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FEATURED NEWS

Maximizing Recreational Assets of Real Estate

By: [Jeff Shouse, Broker](#)

Recreational-oriented property has been a dynamic segment of the rural real estate market in the Rocky Mountain West for many years. Beginning in the early 1980s, the historic trend of farms and ranches being purchased for agricultural production was augmented with an additional buyer pool of individuals largely motivated by recreational amenities. This trend continues today, and some of the most compelling and desirable acreages are those that provide the foundation to raise crops and livestock as well as provide good opportunities for fishing, hunting and a variety of other recreational pursuits. These properties oftentimes reward an owner with a lifestyle tied closely to the land, along with the benefits of a viable income stream, potential tax advantages and long-term appreciation of an investment that can actually be touched, is engaging to own, and enjoyed by family and friends.

In the broadest sense, the term “recreation” as it pertains to real estate certainly describes different things for different people, but most individuals highly value the presence of fish and game, whether for sporting pursuits or the simple aesthetic experience of having a prolific wildlife community and sustaining ecosystem on the property. While certain properties naturally have the right blend of ingredients to support diverse wildlife, many do not, due to location, or the simple fact that a mix of preferred features that draw and support animals are insignificant or non-existent altogether. Fortunately there are methods to address these deficiencies, ultimately increasing productivity and invariably, the overall value of the land. Generally, as long as water is available, habitat and food sources can be established or further enhanced. While this process of property sculpting does require effort, time and money, the benefits can be exponentially rewarding and may open the door to acreages - possibly “diamonds in the rough” - that do not immediately provide strong recreational options, however are also priced accordingly less than more turn-key offerings.

Concurrent with the surge of interest in recreational property, an industry comprised of land and water reclamation and enhancement firms has evolved that specializes in property improvement strategies for landowners to increase wildlife populations, whether it be for fish, upland birds, waterfowl or big game species. These firms incorporate a knowledge of disciplines including agricultural management, range and soil science, water rights, wildlife biology, engineering, geology, forestry, construction and other areas of expertise, are well versed in what can and cannot be done due to practicality, viability, and existing regulations, and can facilitate the process of obtaining any requisite permits for a particular task. While there

are many different issues and improvements that may need to be addressed on a particular property, enhancement projects generally fall into a few categories - albeit accepted practices, regulations and required protocol will vary state to state. My observations are based on experience gained through brokering recreational real estate in my home state of Montana for almost three decades.

As it relates to: *Streams, Ponds and Lakes, Wetlands* ([click here](#))

As it relates to: *Agricultural and Range Options* ([click here](#))

When it comes to appreciation and value as it relates to real estate, the old adage “location, location, location” certainly is a primary consideration, however recreational elements that include a healthy and stable wildlife resource increase the desirability and worth of a property by a significant amount. Land stewardship strategies that give importance to wildlife concerns will result in a recreational property that is fulfilling to own, as well as greatly enhance pride of ownership.

FEATURED AGENT

Jeff Shouse, Broker



Jeff has represented sellers and buyers throughout Montana, Idaho and Wyoming in the sales and acquisition of farm, ranch and recreational property since 1987. His main focus has always been centered on premium hunting and fishing opportunities, and he has brokered many outstanding sporting ranches over the years. His clients are typically drawn to pristine, open spaces, and are passionate about the sporting lifestyle.

As a Montana resident since 1975, he has spent a considerable amount of his life fishing and hunting. He worked for nine years as a fly fishing guide on the world-class trout waters of southwest Montana and has ventured to Alaska, South America, Russia, several Canadian Provinces and saltwater destinations to pursue different fishing venues. He is an avid big game, upland bird and waterfowl hunter, and he feels fortunate to have harvested several species of western big game over thirty-five years of traditional bowhunting.

FEATURED PROPERTIES



Smokin' Rock Ranch
Swan Lake, Montana

Price: \$7,500,000

Acreage: 460 Acres

- 2.5 miles of Swan River
- Dramatic mtn. views
- Big game hunting

Shields River Ranch
Livingston, Montana

Price Reduced: \$4,390,000

Acreage: 894 Acres

- 2 miles of Shields River
- Agriculture component
- Excellent bird hunting

Little Mission Creek Ranch
Livingston, Montana

Price: \$3,500,000

Acreage: 586 Acres

- Superior homesites
- Tightly-held area
- "Blue ribbon" streams



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