

The Land Is Perfect but there is No Water

“When the well is dry, we know the worth of water”

-Benjamin Franklin

“To a gardener there is nothing more exasperating than a hose that just isn’t long enough”

-Cecil Roberts

“Only a fool tests the depth of the water with both feet”

- African Proverb

I love life and living it fully and although I usually believe in the concept of jumping in both feet at once, I can see the wisdom in the African proverb above. Sometimes, it is best to stop and think before letting passion and excitement overtake. This is true when buying land. For most people, water is a no brainer, something they look for the moment they start checking out land. For others’ however, it is an afterthought. Many people have spent their entire lives living in cities and towns that supply water to every home on demand. When you buy rural land, this is no longer the case and forgetting this fact can be a major mistake and leave you, literally high and DRY. Let’s take a look at some scenarios and options.

1. **Test for water.** This is the first course of action when you are looking at rural land. Hire someone to make sure there is water available on the land and find out how deep it lies. A water source 500 feet down does not do much good if you cannot afford to drill a well that deep. Water only 15 feet underground may not be suitable for your needs as shallow water is often spoiled by surface contaminants. Some people use water dowsing or witching. This is a less scientific way to find water and leans heavily into the energetic identification of water. That said, I have seen it done to great success many times. Other options include hiring a geologist or drilling test wells. You can also review local water maps which will help you see known trends of water in your area.
2. **Secure Water Rights.** It is quite possible that the land you are looking at has both ground water and surface water available to you. That is great as long as you secure the water rights. It’s easy to forget to lock down this paperwork with all of the other documents you will be reviewing and signing; however, it is extremely important that you confirm the rights to the water use. Without them, you will not be allowed to trap (make ponds) or use the water. A creek flowing through your land is less exciting when you can’t use it to water your garden or swim in. Although still beautiful and healthy for your land without any water rights, the ability to use the water is very important when living in a rural setting.
3. **No Water On Site.** A big decision must be made if you find property that you like that does not have any access to water. The lack of access may be because the groundwater is too deep to make drilling financially viable or because there simply is not any water on the property at all. This does not have to

be a deal breaker, although it most certainly should affect the offer you make on the property and/or the overall price of the land. Consider how much rain the area gets and how far the land is from town. These two considerations will be critical as you identify your options below.

a. Truck the water in. This is an ongoing expense that you will have to consider. Can you lower the purchase price of the land enough that the cost to truck-in and store water in an underground cistern could be added to your monthly expenses without negative repercussions? If the mortgage payment was going to be acceptable at \$2000 per month and you can lower the price of the land purchase so that the land plus the cost of the water would equal that same \$2000, then the deal could successfully move forward.

b. Harvest the rain. If there is adequate rainfall in the area, then you can consider collecting the rain and storing it on site. There will of course be extra costs for infrastructure, but will eliminate the long term cost of trucking-in water. You will need to build a collection source, storage area and pump, but this may not cost more than drilling an average well. By importing your first few truck loads of water, you can get a head start on the water collection. As the rainy seasons come, you can collect water from roof run-off and/or directly into the cistern. Care must be taken to collect and purify the water properly. Be sure to install a cistern that is bigger than what you think you need so that you can store more water in heavy rain years to make up for short comings in dry years.

c. Conserve water. This may seem obvious, but it is even more necessary when your potential source of water is limited. Talk to the sanitation and building departments about installing a composting toilet or other waterless system. In addition, consider installing a grey water system to reuse the water from sinks and showers around the home. A simple system will allow you to water your landscaping with water that would otherwise be thrown away.

Water is the gold or oil of the future as I see it. To me, the idea of using the limited drinking water our planet has to flush our waste down the toilet is wrong. I also think that building departments that do not allow grey water systems and composting toilets will soon be changing their ways as the demand for limited water picks up. Unfortunately, I think the departments around the world are on the slow side of this curve. Even if your property does have adequate water, I invite you to conserve it and use it wisely.