned about. Some can be dangerous and you need to know how to deal with them. The California Fish and Game is a good resource for information.

Wildlife...Oh, Deer!

Cash and the finance company can facilitate new neighbors, but nature has already provided neighbors that have been here for thousands of years - deer, elk, bears, mountain lions, bobcats, coyotes, beavers, raccoons, skunks, trout, hummingbirds, squirrels et al. The wild animals were here first and we are living/camping in their front yard. Some of the native neighbors eat pets, which is a reason to keep domestic pets confined and protected. A regional wildlife writer described a poodle on a deck as a "meatloaf with fur." The neighborhood bears are attracted to kitchen scraps, bird feeders, pet food etc. Folks shouldn't complain when the deer, elk and rabbits eat their petunias. Be accommodating to the wildlife but DO NOT adopt wildlife. It is against the law to willfully and purposefully feed the deer.

Tame life...Horses & Dogs

Part of rural life and the right to be rural is the ability to have pets such as a horse, dog, or llama. There is something wrong with the picture when one neighbor can't have horses,

donkeys, ducks, chickens or guinea hens that stay at home in a pen because dogs running at large from next door or over the ridge harass, maim or kill them. Before you allow your dog, and yourself, to get into trouble with livestock, please become familiar with State and County codes that apply to all pet owners that allow their pets to roam throughout the unincorporated areas of the county. A brochure is available from the Siskiyou County Agriculture Department that cites the applicable County code.

California and other Western states have many laws that not only protect pets from abuse, neglect, cruelty and mistreatment, but they also strongly protect the rights of ranchers and farmers. Single roaming dogs can join other dogs they meet to form dangerous packs that can harm and damage livestock. In Siskiyou County, State law permits ranchers to protect their livestock from injury and income loss due to attacks by dogs. Note that laws cited here apply to unincorporated areas of the county and that other city laws may apply. Both State and County law places the responsibility for the dog and its actions squarely on the shoulders of the dog's owner! So please, show your consideration for your neighbors and your love for your dog by keeping it safe at home. Responsible residents will keep corrals clean and dogs will be confined, reasonably quiet and controlled when out for a walk with their people. Be a good neighbor.

Plant life...Native vs. Weeds

Siskiyou County is serious about weed control and protecting our natural indigenous plants. Current and new residents need to educate themselves and act to control noxious weeds that crowd out native plants. Some weeds are so pernicious that they destroy the land use. Owning rural land means knowing how to care for it. Before buying land, you should know if it has noxious weeds that may be expensive to control and that you may be required to control. Some plants are poisonous to horses and other livestock. By the time most folks become aware, it is too late. Noxious weeds may not be your only problem, indigenous threatened or endangered species may cause your best-laid plans to come to a screeching halt. Plants like Yreka Phlox could require you to change your plans to accommodate the natural environmental conditions that allow certain species to prosper. Contact the Siskiyou County Agriculture Department and Farm Advisor for information and assistance. Thanks for getting aboard.

Fire Danger

Wildfire is always a threat. Lightning starts fires every summer, as do campers, hikers, smokers and careless residents. Although building codes may require fire related precautions, ultimately you are responsible to take the necessary steps to mitigate the fire danger around your dwellings. "Defensible perimeters" are helpful in protecting buildings from fire and inversely can protect the forest from igniting if your house catches on fire. You are responsible for paying for the cost of extinguishing a fire that you started. The United States Forest Service, California Department of Forestry (CDF) and local fire departments wish to advise you. Please ask.

Trees rubbing on roofs pose a real fire hazard to both the house and the woods. The "Darn Fool Clause" says it is OK if you burn your own house down. But if your house sets the woods on fire, and the neighbors are threatened or burned out, you are responsible.

Both the California Department of Forestry and the Forest Service initiate controlled burns in the spring and fall that create smoke and haze throughout the County. These fires are not under the control of local government except for air quality monitoring.

Air Pollution

The safe use of fire also will impact the clean air we are used to breathing in Siskiyou County. To manage the smoke impacts of fires, the law requires that all burns be carried out on "Permissive Burn" days. Under certain circumstances, the Siskiyou County Air Pollution Control District (SCAPCD) can give a variance from this requirement. Even if you are only burning a small amount, you need to call the SCAPCD to find out if it's a permissive burn day. When calling within the County the telephone number is 866-652-2876 (toll-free) or when calling from outside the County the number is 530-842-8123. Please be aware that burning of construction debris, plastics, buildings, tires, tar-paper, etc. is not permitted. Burn permits are required by the California Department of Forestry during fire season, usually April 30 through October. If you plan to burn something on a date that is outside the official fire season, the SCAPCD issues permits for all agricultural burns, burn piles larger than 4 feet by 4 feet, range improvement, forest management burning, treated brush, timber operations and silviculture. Before starting a fire, please know the regulations or call the SCAPCD at 530.841.4029. Rules for small burns may be different for each city so check with your city hall.

Flooding

The topography of the land can tell you where the water will go in the case of heavy precipitation. When property owners fill in ravines, they have found that the water that drained through that ravine now drains through their house. A flash flood can occur and turn a dry gully into a river. It is wise to take this possibility into consideration when building. Spring runoff can cause a very small creek to become a major river. Many residents use sand bags to protect their homes. New home construction requires a surveyor or engineer to determine a safe building site.

The County Public Works Department and/or your property insurance carrier may be able to provide historical information as to whether or not a parcel of land is located in a flood plain. This may have an effect on the rate of your property insurance.

Drought

Siskiyou County experiences drought from time to time. Your lawn may not stay green. If your well runs dry, you will need to make provisions. The County cannot be responsible for those circumstances.

Getting Around

Depending on the location, a four-wheel drive or all-wheel-drive vehicle may be advised. You may get along without one, but that insures there may be times you won't get out and won't get back for a few days. Those ready for prime time have an adequate 4 x 4 vehicle equipped with emergency clothing kit and supplies, winter tires, tow chain, jumper cables and tire chains.

The policy of the Siskiyou County Road Department is to remove snow from the County roads safely and quickly, considering the availability of labor, equipment, and funding. Only minimal sanding is done where warranted by traffic volumes and speeds or where dictated by roadway alignment and grades. Normally, sanding is done only on the more important roads at intersections, steep grades, bridge decks, sharp curves or other areas known to have accident problems associated with icy conditions. Funding limitations do not allow roads to be kept free of snow and ice at all times. Anti-icing chemicals are used in place of sand in certain areas as conditions allow.

Winter maintenance is done on routes in order of importance, starting with major collectors, followed by minor collectors and local roads. School bus routes are also given high priority while recreation-only routes are given lower priority. Uninhabited roads are not plowed or sanded. Plowing begins when three inches of snow accumulates on the roadway. If accumulation is not reached until afternoon or night, then plowing does not begin until early the following morning.

Winter work hours are 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday through Friday (single shifts only). Road Maintenance Supervisors may authorize emergency work (snow removal and certain ice control) on overtime up to 12 hour per day, 7 days per week. This work is limited to between 5:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. daily for the work crews (supervisors may begin checking roads as early as 4:00 a.m.). An exception might be if called out by law enforcement to assist in a specific emergency operation. Unless authorized by the Director, snow and ice are not removed from recreational roads outside the normal work hours.

Snow usually is bermed to the right, attempting to move equal amounts in each direction. Berms are not removed from private road encroachments, mailboxes or driveways. Operators will attempt to avoid unusually high amounts of snow in berms at driveways around enlarged areas such as cul-de-sacs and intersections whenever possible. If time allows during normal work hours, crews may remove berms from driveways to certain public facilities or emergency services. Any work done outside the road right-of-way must receive prior approval by the Director and billed.

County Ordinance No. 770 prohibits parking in the roadway during snow removal operations. In order to enforce this ordinance, the area must be properly signed. Operators will attempt to warn offending motorists prior to contacting CHP for citation and towing.

School bus routes serve the County, however, children may need to walk a considerable way and will need transportation to and from after-school activities.

The Siskiyou Transit and General Express (STAGE) provides fixed route transit/bus service between the major population centers of the County. For information call 1-800-24-STAGE.

EDUCATION

Schools

The primary mission of the Siskiyou County Office of Education is to deliver quality education. Local school districts are responsible for providing such education specific to the laws and regulations established by the California legislature and the California Department of Education.

The County Office of Education is committed to assisting the local school districts through direct and indirect service. The County Office of Education provides a variety of services, including fiscal management curriculum coordination, special schools and programs, health and guidance services, media programs and materials and coordination of state and federal projects.

There are many private school opportunities located throughout the County.

College of the Siskiyous

College of the Siskiyous (COS) is a comprehensive public community college located in the city of Weed with a satellite campus in the city of Yreka. COS is noted for its excellent educational programs, comprehensive support services and personalized instruction. In addition, it's facilities are used as entertainment venues for everything from Shasta Taiko Drummers to film festivals to plays.

SERVICES

Library

The Library maintains branches in Tule Lake, Dorris, Happy Camp, Fort Jones, Etna, Montague, Dunsmuir, McCloud, Mt. Shasta, Weed and a small sub-station in the Scott Bar Post Office. The main branch is located in Yreka at 719 4th Street. Library services include check-out of books, magazines, videos (VHS and DVD), audio books (cassette and CD). The libraries also provide reference assistance and public-use computers with access to the internet, word processing and other software. Our website, www.siskiyoulibrary.info, provides the ability to search our library catalog, place items on hold to be sent to your local library, searchable indexes of Siskiyou County Newspapers and other local databases, and the hours, location and contact information for each branch. In addition, the Library maintains an outline database of Services and Organizations of Siskiyou County (SOS) at <http://www.sosisk.org>.

As with other rural services, the distances among our branches may cause some inconvenience as patrons must sometimes wait for a week or more for an item to be delivered from a branch at the opposite end of the county. However, items can be checked in and out among the various branches. A book checked out in Happy Camp can be returned to Mount Shasta, for example.

Stop by your local public library with identification, proof of your current mailing address and the name and phone number of a local reference and we can issue you a card immediately.

Emergency Services

Volunteer groups staffed by unpaid professionals respond to community emergencies, including your emergency. The service groups include many fire departments, fire auxiliary, search and rescue, ambulance services and community-based organizations, such as Red Cross, Neighborhood Watch, etc. Only two of the six ambulance services in the County are full-time paid services, the remainder are volunteer (Happy Camp, Dorris, Etna, McCloud). An air ambulance service is provided at the Weed Airport.

Again, this is rural living. Response times vary with the season and are much longer than in a city. The folks who show up at your emergency may have had to close their business, drop off a kid or whatever to respond to your emergency call. They will be professional and know what they are doing. Please be aware that it is extremely important to post your address in large reflective numbers where it can be clearly seen both coming and going. Many rural homes are located down dirt roads or out-of-the-way country roads, sometimes miles from the main highway. Emergency response teams cannot help you if they cannot find your home. Keep in mind that you chose to live where the hospital is an hour or more away by road and 20 minutes or more by chopper after the troops find you, stabilize you and load you. There are two hospitals in the County, Fairchild Medical Center in Yreka and Mercy Medical Center Mt. Shasta. Occasionally, a patient may need to be transported south to Redding or north to Medford, Oregon.

Volunteering

If volunteering is not something you would ever consider, it could be rural living is not for you. Although country folks tend to be independent and like their privacy, we depend on each other. The neighbor you didn't bother to wave at all summer is more likely to help pull your car out of a snowy ditch than the folks from your auto club. This County is the sum of the many volunteers who participate in emergency, school, library and other social activities. Join in!

County Fair

A truly rural event is the annual Siskiyou Golden Fair. Folks get to show off their pets, livestock, wares, skills, artistry and achievements. It's pure Americana. The fair is dedicated to showcasing the customs and cultures of Siskiyou County while sustaining and developing family entertainment and enriching economic vitality. The Siskiyou Golden Fair holds many

events throughout the year such as the Gold Wing Touring Association rally, equestrian events, home shows, and wedding receptions. The Tulelake/Butte Valley Fair is conducted in late summer and offers another quality rural fair experience.

Trash

Trash removal is a regular chore (we hope). There are several urban-like trash removal companies, but most people haul their own trash and recyclables to the County transfer station or dump where your County pays as much to haul off recycled items as landfill stuff. The fees charged at the County trash facility, outrageous as they may seem, cover only about 1/3 of the cost. Also, each dwelling unit is assessed an annual fee to help cover costs.

Containment of trash is important. Loose kitchen trash is ugly and will attract unwanted visitors, namely, bears, dogs, raccoons and maybe the code enforcement officer. If an animal or wind scatters your trash, it is up to you to clean it up. Please don't trash paradise.

County Government

County and urban services are very different, partly due to available revenue and partly because cities and counties are constitutionally different. Cities are independent and can do anything not prohibited by the State, whereas counties are an arm of the State and can only do what is specifically permitted by the State. Indicative of making the transition from urban to rural living would be to change the statement, "Why don't they..." to "Why don't I...."

Call the Siskiyou County Administrator at 530-842-8005, to get a listing and location of County departments and services. Come to the Courthouse and County offices where you will always be welcome. The County web site at www.co.siskiyou.ca.us has a variety of topics. If you do not have a personal computer, you can view the web site while you visit the Siskiyou County Library.

Your Supervisors can be contacted through the County Administrator's office at 842-8005 or at their home offices, for Siskiyou is a small rural county where your elected officials are available to you. Generally, the first three Tuesdays of every month the Supervisors hold their regular meeting. You can get on the agenda, you can speak during the "public comment" segment of every meeting, or you can observe. Also, the agenda and minutes of Board of Supervisor meetings are available on the County web site. We welcome your presence as we go about the work entrusted to us by the citizens of Siskiyou County.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

This information summarizes some of the issues and notions residents have faced as they grew up in or moved to Siskiyou Country. It 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 hope this Primer helps you make informed and successful decisions about living in the north country. Is the "right to be rural" right for you? For some, it's a nice place to visit during the spring, summer and fall. For others it is a paradise for year-round living. But for both, living in rural Siskiyou County requires one to learn, prepare and, above all, be ready for the realities of north country living. It is not our intent to dissuade you, only inform you.