



**CODE OF THE WEST**  
**HUMBOLDT COUNTY**  
**NEVADA**

# Code of the West Humboldt County, Nevada

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 prospective citizens of Humboldt County, who wish to follow in the footsteps of those rugged individuals by living outside the city limits. The body of this document was taken from an original work by [John Clarke](#), Commissioner of Larimer County, Colorado.



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## INTRODUCTION

It is important for you to know that life in the country is different from life in the city. Properties offered on the Internet may sound like a good investment, but "buyer beware" - ***IF IT SOUNDS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE, IT JUST MAY BE. WE ADVISE VISITING HUMBOLDT COUNTY TO SEE WHAT YOU ARE INVESTING IN*** - this is a rural community with a low population. Many of the properties offered are not easily accessible - the land may be on a hillside or in the flats - there is no way to be absolutely sure of the topography without seeing the property. There may be no road within miles and it may be necessary to obtain permission to cross land belonging to others in order to access the property.



Many of the advantages of living in a large city are not readily available in a small community. Reno is approximately 170 miles (a 2 1/2-3 hour drive) west of Winnemucca; Boise - 260 miles (a 5 hour drive) north of Winnemucca; Salt Lake City - 369 miles (a 6 hour drive). The nearest commercial passenger airports are in those cities. However, both AMTRAK and Greyhound Lines, Inc. serve Winnemucca.

This document is not intended to dissuade you from living in our rural county, but it is important for you to know that life in the rural areas is very different from life in the city. County governments are not always able to provide the same level of service in undeveloped, rural and remote areas as they do inside urban or developed areas adjacent to the city. To that end, we are providing you with the following information to help you make an educated and informed decision when choosing to purchase or develop land outside the boundaries of incorporated cities or towns in Humboldt County.



## ACCESS

The fact that you may be able to drive to your property does not necessarily guarantee that you, your guests and emergency service vehicles can achieve that same level of access at all times. Please consider the following:

- Emergency response times for sheriff, fire suppression, medical care, etc. cannot be guaranteed. Under some extreme conditions, you may find that emergency response is extremely slow, expensive or nonexistent.



- There can be problems with the legal aspects of access, especially if you gain access across property belonging to others via privately owned easements or access roads. It is wise to obtain legal advice and understand the easements that may be necessary when these types of questions arise. Many of these properties are accessible only through Bureau of Land Management ([BLM: 775-623-1500](tel:775-623-1500)) managed property. Contact the BLM to find out what may be required in order to access the property you propose to purchase.

- You can experience problems with the maintenance and cost of maintenance of your road. Humboldt County maintains 946 miles of roads, but many rural properties are not served by private or public roads. 'Roads' to those properties are not maintained by private homeowners' associations, private parties, or other landowners. In actuality, there are many 'roads' that are not maintained by anyone. Make sure you know what type of maintenance to expect and who will provide that maintenance.



- Many large construction vehicles cannot navigate narrow, winding roads. So, if you plan to build, it would be prudent to check out construction access.
- Extreme weather conditions can destroy roads. It would be prudent to determine whether or not the road to the property you're considering is properly engineered and constructed.
- In extreme weather, which sometimes lasts for several days, county maintained roads can become impassable. Snow could leave you stranded at your property, as well as impede your access to roads. You may need a four-wheel drive vehicle with chains for all four wheels to travel during those episodes. School buses and other types of vehicles may not be able to travel during these times.
- School buses travel only on maintained county roads that have been designated as school bus routes by the school district. You may need to drive your children to the nearest county road so they can get to school.



- Natural disasters, especially floods, can destroy roads. Humboldt County will repair and maintain county roads, however, many roads are the responsibility of the landowners who use those roads. A dry creek bed can become a raging torrent which will wash out roads, bridges, and culverts.
- Unpaved roads generate dust. When traffic levels reach specific levels, Humboldt County treats county system roads to suppress the dust, but dust is still a fact of life for most rural residents.



- If your road is unpaved, it is highly unlikely that Humboldt County will pave it in the foreseeable future. Check with the County Road Department when any statement is made by the seller of any property that indicates any unpaved roads will be paved.
- Unpaved roads are not always smooth and are often slippery when wet. You will experience an increase in vehicle maintenance costs when you regularly travel on rural county roads. Also, be aware that speeds in excess of 35 mph can affect unpaved roads and cause damage to your vehicle. Potholes and washboards usually are created by traffic traveling too fast on unpaved roads.

- Mail delivery is not available to all areas of the county. Check with the postmaster for mail delivery information for your area. You may need to obtain a post office box at one of the USPS offices within the county to facilitate your mail delivery.



- Newspaper delivery is not always available to all areas of the county. Check with the newspaper of your choice before assuming you can get delivery.
- Standard parcel and overnight package delivery can be a problem for those who live in remote rural areas. Confirm with the service providers as to your status.

- It may be more expensive and time consuming to build a rural residence due to delivery fees and the time required for inspectors to reach your site. A county building permit is required prior to the construction of certain structures or improvements to the property. Prior to a building permit being issued an access road, from the nearest county maintained road, will be required to be named and approved by the Regional Street Naming committee and the Regional Planning Commission.

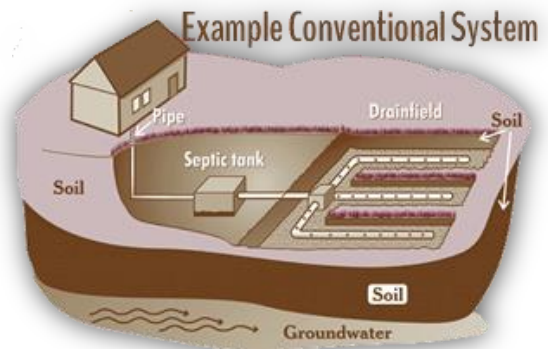


## SERVICES



Water, sewer, telephone, cell phone and other services may be unavailable or may not operate at urban standards. Repairs can often take much longer than in towns and cities. Please review your options from the non-exhaustive list below.

- Telephone communications can be a problem, especially in the rural or mountainous expanse of Humboldt County. If you have a private line, it may be difficult to obtain another line for fax or computer modem uses. Even cellular phones may not work in all areas. Depending on your current provider, they may not have an accessible cell tower that would serve properties beyond the limits of developed areas throughout Nevada.
- Outside of water and sanitation districts, sewer service is not available to many properties. If the property you're considering is within one of those districts, and if sewer service is available to that property, a sizeable assessment may be charged when you hook into the system. If the property lies outside those districts, please be advised that it may be expensive to maintain an onsite system to handle sewage.
- If sewer service is not available, as is generally the case in rural areas, you will need to use an approved [septic system](#) or other treatment process. The type of soil you have available for a leach field will be very important in determining the cost and function of your system. The system must be checked by the State Inspector and permits must be obtained. Perk tests may be required to determine if the property will drain.



- If you have access to a supply of treated domestic water, the tap fees can be expensive. You may also find that your monthly cost of service can be costly when compared to municipal systems.
- If you do not have access to a supply of treated domestic water, you will have to locate an alternative supply. The most common sources of water in rural areas are private wells. Permits for wells are granted by the state engineer and the cost for drilling and pumping can be considerable. The quality and quantity of well water can vary considerably from location to location and from season to season. It is STRONGLY suggested that you research this issue very carefully.
- You will be allowed a well for domestic water use. Permits from the state engineer may restrict water you're able to use to that which is

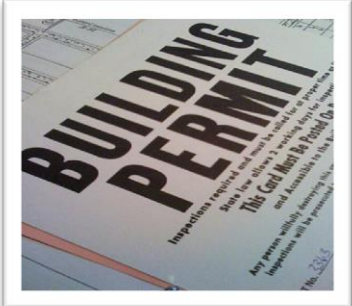
used inside of a home. Similarly, permits from the state engineer may allow or prohibit water use for irrigation of crops, landscaping and/or livestock. If you have other needs, make certain that you have the proper approvals before you invest. It may also be difficult to find enough water to provide your needs even if you can secure the property permit. Water rights in Nevada are very expensive and difficult to obtain.

- Electric service is not available to many areas of Humboldt County. It is important to determine the proximity of electrical power. It can be very expensive to extend power lines to remote areas or to install a personal off-grid electrical system.
- It may be necessary to cross property owned by others in order to extend electric service to your property in the most cost efficient manner. It is important to make sure that the proper easements are in place to allow lines to be built to your property.
- Electric power may not be available in two phase or three phase service configurations. If you have special power requirements, it is important to know what level of service can be provided to your property.
- If you are purchasing land with the plan to build at some future date, there is a possibility that others may build first, and that electric lines may not be able to accommodate your needs without modification to the service lines (addition of transformers or capacitors). Those modifications may cause expenditures you weren't originally forecasting into your budget.
- The cost of electric service is usually divided into a fee to hook into the system and then a monthly charge for energy consumed. It is important to know both costs before making a decision to purchase a specific piece of property.
- Power outages can occur in outlying areas with more frequency than in more developed areas. A loss of electric power can also interrupt your supply of water from a well. You may also lose food in freezers or refrigerators and power outages can cause problems with computers as well. If you live in remote or outlying areas of the county, it is important to be able to survive up to a week or more with no utilities.
- Trash removal can be much more expensive in a rural area than in a city. In some cases, your trash dumpster may be several miles from your home or non-existent. It is illegal to create your own trash dump, even on your own land. It is good to know the cost for trash removal if you're considering moving to remote or outlying areas of the county. In some cases, your only option may be to haul your trash to the landfill yourself. Recycling is more difficult because pick-up is not available in most rural areas.
- If you prefer cooking or heating with natural gas, that service may not be available on rural properties. You may need to consider switching to using propane, which will affect your choice of appliances.



## THE PROPERTY

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

- **Permits and Approvals:** Construction of dwellings and most buildings in Humboldt County require county-issued building permits and inspections prior to use or occupancy. The permitting process not only helps assure you that your proposed project is in conformance with applicable county construction codes, but also that it is consistent with other requirements regulating property divisions and uses such as setbacks, minimum frontage, potable water supply, and sewage disposal systems.
- 
- Not all lots are buildable. The Humboldt County Assessor has many parcels that are split and separated for the purpose of taxation and that are not “legal” lots in the sense that a building permit can be issued. You must check with the Humboldt County Assessor or the Regional Planning Department to determine if it is legal to build on that particular piece of land.
  - [Easements](#) may require you to allow construction of roads, power lines, etc. across your land. There may be easements that are not of record. Check these issues carefully.
  - Many property owners do not own the [mineral rights](#) under their property. ([Per Nevada law](#), a separation of the mineral estate should have been noted in a title search if you are purchasing land without mineral rights.) Owners of mineral rights have the ability to change the surface characteristics in order to extract their minerals. It is important to know what minerals may be located under the land and who owns them – check for Mineral Leases, which allow access to property. Much of the rural land in Humboldt County can be used for mining, however, approval of a conditional use permit is required. A public hearing is held for approval by the Regional Planning Commission. Be aware that adjacent mining uses can expand and cause negative impacts to adjacent properties.
  - You may be provided with a plat of your property, but unless the land has been surveyed and pins placed by a licensed surveyor, you cannot assume that the plat is accurate.



- Fences that separate properties are often misaligned with the property lines. A survey of the land is the only way to confirm the location of your property lines. Humboldt County does not verify the location of property lines or become involved in property line disputes.
- Many subdivisions and planned unit developments have covenants, conditions and restrictions ([CC&Rs](#)) that limit the use of the property (e.g., what you'll be allowed to plant, the color you can paint the exterior of your home, etc.) 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. Also, a lack of covenants can cause problems between neighbors. Humboldt County does not become involved with the enforcement or resolution of the CC&Rs.
- Some properties or Planned Unit Developments may be controlled or governed by [Homeowners Associations](#) (HOAs). Dues are almost always a requirement for those purchasing property subject to an HOA. The bylaws of the HOA will tell you how the organization operates and how the dues are set. Generally, fees collected by the HOA are then used to take care of common elements, roads, open space, etc. A dysfunctional homeowners association or poor covenants could cause problems for you and even involve you in expensive litigation. Humboldt County does not become involved with the enforcement, governance or resolution of HOAs.
- If undeveloped, surrounding properties will probably not remain as they are today. You can check with the Regional Planning Department to find out how the properties are currently zoned and master-planned to see what future developments may be in the planning stages. The view from your property may change.
- It is important to make sure that any [water rights](#) you purchase with the land will provide enough water to maintain fruit trees, pastures, gardens or livestock you intend to manage.
- The water flowing in creeks or streams may belong to someone else; the water flowing in irrigation ditches belongs to someone. You cannot assume that because the water flows across your property, you can use it.
- Flowing and standing water can be hazardous, especially to young children. Before you decide to locate your home near an active ditch, creek, stream or river, consider the possible danger to your family.



## MOTHER NATURE

Residents who live in rural areas usually experience more problems when the elements and earth turn unfriendly. Here are some thoughts for you to consider.

- The physical characteristics of your property can be positive and negative. Trees are a wonderful environmental amenity, but there are few trees in this area.
- Brush fires can also be a problem. Fire season in Humboldt County normally runs from May until October. However, depending on lack of moisture, fire season may run longer. This means there is a high chance of fire due to dry desert conditions, especially dry cheat grass. Some causes of fire are dry lightning strikes, automobile catalytic converters coming in contact with desert grasses, illegal lighting of fireworks, burning weeds and illegal burn barrels.
- Persons caught causing fire by illegal activity or carelessness will be charged with the damages caused by the fire as well as the costs to put the fire out.
- The U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and local fire departments recommend creating a 30 foot green [defensible space](#) around your buildings as a precaution because emergency-response times can be lengthy for outlying areas.
- You may be required to store enough water to contain a fire on your property by the County or your insurance company.
- If you choose to live in remote areas of Humboldt County, there is no guarantee of fire-fighting services.
- Steep slopes can slide in unusually wet weather. Large rocks can also roll down steep slopes and present a great danger to people and property.
- Expansive soils, such as Bentonite Clay (which is common in the foothills) can buckle concrete foundations and twist steel I-beams. Consider having a soil test performed so you'll have a better understanding of the soil conditions on your property.
- North facing slopes and canyons are rarely bathed in direct sunlight in the winter. There is a possibility that snow will accumulate and not melt throughout the winter.



- The topography of the land can tell you where the water will go in the case of heavy precipitation. A flash flood can occur, especially during the summer months, and turn a dry gully into a raging river. Take this possibility into consideration when you decide to build.
- Winter and spring run-off can cause a very small creek to become a major river. Many residents use sand bags to protect their homes. The county does not provide sand bags, equipment or people to protect private property from flooding.



- Nature can provide you with some wonderful wildlife neighbors. Most, such as deer and antelope are positive additions to the environment. However, even "harmless" animals like deer can cross the road unexpectedly and cause traffic accidents. Some animals can be dangerous, so you'll need to know how to deal with them. Rural development encroaches on the traditional habitat of coyotes, bobcats, mountain lions, rattlesnakes, prairie dogs and wild horses. In addition, a problem with mosquitoes and West Nile Virus has arisen in the wet years. In general, it is best to enjoy wildlife from a distance and know that if you do not handle your pets and trash properly, it could cause problems for you and the wildlife. The Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW, 775-623-6565) and the County Extension Office (775-623-6304) are two good resources for information on what kind of animals you can expect to see on your property.
- Antelope usually go under fences and deer usually jump fences, therefore you may wish to contact NDOW for information on construction of a wildlife-friendly fence.
- Threatened and endangered wildlife may be present in outlying areas of the county. Areas of concern have been identified and changes in use in these areas should be referred to the Division of Wildlife and/or the Fish and Wildlife Service before development takes place.
- Hunting has been a way of life since this part of the country was settled. Neighbors may allow hunting activities which could influence how you view safety to yourself or pets. Pets are not encouraged to run

free since they may become a nuisance to livestock and wildlife, or worse, may become the next meal for wild predators.

- Harsh winters can bring unexpected herds of wild horses or deer onto private lands. Their presence can cause damage to fences, haystacks, pastures, and other personal property. Please check with the Division of Wildlife on how to address problems before they occur.



## AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is an integral part of Humboldt County and adds to the quality of life here. The people who tamed this wild land by finding water have allowed agriculture to become an important part of our environment. Owning rural land means knowing how to care for it. There are a few things you need to know:

- Agriculture is an important business in Humboldt County. If you choose to live among the farms and ranches of our rural countryside, do not expect county government to intervene in the normal day-to-day operations of your agri-business neighbors.
- Farmers often work around the clock, especially during planting and harvest time. Hay is often swathed or baled at night. It is possible that adjoining agriculture uses can disturb your peace and quiet.
- Land preparation and other operations can cause dust, especially during windy and dry weather.
- Farmers occasionally burn their ditches to keep them clean of debris, weeds and other obstructions. This burning creates smoke that you may find objectionable.
- Chemicals (mainly fertilizers and herbicides) are often used in growing crops. You may be sensitive to these substances and many people actually have severe allergic reactions. Many of these chemicals are applied by airplanes that fly early in the morning.
- Nevada is an "open range" state. 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 his/her livestock off of your property.
- Animals and their manure can cause objectionable odors. What else can we say?
- Ranchers and farmers must be granted access to their water on your property if they hold the water rights.
- Ranchers may have easements across your property to move their cattle from one grazing area to another.
- Owning rural land means knowing how to care for it. Land-disturbing activities (such as road building, housing construction, etc.) can encourage the growth of exotic plants and weeds. You should be aware that if you buy land with noxious weeds, or these weeds grow, or continue to grow on your property, you may be required to control them at considerable expense. Also, some plants are poisonous to horses and other livestock.



- Animals can be dangerous. Bulls, stallions, rams, boars, etc. can attack human beings. Children need to know that it is not safe to enter pens where animals are kept.
- Much of Humboldt County receives less than 8 inches of precipitation per year. As a result, we have a problem with overgrazing, and fugitive dust. Without irrigation, grass does not grow very well. There is a limit to the amount of grazing the land can handle. The Humboldt County Extension Office can help with these issues.



## MINING



Mining is an integral part of Humboldt County and the State of Nevada.

- Many property owners do not own the mineral rights under their property. Owners of mineral rights have the ability to change the surface characteristics in order to extract their minerals. It is important to know what minerals may be located under the land and who owns them - check for Mineral Leases, which allow access to property. Much of the rural land in Humboldt County can be used for mining. However, an approved 'conditional use permit' is required. A public hearing is held for approval by the Regional Planning Commission. Be aware that adjacent mining uses can expand and cause negative impacts.



## CONCLUSION

Residents of the county usually experience more problems when the elements and earth turn unfriendly. Here are some thoughts for you to consider:

- This information is by no means exhaustive. There are other issues that you may encounter that we have overlooked and we encourage you to be vigilant in your duties to explore and examine those things that could cause your move to be less than you expect.
- Even though rural property owners pay property taxes to the county, the amount of tax collected does not cover the cost of services provided to rural residents. In general, those living in the cities subsidize the lifestyle of those who live in the county by making up the shortfall between the cost of services and the revenues received from rural dwellers.
- Linked references found in this document are for your information. They have been included to serve as a starting point leading to further discovery and exploration. Actual Humboldt County requirements may differ from those stated in any non-County referenced links.
- By publishing The Code of the West, there is no intent on the part of Humboldt County Government to avoid responsibility for those services which it is statutorily or contractually required to perform. We offer these comments in sincere hope that they can help you enjoy your decision to reside in our county. It is not our intent to dissuade you, only inform you.



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## HELPFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

### **Humboldt County**

|                                       |                |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| Humboldt County Building Department   | (775) 623-6322 |
| Humboldt County Road Department       | (775) 623-6416 |
| Regional Planning Department          | (775) 623-6392 |
| Humboldt County Assessor              | (775) 623-6310 |
| Humboldt County Cooperative Extension | (775) 623-6304 |

### **State of Nevada**

|                             |                |
|-----------------------------|----------------|
| Department of Wildlife      | (775) 623-6565 |
| Division of Water Resources | (775) 684-2800 |
| Division of Health          | (775) 623-6588 |

### **United States Government**

|                              |                |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| Bureau of Land Management    | (775) 623-1500 |
| U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service | (775) 861-6300 |
| U.S. Forest Service          | (775) 623-5025 |

