Getting Ready to Buy: Where do you start?

So you’ve decided you want to buy a piece of recreational property for you and your family to enjoy for years to come. Where do you start?

Doing some preliminary research online can be helpful, say real estate brokers in the Potlatch Preferred Network. But early in the process, you should also find a broker who’s a recreational property expert in the area you’re interested in.

And while the internet doesn’t replace actually walking a property, it can help you get an idea of what you’re looking for as you start that relationship with your broker.

“Spending some time online can help you start to get an idea of what you want in a property,” said Natalie Cowart of United Country – Banning Junction Real Estate in northern Minnesota. “This kind of research helps you to be ready to ask the right questions as you begin the process.”

Rick Musick of United Country - Musick & Sons in Idaho starts a relationship with a potential buyer with an online meeting. The staff asks questions to define what the buyer is looking for, while showing photos and details of properties that might fit the bill.

So as you start the process, here are five tips from the Potlatch Preferred Network brokers:

1. **Remember that location is everything.** For starters, pick a geographic area that is going to work for you. Ask yourself questions like these: How far are you willing to drive to your property? Are there recreational opportunities nearby, and does that matter to you? Do you want to be near a town?

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State-by-State

Arkansas

Pete Prutzman
Kingwood Forestry Services

While the big attraction for most recreational property buyers in Arkansas is hunting, property owners also often discover a host of other things to enjoy, says Pete Prutzman of Kingwood Forestry Services.

As an example, Prutzman says some land owners set up infrared game cameras and enjoy the activities of nocturnal animals. “You don’t have to hunt to get a kick out of what goes on around a pond or salt lick or feeder,” he says.

Forested land also offers great bird watching opportunities. Bald eagles, wood ducks, pine warblers, and pileated woodpeckers are just a few species that make their home in Arkansas’ pine forests.

Then there is hiking, camping and riding ATVs. For ATV enthusiasts, Prutzman says the great thing about owning property is you can create your own trails, mud pits and obstacle courses and then enjoy them with friends and family.

To learn about more recreational opportunities in Arkansas, visit www.arkansas.com.

Minnesota

Charlie Chernak
Bear Island Land Co.

In northern Minnesota, trails run for miles in every direction, offering extensive opportunities for winter recreation.

Minnesota has an extensive groomed trail system for snowmobiling, says Charlie Chernak of Bear Island Land Co., and many Potlatch properties are in close proximity to the trails. “You can go hundreds of miles on trails,” Chernak says, “all maintained by the state of Minnesota.”

If you prefer non-motorized winter fun, Minnesota also offers miles of groomed cross-country ski trails, and the state also has a detailed trail system specifically for cross-country skiing.

Activities like these have prompted some property owners to use their hunting shack for more than just hunting. “Traditionally deer shacks were full of just the boys, but snowmobiling is becoming a real family activity,” says Chernak. “If you build a cabin, you can snowshoe or cross-country ski right out your back door.”

When the snow melts, those same trails offer great places to hike and enjoy nature’s beauty, while other trails offer ATV opportunities.

To discover more recreational opportunities in Minnesota, visit www.exploreminnesota.com.

Idaho

Rick Musick
United Country - Musick & Sons Auction & Real Estate Services

One of the best ways to explore the beauty of Idaho is to take a drive on one of the state’s 31 scenic byways, says Rick Musick of United Country - Musick & Sons Auction & Real Estate Services.

Some Idaho byways have historic significance, and others provide access to natural attractions and outdoor recreation, but all offer extraordinary scenic beauty.

Another way to appreciate the Idaho outdoors is by ATV. “ATV clubs are really popular here,” Musick says. “A lot of clubs take road trips or host events like scavenger hunts.”

For those who prefer the water, Musick says North Central Idaho is known for whitewater rafting and guided fishing.

Rivers and lakes aren’t the only types of water that residents and visitors enjoy, though. Valley County is home to a lot of natural hot springs, says Musick, and in fact, one of the brokerages current Potlatch listings has a hot spring on it. The soothing, healing properties of these geothermal springs are widely touted.

For more information about recreational opportunities in Idaho, Musick recommends visiting www.visitidaho.org.

Q&A

Mark Knight
Davis DuBose Knight Forestry & Real Estate
Arkansas

What trends are you seeing in recreational property sales and how does the national economy impact property sales in your area of Arkansas?

It’s a stable, steady market. There’s a lot of interest in smaller-acreage parcels - 40 acres or less. There’s also interest in institutional investment properties 3,000 acres and above. The improving economy results in more optimistic buyers. And as timber prices move up, we definitely see an increase of timberland sales.

What are some of the most common questions your potential buyers ask?

Typically, they ask about current timber prices. They also want to know about access to the property and if there are utilities on the property.

What factors impact the sale of timberland?

Factors such as price, location, property accessibility, proximity to mills, timber quality and stocking levels have the greatest impact on the sale of timberland. An increase in housing starts and wet weather tend to drive up the demand for timber and can also provide a boost to timberland sales.

Are your clients mainly interested in purchasing property for investment or for recreational use?

Our clients primarily purchase land for investment, but some are interested in a combination of recreational use and timber investment. Any time we can show a property’s value in terms of timber investment, it immediately makes that property more attractive. It’s nice to be able to demonstrate that the land isn’t just a place to play, but also a potential investment.

In terms of recreation, what are the most popular activities in your area?

Hunting and fishing are by far the most popular recreational activities. Fly fishing is really popular in northern Arkansas. Our many lakes and waterways provide ample canoeing opportunities, and cycling is also really popular here. I enjoy deer, duck and turkey hunting, so when prospective buyers ask about land that offers good hunting prospects, I can readily answer their questions.
When J.D. Neeley’s father started a forestry consulting business in southern Arkansas in 1972, the company was managing 20,000 acres. Now, United Country-Neeley Forestry Service manages 220,000 acres.

And that knowledge plays well into the family business’ work in recreational real estate.

J.D. joined the business in 1985 and has overseen its growth and expansion into timberland appraisal, property appraisal and real estate sales.

The most recent expansion started five years ago, and United Country-Neeley Forestry topped $10 million in gross sales last year. “We feel very blessed to have had such a good year,” Neeley said.

Located in what’s called the “wood basket” of south Arkansas, Neeley said his prospective buyers are often looking to invest in timberland. “Financing is still looking good for those wanting to purchase property,” he said. “It’s a good time to buy, and we’re expecting to see a return to historic averages in pine saw timber pricing.”

Other purchasers are looking for land to hunt, camp or ride their ATVs on. Neeley’s familiarity with the area comes in handy when folks are seeking land for recreational use. “I’m an avid outdoorsman,” Neeley said. “I love to hunt!”

In fact, he recently returned from a duck-hunting trip. “We’ve been racking up the ducks,” he said.

Tying nicely into his work, Neeley’s entire family embraces the outdoor lifestyle. “We have a cabin back on our old homestead,” he said, “and we spend a lot of time there.”

And in keeping with the company’s history as a family enterprise, J.D.’s son Daniel recently joined the company, making it a three-generation business. Daniel recently completed his forestry degree and is working on his MBA.

The United Country-Neeley Forestry Service team is made up of nine experienced team members, including registered forester and executive broker Josh Barkhimer and executive broker Brenda Kirkley, who brings 30 years of brokerage experience to the company.

“In terms of management, we do a lot of work with multi-generational family property.”

~J.D. Neeley

“In terms of management, we do a lot of work with multi-generational family property,” Neeley said. “Often, we are working with land that we originally managed for parents, and that we now manage for their children and even their grandchildren.” These kinds of ongoing relationships add great satisfaction to his work, he said.

But what he finds most enjoyable is seeing the company’s clients enjoy their property and what it can bring to them, both recreationally and financially. “I love to see properties well-managed and producing good timber revenues,” he said. “Helping people maximize their returns is very rewarding.”

To connect with the Neeley Forestry team, and to learn more about its Potlatch land listings in Arkansas, call 870-836-5981, or visit www.ucneeleyforestry.com
2. Think about how you are going to use the property. This is critical in determining what features your property should have. Do you want to hunt on it? Will you want trails for snowmobiling or hiking? Do you plan to build a cabin on the property?

3. If you are looking to use a property soon, start the process now. The process of buying usually takes at least several months, when you factor in property visits, working out financing, and arranging a closing. So if you want to use your property this spring, the time to start looking is now.

4. If you want to build a cabin on the property someday, think about access, utilities and topography. “You have to go beyond basic maps and photos to truly understand where a cabin might sit,” Cowart says. “And if you think you want to build someday, it’s good to have access and utilities figured out ahead of time.”

5. It’s smart to work out your financing ahead of time. Are there lenders making loans for land in the area where you’re looking? If so, Potlatch brokers can be a good source for finding lenders to talk to. Knowing your financing will give you confidence that your desired price range will work.

We have a wide variety of quality hunting and recreational properties available, sold through highly experienced real estate experts who are part of the Potlatch Preferred Broker Network. At Potlatch, we are committed to passing well-managed forest land on to future generations. Our commitment to you is to answer any question or concern you may have, ensuring you make an informed buying decision.

When you’re ready to take the next step, a great place to start your online search is at the Potlatch Real Estate website, at www.PotlatchLandSales.com.

POTLATCH PREFERRED BROKER NETWORK

Let us show you why your Potlatch Preferred Broker is the only name you’ll need to know when it comes to buying property. Please contact the broker nearest your area of interest or visit us at www.PotlatchLandSales.com.

We look forward to helping you with your property search!

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