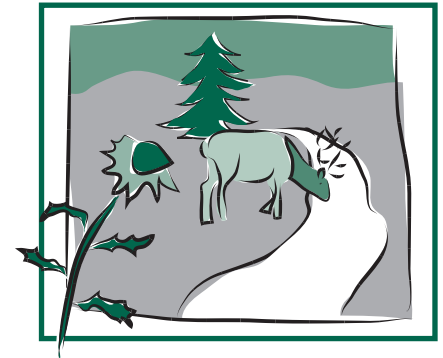


Recreation on Private Land

Fact Sheet No. 6.301

Natural Resources Series | **Wildlife**



by D.E. Benson*

Granting access to private land to fish, hunt, view wildlife, camp, or for any kind of recreation is an unselfish act by the owner that provides welcome experiences for recreationists.

Guidelines

Access to private lands is a privilege respected by most visitors, but when some abuse the privilege access is often denied to all. NO TRESPASSING or NO HUNTING signs promote negative feelings by both landowners and recreationists.

Access to private land can be managed in a positive way. If you choose to have recreationists on the property, know who you have and communicate the rules. Start by getting their addresses, car license numbers and signatures. Explain where they may go, what they are authorized to do, and for how long (a morning, a hunting season, etc.).

If you have special rules relating to wood cutting, collecting artifacts, use of roads, etc., be sure to communicate those rules. An arrowhead could be picked up with great excitement and pride knowing the landowner approves. Cutting up a dead tree and tossing it into a pickup may not seem inappropriate to a visitor who sees acres of forest, but as the landowner you may object. To allow the pocketing of a few pieces of flint or taking firewood home could enrich the recreational experience and appreciation of your land. Landowners should decide on and request the behaviors they expect in advance to avoid surprises for either party. You are in control -- communicate your rules.

Personal bonds between recreationists and landowners can become quite strong. Visitors share stories, lend helping hands and leave packages to show gratitude for

access privileges. Many users become friends that landowners look forward to seeing on opening day and other times of the year.

Not all visitor and landowner encounters are positive. The goal of the landowner should be to have people on the property who are respectful and responsible.

Visitors can become additional eyes and ears spotting lost cattle or trespassers. Perhaps they can help mend a piece of fence. All it might take to get some help is a request (obviously not during the hunt) and a quick lesson with the fence stretchers. Visitors won't want to spend their whole trip on labor, but the odd jobs could be a welcome break from the camping trip or hunt and a way that they can demonstrate their appreciation and respect for you and the property. Visitors might want to come back other days to do work.

Landowners can grant privileges to people who demonstrate good outdoor behavior, but take equal care to exclude violators. You do not need to tolerate outdoor destroyers and violators. Laws against hunting without permission, littering and game violations have been tightened in the landowners' favor. Recreation will be promoted when outdoor users learn that they are welcomed when cooperative but when disrespectful, they will be penalized.

Include considerations for managing outdoor users as part of your normal agricultural operation. It is inevitable that you will be asked for access permission. Gather the appropriate information from the visitors and establish guidelines for use. Give sufficient information to keep users in line, take care of your needs, and to provide a quality experience on your property. Create a simple form that communicates to guests about obeying the rules and that the landowner is not responsible for injuries or accidents while users are on the property. Have users sign the agreement.

Quick Facts

- Include considerations for managing recreation as part of your normal agricultural operation.
- Landowners should plan and request what behavior they expect from users far enough in advance to avoid surprises for either party.
- Have a form that gives rules for land use and that is signed by recreationists acknowledging that the landowner is not held responsible for accidents that might occur while using the property.
- Keep records of outdoor users and use them to encourage or discourage participation later.

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