



# WILDLIFE

---

## Recreation on Private Land

no. 6.301

by D.E. Benson <sup>1</sup>

### Quick Facts...

Include considerations for managing recreation as part of your normal agricultural operation.

Landowners should plan and request what behavior they expect far enough in advance to avoid surprises for either party.

Keep records of outdoor users.

Granting access to private land to fish, hunt, camp or for any kind of recreation is an unselfish act by the owner that provides welcomed experiences for recreationists.

### Guidelines

Access to private lands is a privilege respected by most visitors, but when some abuse the privilege access is often denied to all. **NO TRESPASSING** or **NO HUNTING** signs promote negative feelings by both landowners and recreationists.

Access to private land can be dealt with in a positive way. If you choose to have recreationists on the property, know who you have and communicate the rules. Start by getting their addresses, car license numbers and signatures. Explain where they may go and for how long (a morning, a hunting season, etc.).

If you have special rules relating to wood cutting, collecting artifacts, use of roads, etc., be sure to communicate those rules. An arrowhead could be picked up with great excitement and pride knowing the landowner approves. Cutting up a dead tree and tossing it into a pickup may not seem inappropriate to a visitor who sees acres of forest, but as the landowner you may object. To allow the pocketing of a few pieces of flint or taking firewood home could enrich the recreational experience and appreciation of your land. Landowners should decide on and request the behaviors they expect in advance to avoid surprises for either party. You are in control — communicate your rules.

Personal bonds between recreationists and landowners can become quite strong. Visitors share stories, lend helping hands and leave packages at the door to show gratitude for access privileges. Many become friends that landowners look forward to seeing on opening day.

Not all visitors and landowners encounters are this positive. The goal of the landowner should be to have people on the property that are respectful and responsible.

Visitors can become additional eyes and ears spotting lost cattle or trespassers. Perhaps they can help mend a piece of fence. All it might take to get some help is a request (obviously not during the hunt) and a quick lesson with the fence stretchers. Visitors won't want to spend their whole trip on labor, but the odd jobs could be a welcome break from the camping trip or hunt and a way that they can demonstrate their appreciation and respect for you and the property.

Landowners can grant privileges to people who demonstrate good outdoor behavior but take equal care to exclude violators. You do not have to tolerate outdoor destroyers and violators. Laws against hunting without permission, littering and game violations have been tightened in the landowners'

**Colorado  
State**  
University  
Cooperative  
Extension

*Putting Knowledge to Work*

© Colorado State University  
Cooperative Extension. 11/98.  
Reviewed 10/03.  
[www.ext.colostate.edu](http://www.ext.colostate.edu)

favor. Recreation will be promoted when outdoor users learn they are welcomed when cooperative but when disrespectful, they will be penalized.

Include considerations for managing outdoor users as part of your normal agricultural operation. It is inevitable that you will be asked for access permission. Gather the appropriate information from the visitors and establish guidelines for use. Give sufficient information to keep users in line, take care of your needs, and to provide a quality experience on your property.

The *Wildlife and Recreation Workbook* (XCM-117) is available from Colorado State University Cooperative Extension. Use it to plan for visitors, write lease agreements and develop land and wildlife management plans.