

Photo Southern Foresters

You've found your dream property in the perfect rural setting. Before you run out and make an offer, make sure you consider these tips to improve your buying experience as you realize your rural dreams.

# Shopping for rural land is worthwhile but complex

BY TOM BRICKMAN  
Registered Forester

If you are shopping for land, here's a checklist developed by trial and error, from experience gained in helping people buy and sell more than 200,000 acres of rural land over 40 years.

## Be clear on why you want to own land

Hunting, investment, rural residence and family recreation are all good reasons for owning land and each one leads to a different kind of land. For example, if you plan to live on the land, legal access and proximity to public services will be important. Be clear on your intentions so you can focus your search. Consider how

you will use the land and how your wife, husband or children wish to be involved.

The key to fewer regrets is thinking in detail about how the land will be used and involving your family in the shopping effort.

## Look at many properties

The more you shop, the better deal you'll find. Our experience is that people change their minds about many details once they do some shopping. Looking at a lot of deals can be challenging because it takes a lot of time but it's important. Keep in mind that easy-to-find properties (on the internet) are only a small part of all the land available for new ownership.

That's because many more properties are promoted by thousands of landowners or small-town agents. In fact, our research shows that many properties available for purchase have not been promoted at all.

So keep looking, get help if needed and you'll find your dream property.

## Inspect the property

Not every property will have the physical characteristics you desire. To determine suitability you'll want to physically inspect any possible purchase. Depending on intended use, things to consider are neighborhood desirability, ease of access, timber species, age and quantity, soil productivity, how the land lays (topography),

presence of creeks, quality of pastures, existence of boundary line and corner markings, potential boundary or access problems with neighboring landowners, etc.

Whenever you buy land, remember that one day you may want to sell it. So think about that day now and make a better buying decision. Whatever appears to be a problem for you right now will likely be a problem for future buyers too.

To inspect a property, you'll need aerial photos and topographic maps with the boundary lines indicated. Get out and walk the lines. A good source for boundary line information is the county tax assessor office. In fact, many counties have tax maps online.

And there are private sources for paper and online tax map sites.

A consulting forester can help with an inspection.

## Talk to the property owner

Believe it or not, some people will say they want to sell their land but don't have a sincere interest in selling. It might be for a free appraisal or even for the attention. You should interview the property owner to assess the strength of their motivation to sell.

A property listed by an agent should already have this step completed. But not all agents do this and some don't do it correctly.

So ask good questions of the owner or living agent, such as how long it's been

on the market, how many price changes there have been, how many offers have been made, how many different agents have listed it and why the owner is selling.

## Confirm the acreage

Most rural land has never been surveyed. The fact is, without a survey, no one really knows exactly how many acres are in a tract. For example, the deed may say 160 acres because the property is one-fourth of a section (a perfect section is 640 acres) but the tax assessor may say 155 acres. Each have their reasons but without a survey neither should be viewed as exact. Because surveys are ex-

See **PURCHASE**, 20C

**Salute To The Area Wood Products & Forestry Industry**

**SPARKS FORESTRY SERVICES LLC**


**Complete Forestland Management**

- FORESTLAND MANAGEMENT • TIMBER APPRAISALS
- TIMBER SALES • REFORESTATION SERVICES
- RELEASE AND SITE PREP SPRAY SERVICES
- DRONE SERVICES • COGON GRASS TREATMENT

Mr. Kim C. Sparks, Consulting Forester  
Alabama RF License #2133 • Mississippi RF License #2711AL

760 Sugar Creek Drive • Thomasville, Alabama 36784

(334) 830-0453 • Sparksforestry@gmail.com



**WE SALUTE THE TIMBER AND FORESTRY INDUSTRY**

**Wilson, Drinkard & Drinkard, LLC**

*Attorney's At Law*

**Bruce N. Wilson • C. Daryl Drinkard • Matthew C. Drinkard • Blane Dolbare**

103 Court Street • Grove Hill • **(251) 275-3221**



**PROUDLY SUPPORTING THE FORESTRY INDUSTRY**


**The Town of McIntosh**

✱

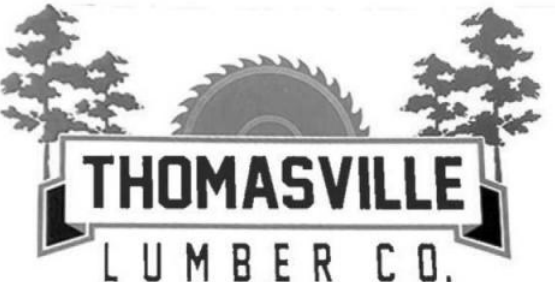
**Wilbert L. Dixon, Mayor**  
**Theresa A. Johnson, Town Clerk**

**Council**  
**Roosevelt Adams, Jr.**  
**Randall Davidson**  
**Norman J. Howard**  
**Walter B. Johnson, Sr.**  
**Lillie R. Steiner**





**PROUDLY SALUTING THE TIMBER & FORESTRY INDUSTRY!**



Highway 5 • Thomasville, AL

**(334) 636-9622**