What Do You Have and What Do You Want? Turning Dreams Into Reality

Lesson Description

Most people who purchase a small-acreage property have an idea of the eventual look and uses they envision for their property. Unfortunately, this vision is sometimes nebulous, incomplete, or unrealistic. You will be encouraged to focus on short-term and long-term goals for your property. The first step in any land use endeavor is to identify the existing asset(s) of a property. As you come to realize the extent and potential of your physical holdings as well as the limitations and responsibilities, you will be better prepared to set and implement reasonable goals for their properties.

Lesson Objectives

1. Learn what stewardship and sustainability mean.
2. Gain an understanding of their reasons for living on small-acreage properties.
3. Be able to assess and develop clearly defined sets of short-term and long-term goals for their properties.
4. Know how and why to complete an inventory of their property’s facilities and assets.
5. Demonstrate an awareness of different components of their property by creating physical inventory maps.
Module 1, Lesson 1

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Activity Sheets

1. Goal-setting Activity Sheet.
2. Inventorying Property Facilities and Assets Activity Sheet.
3. Physical Inventory Map – existing conditions.
4. Physical Inventory Map – proposed changes.
5. Understanding Legal Descriptions Activity Sheet (optional).

Supplemental Resources

Best Management Practices for Small Acreages, WSU Clark County Extension
Resource List, WSU Clark County Extension
Natural Resource Conservation Services eFOTG
Washington Soil Survey Reports Online
Tips on Land and Water Management for Small Acreages in SW Washington
Goal-setting Activity Sheet, page 1 of 2

Your Goals and Resources: What Are Your Goals For Your Property?

After reflecting for a few moments, list goals for your property. Don’t let your ideas be limited by considerations such as finances. You’ll revise your goals after the next lesson. If you have a timeline in mind, record a finish date for the goal. If not, note the relative priority of each goal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are your goals for your property?</th>
<th>What resources do you need?</th>
<th>What is the priority or time line?</th>
<th>When will you be finished?</th>
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# Goal-setting Activity Sheet, page 2 of 2

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<th>What are your goals for your property?</th>
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### Inventorying Property Facilities and Assets Activity Sheet, page 1 of 4

#### What buildings do you have on your property?

House  □ Yes  □ No  Footprint* _________________________________

*Footprint: The space occupied by a building expressed in square footage.

Outbuildings  □ Y  □ N
- Type: ________________ Footprint* _______________________________
- Type: ________________ Footprint* _______________________________
- Type: ________________ Footprint* _______________________________
- Type: ________________ Footprint* _______________________________

#### What facilities do you have on your property?

Corrals  □ Yes  □ No
- Location and dimensions ______________________________________
- Location and dimensions ______________________________________

Pasture(s)  □ Yes  □ No
- Location and dimensions ______________________________________
- Location and dimensions ______________________________________

Fences  □ Yes  □ No
- Type ____________________________
- Location and lengths ____________________________
- Type ____________________________
- Location and lengths ____________________________
- Type ____________________________
- Location and lengths ____________________________
- Type ____________________________
- Location and lengths ____________________________

Well(s)  □ Yes  □ No
- Type ____________________________
  Permitted uses ____________________________
  Volume of water you’re allowed to use each day ____________________________
- Type ____________________________
  Permitted uses ____________________________
  Volume of water you’re allowed to use each day ____________________________
Facilities on your property, continued:

Water lines  □ Yes  □ No
Type (household, irrigation, etc) __________________________________________________
Location ______________________________________________________________________
Type ____________________________
Location ______________________________________________________________________

Septic system  □ Yes  □ No
Type __________________________________________________
Size and location of tank ________________________________________________________
Depth, location and dimensions of drainfield ________________________________

Sewer lines  □ Yes  □ No
Size, location and depth ________________________________________________________

Gas/oil lines  □ Yes  □ No
Type (above or below ground) ________________________________________________
Location _________________________________________________________________
Type _________________________________________________________________
Location _________________________________________________________________

Power lines  □ Yes  □ No
Type (above or below ground) ________________________________________________
Location _________________________________________________________________
Type _________________________________________________________________
Location _________________________________________________________________

Cable lines  □ Yes  □ No
Type (above or below ground) ________________________________________________
Location _________________________________________________________________
Type _________________________________________________________________
Location _________________________________________________________________

Telephone lines  □ Yes  □ No
Type (above or below ground) ________________________________________________
Location _________________________________________________________________
Type _________________________________________________________________
Location _________________________________________________________________
Facilities on your property, continued:

Do you have easements on your property for any of the following?

- Sewer  □ Yes  □ No  Location ______________________________
- Power lines  □ Yes  □ No  Location ______________________________
- Cable lines  □ Yes  □ No  Location ______________________________
- Telephone lines  □ Yes  □ No  Location ______________________________
- Access  □ Yes  □ No  Type ______________________________
  Location _______________________________________________________
- Drainage  □ Yes  □ No  Location ______________________________
- Irrigation ditches  □ Yes  □ No  Location ______________________________
- Frontage  □ Yes  □ No  Type (sidewalks, street widening, etc) __________
  Location _______________________________________________________

Are you aware of any buffer zone requirements on your property? List the location, width and requirements.

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

Property assets:

Existing trees or areas with vegetation  □ Yes  □ No
  Condition _____________________________________________________________

Defensible space areas  □ Yes  □ No
  Condition _____________________________________________________________

Pasture(s)  □ Yes  □ No
  Condition _____________________________________________________________

Streams/creeks  □ Yes  □ No
  Condition _____________________________________________________________

Wetlands  □ Yes  □ No
  Condition _____________________________________________________________

Ponds  □ Yes  □ No
  Condition _____________________________________________________________
Property assets (continued):

Are you having problems with any of the assets listed above? Write them below.

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

Property problems:

Wildfire threats within 50 feet of your house or outbuildings:

Trees? □ Yes □ No  Tall shrubs? □ Yes □ No  Dry groundcover? □ Yes □ No
Firewood piles? □ Yes □ No  Decks? □ Yes □ No

What material is your roof made from? ____________________________________________

Do your attic vents have screens? □ Yes □ No

Do you know if your landscaping plants are “fire resistant”? □ Yes □ No

Weedy areas □ Yes □ No

Describe the weeds. List the name or description, the amount of area affected, and the severity of the problem.

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

Any other problems? _____________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
**Sample Inventory Map**

**Property characteristics**

Legal description: SE1/4, NE1/4, SE1/4 of Section 9, T20N, R14E

Total acres: 10
Types and numbers of animals: 6 cattle, 1 horse, 3 goats

Number of pastures: 2
Months animals are grazed: 9 months
Soil types: clay loam, silt loam

Grasses present: Tall fescue, orchardgrass, clover, bentgrass

Weeds present: Canada thistle, pigweed

Adapted from: Presentation materials written by Wendy Williams, USDA NRCS, Bozeman, MT.
Module 1, Lesson 1

Inventory Map of Existing Resources Activity Sheet

*Sketch the outline of your property and show all the facilities and assets. Add the locations of your neighbors’ buildings and facilities that are close to your property.*

Legal description:______________________________________________

Total acres: ________ Types and numbers of animals: __________________________________________________________

Number of pastures: ________ Months animals are grazed: ________ Soil types: ________________________________

Grasses present: _______________________________________________

Weeds present: _______________________________________________
Townships and ranges

In the west, to write legal descriptions of properties, land was divided into townships and ranges starting at different principle meridians.

- Each T/R area is 6 miles on a side.
- Townships and Ranges begin counting off from the point where the Principle Meridian and the Base Line meet.
- Townships are either north or south of the baseline and Ranges are either east or west of the Principle Meridian.
- Each Township and Range block equals approximately 36 square miles (23,040 acres).

Note the dotted block. This is T2S, R2E. We will use this in the next worksheet to describe sections.
By convention, sections are counted off as shown on the diagram above.

- Each township contains 36 sections.
- Each section is about one mile on each side.
- One section, or one square mile, is 640 acres.
- 1 mile by 1 mile = 5,280 feet x 5,280 feet = 27,878,400 square feet/43,560 square feet per acre = 640 acres.
- Due to the curvature of the earth, not all sections are exactly one square mile.
- Section 13, the dotted section above, will be used for the exercises on the next page.
Legal descriptions: By convention, these descriptions start from the smallest area and proceed to the larger area, as seen in the sample descriptions below. Descriptions are usually written in terms of halves or quarters.

**Area A:**
NW 1/4, Section 13, T2S, R2E (160 acres)

**Area B:**
SE 1/4, SE 1/4, Section 13, T2S, R2E (40 acres) – the southeast quarter of the southeast quarter

**Area C:**
S 1/2, NW 1/4, SE 1/4, Section 13, T2S, R2E (20 acres)

**Area D:**
W 1/2, NE 1/4, SE 1/4, Section 13, T2S, R2E (20 acres)

**Area E:**
NE 1/4, SW 1/4, SE 1/4, Section 13, T2S, R2E (10 Acres)

**Area F:**
SE 1/4, SE 1/4, SW 1/4, SE1/4, Section 13, T2S, R2E (2.5 acres)

Sometimes it helps to write or think of a “of the” in place of the commas in the legal description. The description for area F then becomes: “the SE1/4 of the SE 1/4 of the SW 1/4 of the SE 1/4 of section 13 of T2S, R2E”

**Exercise:** Describe the five properties shown at the left and list their acreages. These properties are also in Section 13, T2S, R2E, as shown above.
Module 1, Lesson 1

Understanding Legal Descriptions Activity Sheet, page 4 of 4

Answer Key

1) SW 1/4, NW 1/4, Section 13, T2S, R2E (40 acres)

2) S 1/4, SE 1/4, SE 1/4, Section 13, T2S, R2E (10 acres)

3) SW 1/4, SW 1/4, SW 1/4, Section 13, T2S, R2E (10 acres)

4) W 1/4, NE 1/4, Section 13, T2S, R2E (40 acres)

5) Starting at the number 5 and working clockwise, SE 1/4, NW 1/4, SW 1/4, SE 1/4 AND SW 1/4, NE 1/4, SW 1/4, SE 1/4, AND NW 1/4, SE 1/4, SW 1/4, SE 1/4 AND NE 1/4, SW 1/4, SW 1/4, SE 1/4, Section 13, T2S, R2E (10 acres total)
Calculating Acreages from Property Maps Activity Sheet, page 1 of 2

When calculating acreages for your property, try to break the area into squares or rectangles with known distances for each side, as shown below.

For full rectangles, multiply the length of one side in feet times the length of the other side in feet to get the square footage. Then, divide by 43,560 square feet/acre to get the number of acres.

Examples:

Area A: \(400 \times 155 = 62,000\) square feet
\(62,000\) square feet divided by 43,560 = 1.42 acres

Area B: \(65 \times 60 = 3,900\) square feet
\(3,900\) square feet divided by 43,560 = 0.09 acres

Area C: \(200 \times 135 = 27,000\) square feet \(\div\) 43,560 square feet per acre = 0.62 acres.

As an aside, the pond area in C (using triangular areas; length times width divided by 2) = \(50 \times 35 = 1,750\) square feet + \(30 \times 50 = 1,500\) square feet = 1,625 square feet of pond. Usable land of Area C = 27,000 – 1,625 = 25,375 square feet \(\div\) 43,560 = 0.58 acres

Area D: \(315 \times 80 = 25,200\) square feet
\(25,200\) square feet divided by 43,560 = 0.58 acres

Area E: \(65 \times 95 = 6,175\) square feet
\(6,175\) square feet divided by 43,560 = 0.14 acres
HOWEVER: Area E is only half of the rectangle, so divide by 2 to get 0.07 acres

Total Acres = 1.42 + 0.09 + 0.62 + 0.58 + 0.07 = 2.78 acres

Try your skill: Calculate the acreage of AREA F
Note that Area F is a triangle. You can figure out the length of one side of the triangle by adding together sides from E and B:

95 feet + 60 feet = 155 feet.

You can figure out another length by subtracting the length of side C from side A:

400 feet – 200 feet = 200 feet.

Now you can calculate the size of the rectangle that includes F:

155 x 200 = 31,000 square feet

31,000 square feet divided by 43,560 square feet per acre = 0.71 acres

Triangle F is half the rectangle

0.71 acres divided by 2 = 0.355 acres
Glossary

Buffer zone, buffer strip: Neutral area that acts as a protective barrier separating two conflicting forces. An area that acts to minimize the impact of pollutants on the environment or public welfare. For example, a buffer zone is established between a composting facility and neighboring residents to minimize odor problems. A buffer strip is a grassed or planted zone that acts as a protective barrier between an area which experiences livestock grazing or other activities and a water body. Buffer strips can be streamside features to protect streams and streambanks or features built on slopes to slow water runoff velocities.

Covenants, conditions and restrictions (CC&Rs): A series of regulations created by neighborhoods or housing developments that govern various construction features, such as setbacks, fence heights and types, house paint colors, etc.

Easement: A right to use the land of another for a specific purpose, such as for a right-of-way, access to water or utilities; an incorporeal interest in land.

Footprint: The space occupied by a building expressed in square footage; the “footprint” the building makes on the property.

Section: A subsection of a township. Each township is divided into 36 sections, each section contains 640 acres and measures 1 mile by 1 mile.

Township: A unit of legal land description adopted from the English system. Townships are approximately 6 miles on each side.

Watershed (drainage basin): An area of land that collects rain and/or snowmelt and discharges much of it to a stream, river, or other water body, or to groundwater.

Wetland: An area of land that is saturated at least part of the year by water. Wetlands are defined and delineated with specific criteria related to their hydrology, soils, and vegetation. Wetlands associated with coastal salt water include salt marshes, tidal basins, marshes, and mangrove swamps. Inland freshwater wetlands include swamps, marshes, seeps and bogs (lentic wetlands) and streams, rivers, and springs (lotic wetlands).
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Web sites for further information

Washington State University Clark County Extension, http://clark.wsu.edu
Oregon State University Extension Service Oregon Small Farms, http://smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/
Idaho OnePlan Farm Planning, http://www.oneplan.org/
Landowning Colorado Style, http://digitool.library.colostate.edu/exlibris/dtl/d3_1/apache_media/L2V4bGlicmlzL2R0bC9kM18xL2FwYWN0ZV9tZWRpYS8xMDAzODM=.pdf
Larimer County, Colorado Code of the West, http://www.co.larimer.co.us/planning/planning/code_of_the_west/
University of Nebraska Lincoln Cooperative Extension Acreage and Small Farm Insights, http://acreage.unl.edu/