

# **The Property Owner's Resource Guide**

**For Those Who Own Property  
or are Considering Purchasing Property  
in Cook County**



## **A Reference Guide to Cook County Land Use**

(See Official Ordinances for specific details on land use in Cook County)

**Land Services Department  
Cook County Courthouse, Grand Marais, MN**

April 2022

[www.co.cook.mn.us](http://www.co.cook.mn.us)

# Information Before You Buy, Build or Remodel

## City of Grand Marais

\* City Hall ..... 218-387-1848

## Driveway Access Permits

Permits are required before installing a culvert or constructing an access driveway off of a township, county or state road

\* Cook County Highway Dept ..... 218-387-3014  
\* Grand Portage Land Use ..... 218-475-2415  
\* MN DNR ..... 218-353-7397  
\* MN DOT (State) ..... 218-387-3088  
\* Schroeder TWSP Clerk ..... 218-663-8109  
\* U.S. Forest Service Gunflint Ranger District ..... 218-387-1750  
\* U.S. Forest Service Tofte Ranger District ..... 218-663-8060  
[www.co.cook.mn.us/index.php/p-a-z-home](http://www.co.cook.mn.us/index.php/p-a-z-home)

## Fire Burning Permits

If you plan to burn brush or grass on your property you are required to obtain a burning permit before proceeding to burn. Be aware if you cause an out of control fire, you are personally responsible for the firefighting costs.

Burning trash and use of burn barrels are illegal.

\* MN DNR ..... 218-387-3037  
\* US Forest Service, Gunflint Ranger District ..... 218-387-1750  
\* US Forest Service, Tofte Ranger District ..... 218-663-8060  
\* Isak Hansen & Sons ..... 218-663-7201  
\* Online burning permit and information:  
[www.dnr.state.mn.us/forestry/fire/questions.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/forestry/fire/questions.html)

## Grand Portage

Trust Lands and Natural Resources Department

\* Front Desk ..... 218-475-2020  
\* Housing Authority ..... 218-475-2552  
\* Water/Sewer ..... 218-475-2212

## Land Use Permits/Grade and Fill Permits/ Stormwater & Erosion Control/Subdividing Land

Before building a driveway or building on land in Cook County, contact the Cook County Land Services Department to obtain zoning requirements and information.

If you are in the city limits of Grand Marais, contact the City Clerk.

\* Cook County Land Services Department ..... 218-387-3630  
\* Grand Marais City Clerk ..... 218-387-1848  
[www.co.cook.mn.us/](http://www.co.cook.mn.us/)

## Property Ownership, Classification, and assessments

Property classification (use) and assessments of estimated market values.

\* Cook County Assessor ..... 218-387-3650

Current property ownership, special assessments and taxes.

\* Cook County Auditor ..... 218-387-3640  
[www.co.cook.mn.us/](http://www.co.cook.mn.us/)

## Recorded Documents

Deeds, surveys, restrictive covenants, and property restrictions

\* Cook County Recorder ..... 218-387-3660

## Sewage Treatment Systems

State law regulates sewage treatment system installation, including separation distance from wells, buildings, and property lines. Cook County has additional requirements and/or recommendations.

\* Contact: Cook County Environmental Health ..... 218-387-3630  
[www.co.cook.mn.us](http://www.co.cook.mn.us) [septic.umn.edu](mailto:septic.umn.edu)

## Lakes and Rivers

Basic information on streams and lakes:

[www.cookswcd.org](http://www.cookswcd.org) or  
[www.lakesuperiorstreams.org](http://www.lakesuperiorstreams.org)

## Original development and funding by:

Cook County Soil and Water Conservation District

## With assistance from:

Cook County Land Services Department

Cook County Property Owners Resource Guide Committee

Revised 2022 by Cook County Land Services Department

## Solid Waste Management

Household garbage, demolition material, demolition material, household hazardous waste, recycling.

\* Cook County Recycling Center ..... 218-387-3044  
\* West End Transfer Station. No on-site phone ..... 218-387-3630  
[www.co.cook.mn.us](http://www.co.cook.mn.us)

## Surface Waters

Permits are needed for docks, culverts, beach development, stream and lakeshore stabilization and stream crossings when working in public waters and/or wetlands.

\* DNR Protected Waters Permits ..... 218-834-6623  
[www.dnr.state.mn.us/permits/water/index.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/permits/water/index.html)

Before diverting, withdrawing, impounding or distributing any surface water you must obtain a water use permit.

\* Minnesota DNR ..... 218-834-6639  
[www.dnr.state.mn.us/permits/water/index.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/permits/water/index.html)

## Water Quality

Livestock manure, pesticides, sediment, erosion and shoreline stabilization concerns. Testing services, pollutants and spills that may impact both environment and health.

\* Cook County Soil & Water ..... 218-387-3647  
\* Cook County Land Services ..... 218-387-3630  
\* Cook County Extension ..... 218-387-3015

## Water Wells

All wells must be registered with the State of Minnesota. Your well driller should take care of your registration.

\* Water Testing Kits: Cook County Environmental Health 218-387-3630  
\* Minnesota Department of Health Well Management Unit 218-302-6166  
[www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/wells](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/wells)

\* Well Drillers

Look under "Well Drilling and Services" in the Yellow Pages.

## Wetlands

The Cook County Land Services office regulates activities in wetlands and permits are required. You may also need permits from local, state and federal governments for your projects.

\* Cook County Land Services ..... 218-387-3630  
\* Grand Marais City Clerk ..... 218-387-1848  
\* US Army Corps of Engineers ..... 218-834-6630  
\* DNR Division of Waters ..... 218-834-6623  
[www.bwsr.state.mn.us/wetlands/index.html](http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/wetlands/index.html)  
[www.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/forms.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/forms.html)

## Utilities

Coordination of utilities installation.

\* Arrowhead Electric Cooperative ..... 218-663-7239  
\* Grand Marais Public Utilities Commission ..... 218-387-1848  
\* Before digging call Gopher ONE ..... 1-800-252-1166  
[www.gopheronestatecall.org](http://www.gopheronestatecall.org)

## Various Homeowner Matters

\* Firewise ..... 218-387-3642  
[cookcountyfirewise.org/](http://cookcountyfirewise.org/)  
\* Cook County Extension ..... 218-387-3015  
\* CodeRED Emergency Notification.....See page 17

## Online Zoning and Land Use Regulations Map

This is an interactive map for a visual understanding of zoning districts and other boundaries that guide and regulate development in Cook County, MN.  
[co.cook.mn.us](http://co.cook.mn.us)

This project was funded in part by the Coastal Zone Management Act, by NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, in conjunction with Minnesota's Lake Superior Coastal Program.

## Original writing and production (2006 Cook County):

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# Table of Contents...

Zoning Districts .....4

Buying/Building?  
A Check List .....5

Purchasing Property .....6

Building or Remodeling a Home .....7

Techniques for Better  
Lot Layout and Design .....8

Building a Driveway? ..... 9

Energy Efficiency &  
Renewable Energy .....10

Water Supply .....11

Individual Sewage  
Treatment Systems .....12

Protecting Wetlands .....14

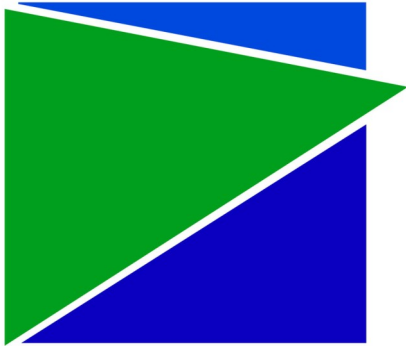
So, You Own Property  
On a Lake or Stream? .....16

Preparing for Emergencies  
CodeRED .....17

Keeping Records .....19

Emergency Phone Numbers .....20

COOK COUNTY



MINNESOTA

*SUPPORTING COMMUNITY  
THROUGH QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICE*

Cook County offers pristine shores, amazing forests, spectacular views, wild areas, and diverse styles of living. The County leadership has acted in ways to enhance and protect these unique qualities. They understand the need for development. Regulations are established, not to hinder progress, but to protect what we all love, through the use of best practices in design, during construction, and through citizen education on issues such as low-impact development and sustainable living.



## Necessary Permits

A typical homeowner developing a new lot is required to obtain a Land Use Permit, Septic System Permit, Physical Address Permit, Stormwater/Grade and Fill Permit, and verification that the lot meets the criteria of the new Subdivision Ordinance from the Zoning Office. They will also likely need a well permit and an electrical inspection from other agencies.

It is important to understand that if you are obtaining a permit, all other permits will be triggered. To avoid violations, contact the Cook County Land Services Department.

## List of Ordinances That May Apply to Your Land Development

- The Cook County Zoning Ordinance regarding setback requirements and uses for your property
- The Cook County Subdivision Ordinance regarding the division of land
- The Cook County Stormwater Ordinance regarding erosion control and stormwater
- The Cook County Septic Ordinance regarding individual sewage treatment systems
- Minnesota Chapter 8420 regarding public waters and the Wetland Conservation Act
- U.S. Army Corp of Engineers regulations regarding public waters and wetland conservation



# Zoning Districts

**Zoning Districts (Land Use Districts)** define how land may be used, such as the minimum size of lots, height of structures, setbacks, and other features. The purpose of land use planning is to provide for orderly development and to minimize conflicts between incompatible uses.

in Cook County

Although lots as small as one or two acres are allowed, the majority of land in Cook County is zoned for a minimum lot size of 5, 10, or 20 acres.

The Zoning Ordinance permits certain land uses in each district, such as residential or commercial. Additional uses (called conditional or interim uses) may be permitted if the use is approved by a public hearing process.

**Land use district maps are available online:**  
<https://cookcountymn.maps.arcgis.com/home/index.html>

## Permitting your projects

Permits are issued for activities such as building a home or other structure, building an addition, constructing a road, and soil disturbing activities such as grading, filling, and excavating. Individual sewage treatment system permits are also required for installing a sewage treatment system.

## Subdivision Concerns

A property within a platted subdivision may have rules that govern the use of the property which are additional to the county

zoning laws. These are typically referred to as “covenants” and “restrictions,” and have been developed and agreed upon by a property owners’ association. Common examples of such covenants and/or restrictions are increased setbacks, architectural review, and mandatory contribution to road maintenance costs. Documents outlining these rules for a specific piece of property will be on file with the Cook County Recorder. Call 218-387-3660.

## Subdivision Ordinance Highlights

The subdivision ordinance applies to any division of land into two or more parcels if one of the parcels is less than a standard quarter section in size (approximately 40 acres).

Each lot created for residential use must meet the minimum lot size and dimensions for the zone district it is located in; have an area for construction of a home-site that can be accessed and developed meeting all minimum setback requirements; avoid, minimize or mitigate wetland impacts in accordance with County, State and Federal wetland rules and

## Conditional and Interim Use Permits

Conditional and interim use permits regulate those types of activities that need more than a simple administrative review for approval, and may even be required for some home businesses. A listing of the conditional and interim permits can be found in the Cook County Zoning Ordinance, but we would encourage you to contact the Zoning Administrator if you have any questions as to whether you need a conditional or interim use permit, and what the specific steps are to obtain one.

laws; and be capable of supporting two standard septic systems as defined by the Cook County Septic Ordinance.

The full content of the Subdivision Ordinance can be accessed at: <https://www.co.cook.mn.us/>

## Variances

If you cannot build according to the setback standards, you may need to apply for relief from the standards, known as a variance. Variances are reviewed on a case-by-case basis before the Board of Adjustment. In order to receive a variance, the landowner must show a practical difficulty exists in accordance with Minnesota State standards. Contact the Zoning Administrator in the Land Services Department to learn more about this process.

## Chart of Residential Zoning District Requirements

Lot Size	FAR-1	FAR-2	FAR-3	LSR	R-1	RC/R	LR-1	LR-2	TMU	SMU*
Minimum Lot Area (acres)	20	10	5	1	2 (a)	5 (c)	0.25 (d)	0.75 (d)	0.5 (f)	2 (g)
Minimum Lot Width	600'	300'	200'	150'	200'	300'	75' (e)	100' (e)	50'	-
<b>Setbacks</b>										
Side Yard	50'	50'	25'	10'	10'	50'	10'	25'	10'	10'
Rear Yard	50'	50'	50'	25'	50'	50'	25'	40'	25'	25' (h)
<b>Road Setbacks</b>										
State Centerline	130'	130'	130'	130'	(b)	100'	-	-	-	100' (h)
County Centerline	85'	85'	85'	50'	50'	50'	-	-	-	50' (h)
Private Centerline	65'	65'	65'	50'	50'	50'	-	-	-	50' (h)
Right of Way	35'	35'	35'	35'	35'	35'	25'	25'	25'	35' (h)
<b>Structures</b>										
Max Building Height	35'	35'	35'	35'	35'	35'	35'	35'	35'	35'
Max Lot Coverage	Contact Land Services									

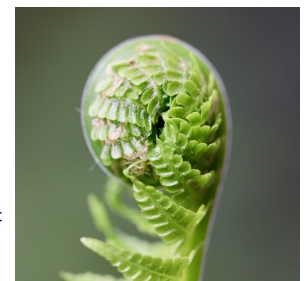
- a. One acre on Lake Superior
- b. State Highway 130', except private garages 100'
- c. See Section 4.17 C. (1)
- d. With Water Systems as defined in Section 4; 2 Acres without systems
- e. With Water Systems as defined in Section 4; 200 Feet without systems

- f. With Water Systems as defined in Section 4; 1 Acre without systems
- g. For residential lots on Lake Superior lot area required shall be 1 acre; see Section 4 for commercial requirements
- h. Residential only, See Section 4 for further details.

\*See Article 8 “North Shore Management Plan Regulations” for parcels adjacent to Lake Superior or Hwy 61.

## Residential Zone Districts

**FAR-1:** Forest Agriculture Recreation  
**FAR-2:** Forest Agriculture Residential  
**FAR-3:** Forest Agriculture Residential  
**LSR:** Lake Shore Residential  
**R-1:** Residential  
**RC/R:** Resort Commercial Residential  
**LR-1:** Lutsen Residential  
**LR-2:** Lutsen Residential  
**TMU:** Tofte Mixed Use  
**SMU:** Schroeder Mixed Use





# Are you considering buying/building?

## A CHECKLIST

If you are considering buying land, use the Checklist in **TRACK I**. If you are buying land that has improvements on it (a house or other structures) use **TRACK II** also.



### TRACK I Checklist for undeveloped land

Is your intended use permitted in the zone district?

*(Hint: Check the online zoning map or with the Land Services Department to find the district and requirements.)*

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you know where your property lines are?

*(Hint: Check with the Recorder's Office for existing survey information, or Land Services Department for a list of surveyors.)*

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is the site appropriate for your intended use?

*(Hint: Check on such details as the availability of utilities, legal road access, proximity to the water table, and soil type. The basic soil type can be determined by a licensed sewage treatment system designer.)*

☐ Yes ☐ No

Are there activities present or allowed in the area that may be undesirable to you? (Consider gravel pits, dog kennels, dusty road, surrounding zone districts)

☐ Yes ☐ No

Have you acquired necessary permits before starting your project? *(Such as constructing an access road, building a structure, or any soil disturbing activities)*

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is your road maintained and plowed by a governmental agency?

☐ Yes ☐ No

*\*Note: There can be serious consequences for wetland and other soil disturbances. Contact the Land Services Department before altering the property.*

### TRACK II Checklist for developed property

Do the improvements meet the minimum requirements of the zone district?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Does the property have a sewage treatment system Certificate of Compliance and evidence of regular maintenance?

*(Hint: Although not required by Cook County, it is in the buyer's best interest to insist on a sewage treatment system inspection prior to closing.)*

☐ Yes ☐ No

Has the property had a recent drinking water quality test?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you know the utilities and property tax costs for the prior two years?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Have you met your potential neighbors?

☐ Yes ☐ No



## Commonly Asked Questions

**Q** If I have a land use question, what can I bring into the Land Services Department to help get an answer?

**A**

- Sketch of property
- Photos
- Tax Parcel ID
- Sewage treatment system information
- Special features: topography, streams, drainageway, bluff, soils

**Q** Who handles land use disputes between neighbors?

**A** Generally, legal disputes are civil matters between individuals and need to be handled on this basis. However, the Land Services Department can provide assistance on setbacks and other zoning requirements. Property line disputes may require the use of a licensed land surveyor.

## Did you know?

- Land use is regulated throughout Cook County.
- A permit is required for the construction of a building, addition, deck or other structure, as well as any soil disturbing activities such as grading, filling or excavation.
- You may need a septic inspection prior to receiving an approved permit. This will depend on the project location and type.
- Each newly created lot must have adequate sites for two sewage treatment systems.
- A permit is required for sewage treatment system installations and repairs. All installation and repair work must be performed by a sewage treatment system contractor licensed in the State of Minnesota, and the permit must be obtained jointly by the contractor and property owner.

Generally, the first step in lot development is to meet with a contractor and arrange for a site evaluation to determine where the sewage treatment system will be located. A land use permit will not be issued until after the site is determined to have acceptable soils for septic treatment.

# Purchasing Property

in Cook County

## Setbacks

When buying property, it is important to be aware of required setback distances from roads, lakes, streams, and property lines to find a suitable place for the home, driveways and sewage treatment system. The buyer should contact the Land Services Department (218-387-3630) for assistance with this.

## Wetlands

Wetlands are a welcomed amenity to many properties (and provide both aesthetic and hydrologic functions). They are protected from alteration or destruction. Wetlands should not be disturbed unless you have followed specific regulations. To help you determine the location of wetlands on your property and to minimize wetland impacts, contact the Land Services Department. See *Protecting Wetlands page 14*.

## Utilities

Find out if utilities are available at the site.

## Boundaries

Know your boundaries! All property in Cook County has a legal description, but not all the property has been surveyed. Do not rely on the county plat book or USGS Quadrangle maps to show property lines. They are only a guide. The services of a land surveyor are highly recommended to find your property boundaries if you are buying a small lot or planning on building close to a property boundary. Call the Cook County Land Services Department for a list of local surveyors.

## Hidden and 'Other' Costs

Consider some of the "other" and sometimes "hidden" costs, such as snow removal services, the expense of getting electricity to your site, high maintenance costs of private roads, and distance to schools (bus service is not guaranteed).

The soil type (or lack of soil) and topography of the land can affect the cost of building a home and installing a septic system.

Expenses may be incurred for grading, removing/adding soil, and leveling rock. Remember, if you are building on rock you probably won't have a basement.

## No Service Zones

The Cook County Board of Commissioners delineates portions of Cook County as having limited services. If your property is in this area, you are responsible for road plowing and maintenance. In addition, services such as school buses, electrical and telephone lines, fire protection and ambulance services may not be available because of the remote setting of the property. The County may require the property owner to sign a waiver of rights before any land use permits are issued in these remote areas. Many remote streams and lakes are located in these limited service areas.

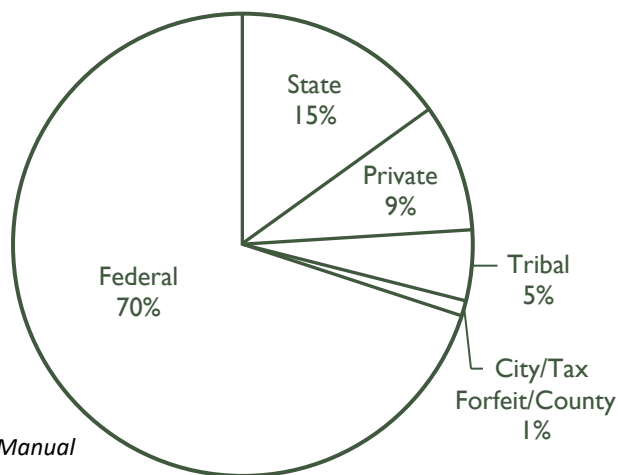
## City of Grand Marais

When purchasing within city limits, it is important to be aware of city ordinances and services which are different from County services and ordinances.

## Land Use Permit (LUP) Process

1. Pre-application consultation with Land Services.
2. Corners of the proposed structure are staked.
3. Applicant fills out and submits the LUP Application along with the appropriate fees.
4. Application is reviewed for compliance with all applicable local Ordinances and State Rules.
5. Land Services conducts site visit to verify the accuracy of the information submitted.
6. Environmental Health reviews and approves Septic Permit.
7. LUP is approved (typically within 15-60 days of submittal) and valid to the end of the following year.
8. Land Services makes an as built site visit to ensure compliance with Ordinance.

## Cook County Land Ownership



**Q** Where can I get help if I want to harvest the timber on my land?

**A** Contact the following organizations for information and resources.

Minnesota Forest Resources Council publication: *Sustainable Forestry, A Land Owner's Manual*

<https://www.mlep.org/documents/sfmanual2015.pdf>

Minnesota Logger Education Program ..... [www.mlep.org/](http://www.mlep.org/)

Minnesota DNR Forester assigned to Cook County ..... 218-387-3037

# Building or Remodeling a Home

in Cook County



## Things to consider . . .

### Choosing a location for your home

Whether you are landscaping your property, building a cabin, or designing a resort, each parcel of land has limitations and opportunities for development. These may include the type of soil, steep slopes, wetlands, native vegetation, other natural features, and uses allowed in the zone district.

The most important step in getting started is to draw a detailed map of your property. Using a topographic map will help.

### Build Site Considerations:

- hills and sloping areas
- drainage patterns
- existing vegetation (trees)
- wildlife habitat
- land features (wetlands)
- slopes (bluffs and rock outcrops)
- southern exposure
- access
- sewage treatment sites
- location of roads and driveways
- water wells
- underground cables, pipelines, and overhead wires
- building sites
- Firewise— See page 18

### Other than the building site, what about the rest of the land?

- Consider limiting the amount of lawn on your property. Native vegetation will lower maintenance while enhancing aesthetics and habitat value.
- Think about ways to landscape that can help maintain the quality and aesthetics of the waters on your land. Follow required setbacks. (Check with Land Services)
- Consider retaining and planting native trees and shrubs that provide food and shelter for wildlife, buffer harsh winter winds and provide shade and screening.
- Plan roads and driveways to follow contours of the land.
- Understand the land supports wildlife both big and small including bears, moose, wolf, fox and many other species. They do not follow the same property boundaries and rules that humans do.
- Wetlands are vital to water quality. Work toward maintaining healthy wetlands. Follow wetland regulations.
- Consider Firewise and emergency preparedness (page 18).

## Commonly Asked Questions



**Q** *Do I need to tell anyone I am building a structure?*

**A** Yes. You must obtain a land use permit from the Cook County Land Services Department.

**Q** *How do I know if my land is buildable?*

**A** This is determined by a number of factors, including how wet the site is, if your site is on rock, if the land can support a structure and sewage treatment system, and the minimum lot size. Structures and roads must also meet required setbacks.

**Q** *Do I need a land use permit to change the size and shape of my house, including a deck?*

**A** Yes.

**Q** *How far away from a lake or river does my structure need to be?*

**A** Required setback distances vary depending on the classification of the stream or lake. See page 12 for details.

**Q** *Are there limits to the size of my home?*

**A** The maximum height of structures is 35 ft. There are building limitations on the amount of the lot covered by impervious surfaces. Impervious surfaces include roofs, driveways, paved areas and gravel roads. The property must be able to support two on-site sewage treatment system sites and the use must be consistent with the uses permitted in your land use district.

**Q** *Can a business be operated in my home?*

**A** To establish a business in a residential zone, a conditional use permit may be required. Contact the Land Services Department for details.

**Q** *Do I need to apply for homestead classification on the home I just purchased or built?*

**A** If you are a Minnesota resident, own the property or are related to the owner, and occupy the property as your primary place of residence; you should apply for homestead classification. Minnesota state law provides for a reduction in the property tax for homestead property. Contact the County Assessor for an application.



# Techniques for Better Lot Layout & Design

## in Cook County

### Stormwater Management

Stormwater runoff can be a major source of pollutants of lakes, streams, and wetlands. On construction sites and adjacent to paved parking areas, for example, stormwater runoff water can transport contaminants and debris including oil, antifreeze, soil particles (sediment), pesticides, and nutrients.

Naturally occurring landscapes including forests, wetlands, and grasslands, trap rainwater and snowmelt, allowing the water to slowly filter into the underlying soil. Stormwater runoff tends to reach lakes and streams more slowly.

In contrast, when too much of the natural surface of a site is covered by non-absorbent (impervious) surfaces such as roads, parking lots, and buildings, runoff does not slowly infiltrate into the soil. During a storm, for example, water remains on the surface, moves very quickly, and often, in large amounts. This can lead to flooding, erosion, and the transport of pollutants into lakes and streams.

Listed here are some techniques and ideas on how to reduce impervious cover, conserve natural areas, and protect water quality during lot layout and design.

#### 1. Preserve Natural Areas

From a stormwater standpoint, it is desirable to maintain as much natural vegetative cover such as forests, wetlands, and meadows as possible. Natural areas generate less stormwater runoff, transport fewer pollutants, and they help to maximize infiltration of water.

- a. Protect natural stands of trees, shrubs and grasses.
- b. On disturbed areas, plant grass and trees to re-establish forest cover. Trees help by intercepting rainfall, maximizing infiltration, and absorbing water.
- c. Leave a wide vegetative buffer along streams and lakes to filter stormwater runoff from disturbed upland areas.

#### 2. Distribute Runoff

Use pervious (absorbent) areas such as grass swales to help direct and filter runoff from roads and buildings.

- a. Stockpile topsoil and re-distribute over site following construction. This will promote more vigorous plant growth and encourage more effective infiltration of runoff.
- b. Direct concentrated runoff into rain gardens, rain barrels or natural swales to naturally infiltrate surface water.
- c. Place roads and buildings away from steep slopes where excess stormwater runoff could lead to erosion problems.

#### 3. Reduce Impervious Cover in Site Design

Following these recommendations may result in greater cost savings initially, lower maintenance costs in the future, and will help protect water quality by lessening the impacts of stormwater runoff. There is a direct relationship between the amount of impervious cover and the physical and biological condition of downstream receiving waters. (epa.gov)

Reduce the total area of rooftops, driveways, and sidewalks on a site without compromising safety or violating local ordinances. Consider the following:

- a. Shorter driveways
- b. Smaller parking areas
- c. Slimmer sidewalks
- d. Narrower streets & driveways
- e. Pervious pavers

### TECHNICAL DEFINITION:

**Stormwater** –  
surface water runoff from rain  
or snowmelt



### Stormwater Management in Cook County

Cook County combines several programs to lessen the impacts of construction activities on its surface and ground waters. The Cook County Stormwater Ordinance regulates projects as small as 1,000 square feet, while larger projects (i.e. those greater than one acre) are regulated by both county regulations and the federally mandated National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System and the Clean Water Act, while state programs include the State Disposal System (SDS) and Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP).

Regardless of whether the areas impacted during construction are large or small, maintaining the integrity of the environment is the responsibility of all. Proven erosion and sediment control measures, called Best Management Practices (BMPs) should be an important component of your construction plans. BMPs include practices such as seeding and mulching disturbed areas, installing silt fence, and using rock check dams to slow water flow in ditches.

The County's Stormwater Ordinance, the State's SWPPP, and incorporation of BMPs address issues contractors and private landowners are likely to experience during construction including sediment and nutrient transport, erosion, surface-and sub-surface pollution, and the impacts of impervious surfaces on water quality. More importantly, however, both programs identify tools and resources useful in effectively reducing negative impacts to Cook County waters.

#### Online Resources:

**Cook County Stormwater Management Ordinance**  
[www.co.cook.mn.us](http://www.co.cook.mn.us)

**Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan Application**  
[www.pca.state.mn.us/publications/wq-strm2-51.doc](http://www.pca.state.mn.us/publications/wq-strm2-51.doc)

#### Erosion and Sediment Control

[www.pca.state.mn.us/water/pubs/swm-ch6.pdf](http://www.pca.state.mn.us/water/pubs/swm-ch6.pdf)

#### Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs)

[www.pca.state.mn.us/water/pubs/sw-bmpmanual.html](http://www.pca.state.mn.us/water/pubs/sw-bmpmanual.html)

#### Cook County Soil and Water Conservation District

[www.cookswcd.org](http://www.cookswcd.org)



# Building a Driveway

in Cook County



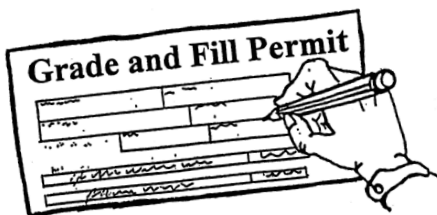
If you're planning on constructing a road or driveway or having one constructed for you, the following 13 recommendations will save you time and money in the long run. They will also lower your maintenance, improve safety, and protect water resources.

## Recommendations:

1. **Secure all necessary permits BEFORE you begin work.**

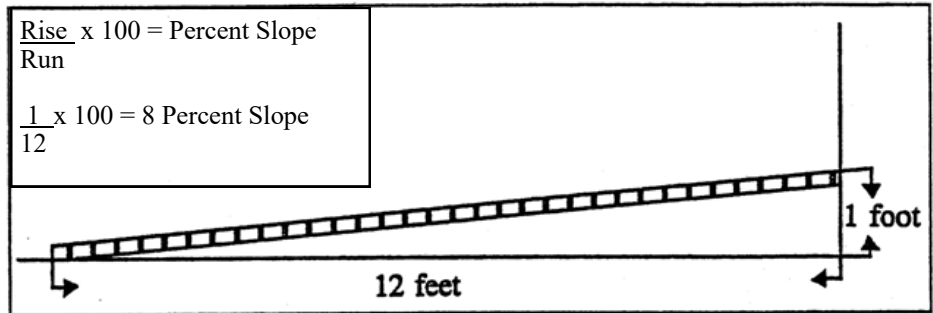
## Checklist:

- ✓ Get a Grade and Fill and Stormwater Permits from the Land Services Office and check on setback distances from streams and lakes.
  - ✓ Get a Driveway Access Permit from the Cook County Highway Department if your driveway connects to a county road.
  - ✓ Get a Driveway Access Permit from the Minnesota Department of Transportation if your driveway connects to Highway 61.
  - ✓ Check to see if you need a Wetland Permit from the Land Services Department.
  - ✓ Contact the Minnesota DNR for a Water Permit application.
  - ✓ Call GOPHER State One-Call at (800) 252-1166
  - ✓ Complete a Physical Address Application (911 Address) from the Emergency Management Department, 218-387-3059.
2. **Locate roads and driveways away from steep slopes.** If you must cross a hillside, follow the contour of the slope to keep the road as level as possible. Avoid constructing roads directly downhill towards a structure to minimize flooding potential.



$$\frac{\text{Rise}}{\text{Run}} \times 100 = \text{Percent Slope}$$

$$\frac{1}{12} \times 100 = 8 \text{ Percent Slope}$$



3. **Plan driveway finished grades of 8 percent or less for safety and ease of access.** Driveways steeper than 8 percent will be more expensive to construct, maintain and will be more prone to erosion. They may also not be accessible year-round.
4. **Locate roads the proper setback distance** away from lakes, ponds, and streams (see Land Services Office). If crossing a stream, check with the DNR to see if you need a DNR Waters Permit before you begin work. If you must cross a waterway, cross at a right angle.
5. **Avoid wetlands!** Filling or draining wetlands is regulated by state and federal law and requires you to secure a permit if your project will disturb wetlands. If wetlands cannot be avoided, use geo-textile fabric under the gravel base to increase the strength of the underlying soils.
6. **During road construction, remember to grub out stumps** so they don't rot later and cause the road to collapse. In addition to a firm foundation, use good fill material, compact soils well, keep water away from the road, and design with room for winter snow banks.
7. **Maintain all natural waterways by installing properly-sized culverts.** Consult your County Highway Engineer for guidance on properly sizing culverts and bridges for your site. Under-sizing either of these can result in an unsafe road surface or a complete washout. Your County Highway Engineer is also familiar

with installing culverts, tiling springs, crowning roads and minimizing problems from ice formation. Also, it is not a good idea to build roads to function as dams since the roadbed may become saturated and fail.

8. **Crown roads and driveways to move water off the road surface** and install water bars or open top culverts on sloping roadways. Water bars are small raised ridges that help to move water to the road ditches rather than allowing it to run the entire length of the slope. Open top culverts are flush with the road surface, drain water off the surface and direct it into the ditch.
9. **More salt does not mean more melting.** It is recommended by the MPCA to use less than 4 pounds of salt per 1,000 sq. feet. Sweep up extra salt or sand that may be visible on dry pavement and use it somewhere else that might need it.

*Continued on page 10*







moderate to steep slopes, remember to install rock check dams in ditches to slow down water runoff. You can also periodically route the water away from the road into “run-out” ditches to avoid severe gully erosion IF you have a safe, non-erodible outlet. Contact the Cook County Soil & Water Conservation District for erosion control advice.

*Continued from page 9*

10. **Remember to build a wide enough road with an adequate turn around area near your home for emergency vehicle access.** Excessively steep and narrow driveways will limit the ability of emergency vehicles to respond to your home and may also make the road unsafe during poor weather conditions.
11. **Finished road shoulder slopes and back slopes should not be steeper than 2:1.**
12. **Seed and mulch all disturbed areas along new roads to minimize erosion.** If you have

13. **Call “GOPHER State One-Call” at least 48 hours before you do any excavating.** They will notify all underground utilities in the area and ensure that work can proceed safely.

## Questions?

### Zoning Regulations –

Land Services Department  
218-387-3630

### Erosion Control –

Soil & Water Conservation District  
218-387-3647  
Land Services Department  
218-387-3631

### Culvert Design / Access Permit –

Highway Department  
218-387-3014

### Water Permit –

MN Department of Natural Resources  
218-834-6623

## Commonly Asked Questions Q&A

**Q** *Do I need a permit to improve an existing driveway on my property?*

**A** A permit will be required to extend an existing driveway if more than 50 cubic yards of material will be cut or filled. Routine repair and grading of existing driveways does not require a new permit.

## Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy

### Building or Renovating: Efficiency and Renewable Energy

Keeping the size of your home small is more comfortable and saves on energy costs. Buildings use about 37% of our total energy usage. Investing in energy efficiency is the number one way to reduce your energy costs. Renewable energy using solar, wind or biomass would be a second way but it is less cost effective. Cold climate building creates some difficult energy efficiency issues unless the building envelope for air and moisture exchange is considered. Long term costs need to be evaluated when designing, building and operating your home in Cook County.

MN Sustainable Building Guidelines.

<https://www.b3mn.org/guidelines/>

MN Pollution Control Agency:

[www.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/living-green/index.html](http://www.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/living-green/index.html)

MN Fix-Up Fund

<https://www.mncee.org/how-get-started>

Duluth Energy Design Conference & Expo:

[www.duluthenergydesign.com](http://www.duluthenergydesign.com)

### Landscape

Making your building the right shape, properly placing its windows and pointing it in the right direction can cut the building's energy use by 30 – 40% at no additional cost.

You can reduce energy by allowing the sun to assist in heating the building in the winter and blocking the sun to cool the building in the summer. A well designed landscape includes:

- Tree placement to protect your home from winter wind and summer sun.
- Reduction of heat and cooling by orientation of the building.
- Properly sized overhangs will protect your home from summer sun and allow solar gain in the winter.
- Placement and ratios of windows to mass in the home will increase solar gain and provide natural lighting.

### Online Resources

<https://extension.umn.edu/>

<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/treecare/energy/strategies.html>

### Insulation

Insulating your home to a higher R-value in the walls, floors, ceilings can reduce your energy use over time. During the winter heating season, vapor may be driven from the building interior into the walls, roof, and floors. In summer, air conditioning can force vapor flow in the opposite direction, with cold, dry air on the inside, and hot, moist air from the outside being forced in. Houses in the cold and very cold climates cannot be built as if they are one-way streets for moisture transfer.

<https://bbe.umn.edu/research/cold-climate-housing-program>

### Heat & Electrical Use

Traditional fossil fuel heating sources include electricity, propane or fuel oil. There are ways to reduce your fossil fuel consumption by installation of an off-peak electrical system or a hot water in-floor system that uses less fossil fuels for heat.

Alternative heating systems include the use of passive solar design, active solar with solar panels, photovoltaics, geothermal, or wood, biomass, and pellet stoves.

Information in greater Cook County:

Arrowhead Electric EnergyWise

[www.aecimn.com](http://www.aecimn.com) 218-663-7239

Information for Grand Marais:

[www.mnpower.com/EnergyConservation](http://www.mnpower.com/EnergyConservation)

[www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov)

### Building Materials Choices

Many people are looking for reused building materials or choosing materials that are produced locally or in more sustainable or green ways. Listed below are some possible sources.

Building Materials Reuse Association

[www.bmra.org](http://www.bmra.org)

Green Spec

[www.buildinggreen.com/menus](http://www.buildinggreen.com/menus)

Building Materials Outlet

[www.bmomn.com](http://www.bmomn.com)

### Local Assistance

For specific information on energy efficiency and renewable energy:

Cook County Local Energy Project

<https://www.cookcountylocalenergy.org/>

Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency 218-748-7358



# Water Supply

in Cook County

## The Water Well

While the water supplied by a private well is not regulated by Cook County, the design, location, construction and abandonment of the well is regulated by the State of Minnesota. A private water well must be located and constructed to protect it from surface waters and from seepage from sources of contamination. (See map on page 12) Minnesota Department of Health has a well index that will assist you in determining and locating a pre-existing well on your property. (See helpful websites below)

## Water Quantity

The average person uses approximately 75 gallons of water per day. Water use does not occur evenly over the course of a day. Water systems must often meet the needs of many uses during short periods of time. These times, called “peak use periods” usually last from 30 minutes to two hours and usually occur near mealtimes, laundry periods, and before bedtime.

A water system must be able to meet both total gallons per day and peak use demands continuously for one or two hours. Wells should produce three to five gallons of water per minute, anything less than three gallons per minute could create problems for the homeowner unless a properly-sized storage tank is installed to meet your water needs during peak flows.

## Water Quality

A safe source of water should meet U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) primary drinking water standards. All private wells should be tested by a certified, independent laboratory and results compared to EPA drinking water standards. Two contaminants of primary concern are coliform bacteria and nitrates. Contact the Cook County Environmental Health Department at 218-387-3632 for a water testing kit and instructions.

Some wells in Cook County have a high level of fluoride. Contact the Cook County

Environmental Health Department if you would like to have your water tested.

Unfortunately, there are some areas along Lake Superior that have high levels of salt in their water. To safely use this water requires additional treatment.

For additional information on the rules and regulations governing a private water well and for information on water treatment options, contact the Minnesota Department of Health at (218) 723-4653.

## Checklist

- ✓ Is your drinking water well located at least 100 feet from your sewage treatment system?
- ✓ Do water tests confirm there are no coliform bacteria or nitrate contamination?
- ✓ Is the well constructed by state licensed well driller?

## Commonly Asked Questions

**Q** Do I need to tell anyone I am constructing a well?

**A** Yes, Contact the Minnesota Department of Health, Well Management Unit at (218) 723-4653 for a permit. Wells must be properly located (setbacks from sewage treatment systems and structures) and installed by licensed well drillers.

**Q** I want the water in my well tested. Who can do this for me?

**A** Water testing kits and further information are available from the Cook County Land Services Department. For additional information on water quality, contact the Water Resources Center at the University of Minnesota (see Helpful website below)

**Q** Can I use lake or river water (surface water) for my drinking water?

**A** All surface water supplies should be considered as unsafe for a drinking water supply as they are subject to bacterial and viral contamination. There are many people in Cook County that do use this resource with proper pre-treatment (filtration and disinfection).

### Helpful websites:

[www.extension.umn.edu/water](http://www.extension.umn.edu/water)

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/waterquality/test.html>

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/wells/construction/handbook.pdf>

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/mwi/index.html>

# Individual Sewage Treatment Systems (ISTS)

Most town and city dwellers rely on a public waste water treatment system for sewage management. While public waste water treatment systems may be available to some rural dwellers, most rely on private individual sewage treatment systems (ISTS).

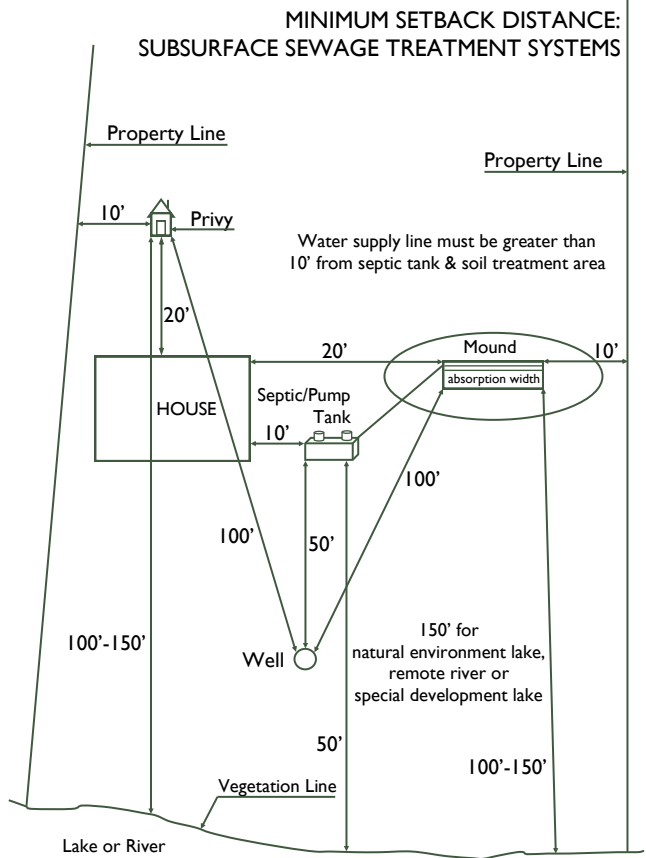
in Cook County

The design and installation of ISTS is regulated by State Rules and permitted through the Cook County Land Services Department. ISTS must be installed by State licensed contractors. A list of contractors can be obtained at the Land Services Department. Alternative sewage treatment systems will be considered for approval. Contact the Cook County Environmental Health Departmental 218-387-3632.

## Maintenance and Care

1. Good vegetative cover should be maintained over the soil treatment system. However, do not plant trees or shrubs because the roots may clog the distribution lines.
2. Do not drive over the soil treatment system and maintain snow cover in the winter to prevent the area from freezing.
3. Use water-conserving fixtures like low-flow showerheads and toilets.
4. Distribute wash loads evenly throughout the week to avoid overloading the system with large amounts of water.
5. Wash only full loads in the dishwasher and washing machine. Consider a water-conserving washing machine because they use less water.
6. Use liquid detergents (powdered detergents add fine particles that may clog the soil treatment system).
7. Reduce the use of harsh cleaners and antibacterial soaps.
8. Use of garbage disposals is not recommended. Consider composting.
9. The septic tank MUST be cleaned (pumped) every 2-3 years to remove floating scum and sludge that accumulate. If this material is allowed to enter the soil treatment system (mound or trench) it will cause expensive and often irreparable damage.
10. Route roof drains and drain tile away from the drainfield.
11. Do not dispose of solvents, paints, antifreeze, and chemicals down the drain.
12. DO NOT USE starters, feeders, cleaners and other additives. There is no quick fix or substitute for proper operation and regular maintenance.

### Cook County Environmental Health Department



## Septic System Setback Requirements

### Well

- 100 feet from the treatment area if well has less than 50 feet of casing and does not encounter 10 feet of impervious material.
- 50 feet from the treatment area if well has more than 50 feet of casing or encounters 10 feet of impervious material.

### Property Line

- 10 feet from any component of the septic system.

### Road Right of Way

- 10 Feet from any component of the septic system.

### Buildings

- 10 feet from septic tank
- 20 feet from treatment area

### Shoreland

- Shoreland setbacks shall be 100 to 150 feet from the vegetation line to the soil treatment area, depending upon DNR protected waters classification.

Setback Distances to Structures and Septic Treatment Areas According to Water Body Classification					
Lakes	Structure	Septic	Rivers	Structure	Septic
Special Natural Environment	150'	150'	Remote River	200'	150'
Natural Environment	150'	150'	Forested and Transitional	150'	100'
Special Recreation	150'	150'	Tributary	100'	100'
Recreational Development	100'	100'	Be sure to consult the Land Services Office for other setback requirements. * From Vegetation Line of Lake Superior		
Lake Superior	40' *	100'			



# Commonly Asked Questions



**Q** *What permits are needed to install a sewage treatment system; who do I contact?*

**A** An application is jointly submitted by the licensed designer and the homeowner to the Environmental Health Department.

**Q** *What is a Certificate of Compliance?*

**A** A Certificate of Compliance shows that at the time of inspection, the sewage treatment system was installed properly. It is issued after a new system has been properly installed, or after an inspection of an existing system has found that the sewage system is in compliance with State standards. This Certificate of Compliance is considered to be effective for a period of ten years for a new system and six years for an existing system.

**Q** *Do I need a sewage treatment system certificate if I am just going to build a shed?*

**A** Yes and No. No, if you do not live in shoreland. Yes, if you live in shoreland and the shed or any other structure you are building is 160 square feet or larger .

**Q** *Who tells me what type of system I need?*

**A** The licensed ISTS designer can make this determination based on soil and site conditions, and specific needs of the owner.

**Q** *How is the type of system needed on my property determined?*

**A** The type of system is determined by soil texture, depth to water table, proximity to surface waters, the number of people it is intended to serve and all applicable setbacks.

**Q** *How do I know if the sewage treatment system now existing on my property works? Who is responsible for checking it?*

**A** Most systems in Cook County are mound systems. Signs of mound system failures include: wet areas around the edge of the mound; cattails or other wetland vegetation; and/or black areas around the edge of the mound. Trench systems in failure reveal ponding or leakage to a low spot. If buying property it is wise to hire a sewage treatment system inspector to conduct a Point of Sale inspection.

**Q** *I want to sell my home. The buyer wants a Point-of-Sale inspection of my sewage treatment system. Who do I contact to do this?*

**A** A state licensed inspector or the Cook County Environmental Health Department should be contacted.

**Q** *Do I need a permit to construct an outhouse or install a composting toilet?*

**A** Yes, they require a permit from Cook County Environmental Health Department.

**Q** *Can I install my own sewage treatment system? Do I even have to have a sewage treatment system?*

**A** You cannot install your own sewage treatment system. Only licensed installers may. You are required to have a sewage treatment system if any structure has plumbing. If your structure does not have plumbing, an outhouse is acceptable, but still requires a permit. The exception to this is for an outhouse tank, which requires a design by a certified and licensed septic contractor. This can be installed by the owner with a proper septic inspection.

## Did you know?

### Protecting your sewage treatment system

During winters with a lack of snow cover and cold temperatures, sewage treatment systems can freeze. This can be not only a tremendous inconvenience, but can result in expensive repairs. To help prevent your system from freezing, follow these general guidelines:

1. Add a layer of hay or straw mulch (8-12 inches) over the pipes, tank, and soil treatment area.
2. Use normal amounts of water, the warmer the better.
3. Fix any leaky plumbing and DO NOT add antifreeze to the system.
4. Keep all types of vehicles – including ATV's, snowmobiles and high traffic people activities off of the septic system.
5. Make sure all risers, inspection pipes and manholes have covers. Adding insulation over pipes and over the septic tank and soil treatment area is a good idea before the cold weather sets in.
6. Let the grass in your lawn grow higher in the late summer and early fall over the soil treatment area to act as a snow catch and provide better insulation.
7. If you'll be gone for an extended time, consider pumping out your septic tank/pump tank in the fall season before leaving and only if you live in an area without a high water table.

For additional information on sewage treatment systems contact the University of Minnesota: [www.septic.umn.edu/owners/index.htm](http://www.septic.umn.edu/owners/index.htm)





# Protecting Wetlands

Wetlands are very common in Cook County and most contractors are trained to recognize wetlands. Personnel from the Land Services Department or Soil and Water Conservation District can also assist in determining if a wetland exists on your property.

Wetlands are areas that are consistently wet enough to support water-loving plants. They are determined by the soil, vegetation, and water conditions. Some wetland types have open water; most do not. Wetland functions depend on the characteristics of the particular wetland. Wetlands can improve water quality, recharge groundwater, store water, and provide wildlife habitat.

## Wetland Management

When you submit a land use permit to Cook County, the application must address wetlands, waters, and vegetation management AND provide evidence that the activity you are proposing conforms to the standards of the Cook County Land Use

Ordinance and the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act (WCA).

**If you anticipate any wetland disturbance, contact the Cook County Land Services Department for specific regulations.**

## Road Building

If you and/or your contractor plan to construct an access or driveway, remember that a permit from the Land Services Department or access permit from the appropriate road authority may also be required. The permitting process will also review any potential wetland impacts.

**If wetlands are altered, increased sediment flows contaminate our lakes and streams. Cook County wetlands remain largely intact, protecting our waters.**

## in Cook County

**The following are a few suggestions that will save time, money, and avoid compliance problems.**

- ✓ Avoid or minimize wetland impacts.
- ✓ The absence of cattails, water lilies, or even standing water does not guarantee you won't be working in a wetland. In fact, some wetland types hold surface water only a few weeks a year.
- ✓ A common misconception is that seasonal rains increase and droughts reduce wetland size when, in fact, the true relationship is between the soil, the water table interacting with that soil, and those plants adapted to wet soil conditions.
- ✓ If the work site includes tag alder, black spruce, willow, tamarack, white cedar, or black ash, chances are the site is a wetland. If you are in doubt, contact the Land Services Department or the Soil and Water Conservation District at 218-387-3647.



Type 6 Wetland

## TECHNICAL DEFINITION

Wetlands are areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions.

## For your information ...

**Wetlands perform important functions. These functions include:**

- Fisheries Habitat
- Wildlife Habitat
- Shoreland Protection
- Groundwater Protection
- Stormwater Retention
- Public Recreation
- Floral Diversity/Plant Habitats
- Groundwater Recharge



Type 3 Wetland

# Commonly Asked Questions



**Q** *Are there different types of wetlands?*

**A** Yes. Wetland classes described by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are used to evaluate wetlands in Cook County. They are listed as “wetland types” and are classified in eight different categories. The differences between these types are the variations of water conditions, kinds of plants, and soil conditions.

**Q** *When does a landowner need a permit to fill a wetland?*

**A** Always. In some cases, the permitting process can take a long time if state and federal permits are needed. Plan ahead.

**Q** *Is the county the only governmental entity regulating activities around wetlands?*

**A** No, both federal and state agencies may also require permits. The federal contact is the Army Corps of Engineers at 218-834-6630.

**Q** How do I cross wetlands with ATV/hiking trails on my property? Or Wetlands prevent me from gaining access to my lakeshore frontage, what can I do?

**A** Boardwalks (depending on construction) can significantly reduce impacts to wetland and are the preferred method for bridging sensitive hydrologic resources. Contact the Wetlands Specialist in Land Services at (218)387-3634 if you have questions.

**Failure to adhere to the rules of the Wetland Conservation Act may result in a State-Ordered Restoration. This is often a lengthy and expensive process.**

## What can you do?

- **Don't fill or alter wetlands even if they are only wet during the spring.**
- **Consider restoring previously drained or filled wetlands.**
- **Avoid contamination of the waters on your land by avoiding or minimizing the use of fertilizers and pesticides.**
- **Avoid. Minimize. Mitigate.**



## Checklist



### ✓ Plan ahead:

Begin planning well in advance of the anticipated construction starting date. If you suspect wetland disturbances will occur, contact the Cook County Land Services Department (218-387-3634) and the Army Corps of Engineers (218-834-6630) before you begin. In many cases, a site visit can be arranged and a determination made that will avoid unnecessary delays. Permitting can take up to 6 months in some instances. Wetland impacts are calculated in square feet and replacement may be required.

### ✓ Road location and layout:

Use the natural topography as an aid in road layout and keep in mind a reasonable attempt to avoid and minimize the impact must be demonstrated. A meandering design can often be used to avoid wet areas. A curved road also limits the line of site and promotes privacy.

### ✓ Road size:

Choose a location for your road that will minimize the need for ditching, grading, or filling.

### ✓ Stream or waterway crossing:

If development requires crossing a stream or waterway, contact the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources-Division of Waters (218-834-6623) for the classification or status of the waterway. A permit is needed for building a bridge or placing a culvert, if not from the DNR then from Cook County.

### ✓ Dams and Ponds:

Dam and pond construction are both regulated. They alter wetland function, stream flow volume, and wildlife habitat. Contact Cook County Land Services before constructing. For technical assistance contact the Department of Natural Resources or Soil & Water Conservation District.



# So, You Own Property on a Lake or a Stream?

## in Cook County

The consequences of uncontrolled or unplanned shoreline development can be disastrous. Over-developed and poorly designed shoreland areas degrade the entire waterbody.

Increasing demand for shoreline building sites has led to skyrocketing land costs and intensive development. To protect the integrity of the lakes and streams of Cook County, strict standards for development on shorelands are enforced by the County Land Services Department.

### Things to Consider When Developing Shoreland

- leave as much of a buffer strip of natural vegetation as possible (check regulations)
- limit amounts of impervious surfaces (e.g. roofs, driveways, roads, parking areas)

**Sound management of our shorelands in Cook County is important and will help maintain high water quality, sustain property values, and retain the scenic quality of our lakes, rivers, and streams.**

**Shoreland development is regulated by the state; Cook County ordinances are modeled after state regulations.**

- maintain natural vegetation and minimize lawn area
- retain trees and shrubs for natural screen and maximize use of native vegetation
- do not disturb steep slopes
- retain aquatic and shoreline vegetation to protect shorelines from erosion
- minimize or eliminate the use of pesticides and fertilizers
- minimize the amount of clearing for a beach and dock
- Section 7.08 C. of the Cook County Zoning Ordinance requires that roads, driveways, and parking areas must meet shoreland structure setbacks.
- If applicable, connect with homeowners' associations or lake associations for covenances in the area.
- Beware of aquatic invasive species that might be in the water to help prevent their spread.

## Commonly Asked Questions



**Q** What is shoreland?

**A** "Shoreland" in Cook County is defined as all property within 1,000 feet of a lake, pond, or flowage, or 300 feet of a river or stream. It includes the North Shore Management Zone.

**Q** What is the North Shore Management Zone?

**A** The shoreland along Lake Superior has long been recognized for its distinctive characteristics and abundant natural resources. Because the North Shore will continue to experience significant development pressures in the future, the land along Lake Superior has been identified as a distinctive management unit. Different regulations apply in this zone.

**Q** Where is the North Shore Management Zone Boundary?

**A** Within Cook County, the North Shore Management Zone extends from the vegetation line of Lake Superior to a line north

of Highway 61 that's at least 1,000 feet from Lake Superior and 300 feet from the centerline of Highway 61. See the Land Services Department for the exact boundaries.

**Q** How are shorelands managed?

**A** In order to provide a better management and protection tool for shoreland development, a lakes classification plan was developed and adopted for the county's public waters. The public waters of Cook County are classified by the Department of Natural Resources as:

#### Lakes

- a) Natural Environment
- b) Recreational Development
- c) Lake Superior
- d) Special Natural Environment
- e) Special Recreational Development

#### Rivers

- a) Remote
- b) Forested & Transition
- c) Tributary

**Q** What are the guidelines?

**A** Cook County has set standards for land activities in shoreland areas, which include but, aren't limited to:

- Intensive vegetative clearing within the bluff and shore impact zones, and on slopes in excess of 12% is not allowed, however limited clearing of trees and shrubs and trimming or pruning of trees and shrubs, and the placement of stairs to the shoreline is allowed so long as screening from the lake remains intact.
- Topographic alterations and soil work on or near bluffs require permits and a site review by the Land Services Office in the effort to protect the water body as well as fish and wildlife habitat, by preventing soil erosion, bank slumping and nutrient loading.



# Preparing for Emergencies

Each year, hundreds of people build or live in their dream homes tucked into Cook County's woods. We are fortunate to live in an area of abundant natural beauty. The lush forests and lakes and rivers offer relaxation and recreation for every outdoor activity. However, our area is also vulnerable to both man-made and natural disasters. The common concerns include wildfire, severe storms (summer and winter), flash flooding and power failures. Depending on where you live in Cook County, the official emergency response in the aftermath of a disaster will take time, but it will happen.

Residents need to prepare themselves with the skills and resources they will need in the event a disaster occurs. Residents can also employ best practices to reduce the risk from hazards and reduce the extent of damages to their property. Most wildfire mitigation activities are best accomplished while you are preparing your land for your home BEFORE it is built or remodeled.

Our county is fortunate in that our emergency service organizations work closely together and are well trained and ready to serve when needed. But no amount of preparedness by these organizations can replace the need for the individual preparedness of the property owner. By their very nature, most disasters happen without warning.

Everyone should be ready to look after their own needs both during and for a minimum of 72 hours after a disaster. We want everyone to be as safe and prepared as possible, so personal recovery afterwards will be swift.

Whether faced with a family emergency or a regional disaster, the effort you've put into family preparedness and disaster planning will play a large role in how well you "survive" the event. Identify the hazards that may impact you or your property. Remember, anything that can move, break, fall, or burn is a potential hazard. Assess what the consequences might be for your family when disaster strikes. Then determine the procedures and practices you can develop/implement to enhance your disaster resilience.



## CodeRED: The Cook County Emergency Notification System

Cook County is using CodeRED, a high-speed mass notification system to keep you safe in the event of an emergency. The system allows us to deliver emergency messages to you via phone call to your landline or mobile device and through text and email. These messages can be delivered county-wide, to specific geographic regions, or to specific audiences.

**Some examples of where CodeRED may be used include:**

- Evacuation Notices
- Missing Person Cases
- Fires
- Floods

### Signup for CodeRED

Is your cell phone your primary communication device? If so, it's important that you sign up to include your mobile contact information so that you receive emergency alerts even when you are on the go. You can also choose to receive text and email messages at the same time. Registering for CodeRED is free and simple. [Register now](#)

You can also download the Mobile App and receive alerts from other participating Counties while you travel!

**CAUTION:** While the County's mass notification system is considered effective and efficient, you should not wait for or rely on a mass notification system. If you think you are in danger, you should evacuate immediately.

**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. It is important to be able to survive 3-5 days in severe cold with no utilities if you live in remote areas of the county.

**Flooding** can occur, especially during spring runoff. It is wise to take this possibility into consideration when developing your property or building. The county does not provide sand bags, equipment or people to protect private property from flooding. The topography of the land can tell you where the water will go in the case of heavy precipitation. Low areas will collect water when snow melts or large rain events occur. Take your property's topography into account when positioning structures and other developments.

Sign up for CodeRED at <https://www.co.cook.mn.us/government/departments/sheriff/codered.php>

*Continued on page 18*

**For more information on your personal preparedness and reducing the risk from wildfire go to:**

Cook County Emergency Management: [https://www.co.cook.mn.us/government/departments/emergency\\_management/index.php](https://www.co.cook.mn.us/government/departments/emergency_management/index.php)

Cook County Firewise: <https://cookcountyfirewise.org/>

Firewise in Minnesota: <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/firewise/index.html>

 **CodeRED™**



### Landscape

Too many trees and brush near your home make for more fuel for a wildfire. Create a Lean, Clean and Green defensible space of at least 30 feet around your home and other important buildings. Maintaining a defensible space does NOT mean total plant clearance. Mow grass, thin trees (especially evergreen types) and cut back brush. Prune up the lower branches on evergreens to reduce the chance of fire climbing from the ground up into the tree. Reduce the fuel between the woods and your home so fire cannot easily spread. Also, should your home catch on fire, a well-maintained defensible space can protect the forest from igniting.

If you maintain a firewood supply, locate your woodpile at least 30 feet from your home. Consider using native or crushed rock 3-5 feet along the foundation of your home and extend gravel coverage under decks. If you maintain a firewood supply, locate your woodpile at least 30 feet from your home.

### What you can do to reduce the threat of your home being damaged or destroyed by wildfire.

Most property in Cook County is located a considerable distance from the nearest volunteer fire department. Wildfire can devastate your community, but by creating a fire safe boundary (called "defensible space") around your home or business, you may avoid disaster while helping firefighters.

### Access

The fact that you can drive to your property today does not necessarily guarantee that you, your guests and emergency service vehicles can achieve that same level of access at all times. Natural disasters, especially flash flooding, can destroy roads. Be sure to provide adequate access to your property for emergency vehicles. Driveways should be cleared to a 12-foot width with a 14-foot vertical clearance. A turnaround near your home should be provided with at least a 30-foot radius. A 'T'-shaped turnaround with a minimum of 60 feet across the top of the 'T' is a good alternative.

### Building Materials

Whether you are building new or remodeling, use building materials that are fire resistant. If you are building in a high hazard wildfire area, use Class A roofing, stucco or metal siding and screen under all decks with minimum screening having no larger than ¼ inch mesh.

### Burning Practices

Do not burn trash. All outdoor burning, except for a recreational campfire, requires a burning permit in Minnesota. Fires escaping these brush piles or illegal burn barrels are the biggest single source of wildfires in Minnesota. Consider an alternative to burning such as composting or hauling material to a community brush collection site. If you need to burn, plan to burn when everything is green or when the ground is covered with at least 3" of snow.

## Firewise Landscape Checklist



When designing and installing a firewise landscape, consider the following:

- Local area fire history
- Site location and overall terrain
- Prevailing winds and boundaries
- Native vegetation or firewise perennial lists are available at the Cook County Extension Office 218-387-3015.
- Plan characteristics and placement (duffage, water & salt retention ability, aromatic oils, fuel load per area, and size)
- Irrigation requirements

### Zone 1: Within 30 - feet of home

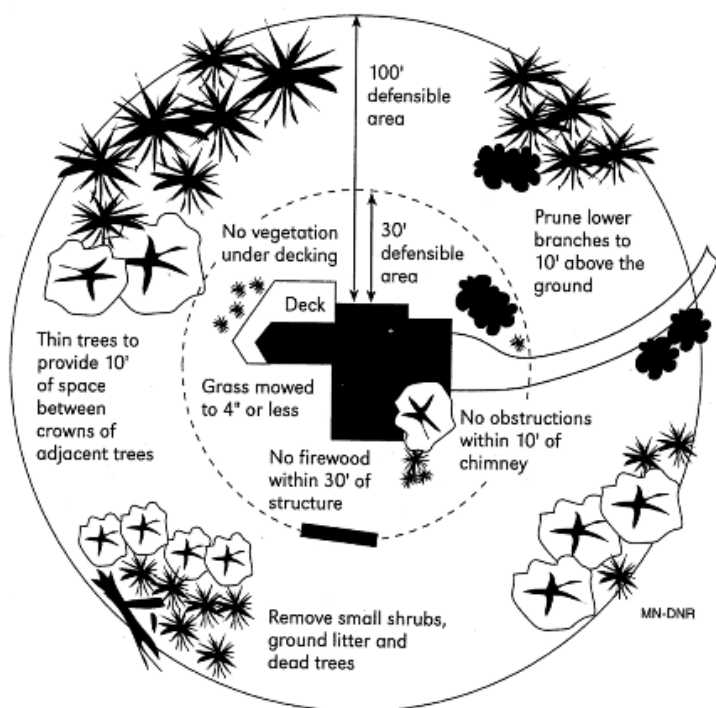
This well-irrigated area encircles the home on all sides, providing space for fire suppression equipment in case of an emergency. Plantings should be limited to carefully spaced, low flammable species.

### Zone 2: Between 30-feet and 100-feet of home

Plants should be low-growing low flammable species that are well places and well groomed. If possible, any irrigation system should extend into this zone.

### Zone 3: Beyond 100 feet of home

Continue to utilize low-growing plants and well spaced trees, using these and other measures to keep the volume of flammable vegetation (fuel) to a minimum. Care should be taken to reduce or eliminate sites or pockets of fuel that are up to several hundred feet from the home.





# Keeping Records

**Legal Description of Your Property:**

**Parcel Code/Tax ID#:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Land Use District:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Property Address (911 system address):**

**Your Well Driller:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date drilled:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Unique well number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Type of well:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Depth of well:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Depth of casing:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Yield rate:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Well casing diameter:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location of well:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Last date water tested:**

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**Your Septic System Designer/Installer:**

**Date installed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Type of system:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location of system:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Last date system was cleaned:**

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**Name of Property Owner When Installed:**

**Year of Certificate of Compliance:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sewage Treatment System #:** \_\_\_\_\_

**County Commissioner and District:**

**Township or Unorganized Territory:**

**Electric Utility Emergency Phone Number:**

**Furnace Cleaned and Serviced (dates):**

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**Homeowners Insurance Policy # and Agent:**

**Hospital Number:**

**Lake/River Classification (setback distance):**

**Permit #'s issued for Buildings:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Polling Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Road Right of Way Distance:** \_\_\_\_\_

**School Phone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Smoke Detectors Checked / Batteries Changed (dates):**

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**Property Taxes Due May 15th and October 15th:**

**Homeowners Association Contact:**

**Lake Association Contact::**

**Other:** \_\_\_\_\_



Map produced by: Kyle Oberg

## Emergency Phone Numbers (218 area code)

**Fire Department—Emergency .....911 Search and Rescue - Emergency .....911**

### Non-Emergency Numbers

Colville Volunteer Fire Department .....218-387-2931

Grand Marais Volunteer Fire Department .....218-387-9092

Grand Portage Volunteer Fire Department .....218-475-2291

Gunflint Trail Volunteer Fire Department ..... 218-388-0313

Hovland Volunteer Fire Department ..... 218-475-2352

Lutsen Volunteer Fire Department .....218-663-7002

Maple Hill Volunteer Fire Department .....218-387-1667

Schroeder Volunteer Fire Hall .....218-663-7756

Tofte Volunteer Fire Hall .....218-663-7619

**Police Department—Emergency .....911**

Cook County Law Enforcement Center— Sheriff , Deputies

Grand Marais .....218-387-3030

Fax .....218-387-3032

Cook County Law Enforcement Center—Sheriff, Deputies  
Grand Marais ..... 218-387-3030

**Medical Emergency Service .....911**

Cook County North Shore Hospital & Care Center  
Grand Marais .....218-387-3040

Sawtooth Mountain Clinic  
Grand Marais .....218-387-2330

Grand Portage Clinic, Grand Portage  
Satellite Clinic .....218-475-2235

West End Branch, Tofte  
Satellite Clinic .....218-387-2330

**Human Services Emergencies .....911**

Cook County Human Service Department  
Grand Marais ..... 218-387-3620

Grand Portage Human Service Department  
Grand Portage .....218-475-2453

Violence Prevention Center  
Grand Marais .....218-387-1237

**Emergency Management Training & Workshops**

Grand Marais .....218-387-3059