FREE GUIDE · AMANDA RICHARDS · LANE COUNTY, OREGON

The Lane County **Acreage Buyer** Checklist

Everything homeschool families and first-time acreage buyers need to know before making an offer in Oregon.

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- Well water vs. city water - the right questions to ask before you offer
- Septic systems - what every buyer must understand
- Zoning for chickens, barns, ADUs and outbuildings
- Driveway and road access - the winter questions most buyers forget
- Outbuilding checklist - permitted vs. unpermitted structures
- Co-op and homeschool community proximity tips
- How to get listings before they hit Zillow

FROM AMANDA:

I live on 7+ acres in the woods with my two boys, chickens, and the life most of my clients are searching for. This checklist is everything I wish someone had handed me when we bought our acreage property.

Amanda Richards

REALTOR® · LPT Realty · Lane County, Oregon

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SECTION 01

Well Water & Water Source

City water is simple. Well water requires due diligence before you offer.

THE BASICS - ASK EVERY TIME

- [ ] **Is the property on well water or city water?**
- [ ] **When was the well last tested?**
  Ask for the written test results, not just a verbal yes.
- [ ] **What is the well's flow rate (GPM)?**
  Minimum for a family home is typically 3-5 GPM. Ask for the well log.
- [ ] **How deep is the well?**
  Depth affects reliability and longevity. Shallow wells can fail in dry summers.
- [ ] **What is the water pressure at the house?**
  Low pressure can indicate pump issues or a struggling well.
- [ ] **Has the water been tested for contaminants?**
  Test for nitrates, coliform bacteria, arsenic, and iron at minimum.
- [ ] **Is there a filtration or treatment system?**
  If yes: how old, who maintains it, and what does it cost annually?

IF IT HAS A SHARED WELL

- [ ] **Is there a recorded well agreement?**
  This should be documented at the county. Verbal agreements do not hold up.
- [ ] **Who owns the well?**
  You want to know before you are in a dispute.
- [ ] **Who pays for maintenance and repairs?**
  Get this in writing.

> *Amanda's tip: Always order a professional well inspection in addition to the standard home inspection. It typically costs $200-$400 and is worth every dollar. Ask your inspector for a flow rate test and a water quality test.*

SECTION 02

Septic System

Septic surprises are expensive. Find out before you offer, not after you close.

BEFORE YOU MAKE AN OFFER

- [ ] **How old is the septic system?**
  Systems 20+ years old may need replacement soon. Budget accordingly.
- [ ] **When was it last pumped and inspected?**
  Should be pumped every 3-5 years. Ask for the service records.
- [ ] **What is the system capacity?**
  Is it sized for the number of bedrooms and for your family's actual size?
- [ ] **Has it ever failed or had repairs?**
  Any history of issues should be fully disclosed and documented.
- [ ] **Is it a standard system or an alternative system?**
  Mound systems, aerobic systems, and sand filters cost more to maintain.
- [ ] **Where is the drain field located?**
  You need to know before planning any landscaping, structures, or additions.
- [ ] **Is there room for a replacement drain field?**
  Some older properties do not have the square footage for an expanded or replacement field.

Amanda's tip: Request a septic inspection from a licensed pumper or inspector, separate from your home inspector. In Lane County, the county sanitarian's office keeps records on older systems. Tim's plumbing network includes septic contractors who can give you a straight answer before you close.

SECTION 03

Zoning & Land Use

Zoning rules vary across Lane County. Know what you can actually do with your land.

ANIMALS & HOMESTEADING

- [ ] **Is livestock allowed on this property?**
  Chickens, goats, horses: zoning determines what is and is not permitted.
- [ ] **How many animals are allowed per acre?**
  Some zones have strict limits. Get the exact number from the county.
- [ ] **Are there setback requirements for animal structures?**
  Coops, barns, and pens must be a minimum distance from property lines and dwellings.

STRUCTURES & BUILDINGS

- [ ] **Are additional structures (barn, shop, ADU) allowed?**
- [ ] **Is an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) permitted?**
  Great for aging parents, rental income, or a homeschool space, if the zone allows it.
- [ ] **What are the setback requirements for outbuildings?**
  Structures must be a minimum distance from all property lines.
- [ ] **Is there a maximum lot coverage percentage?**
  Some zones limit how much of the land can be covered by structures.
- [ ] **Are there restrictions on commercial activity?**
  If you run a business from home, make sure zoning allows it.

HOMESCHOOL & COMMUNITY ACCESS

- [ ] **Is there a homeschool co-op within a reasonable distance?**
- [ ] **Are there 4-H or agricultural extension programs nearby?**
- [ ] **What is the nearest community gathering point or town center?**

> *Amanda's tip: Call Lane County Land Management directly before closing on any rural property. They will tell you exactly what the zoning allows in plain language. Do not rely solely on what the seller says or what the listing states. Verify it yourself.*

SECTION 04

Driveway, Roads & Access

The questions most buyers do not ask until they are stuck in the mud in January.

ROAD & DRIVEWAY BASICS

- [ ] **Is the driveway private or shared?**
  Shared driveways need a recorded easement and a clear maintenance agreement.
- [ ] **Is the road publicly maintained or private?**
  Private roads mean you pay for grading, gravel, and repairs.
- [ ] **What is the road surface: gravel, paved, or dirt?**
  Dirt roads can become impassable in Lane County winters.
- [ ] **Has the driveway been culverted or graded recently?**
  Check the condition. Repairs can cost several thousand dollars.
- [ ] **Is the property accessible in winter?**
  Ask the neighbors, not just the seller. Some roads get closed or muddy seasonally.
- [ ] **Is there year-round access to the home?**
  Rural Lane County can flood. Ask about any known access issues.
- [ ] **Are there any easements across the property?**
  Utility, neighbor, or road easements affect what you can build and where.
- [ ] **What utilities reach the road?**
  Know what services are available: power, gas, internet, phone.

> *Amanda's tip: Drive the property access road in wet conditions if you can, or at minimum ask a neighbor what it is like in December and January. What looks fine in August can be a very different story after two weeks of rain.*

SECTION 05

Outbuildings & Structures

Outbuildings can add significant value or significant liability. Know which you are getting.

PERMITS & CONDITION

- [ ] **Are the outbuildings permitted?**
  Unpermitted structures can create issues at closing, with insurance, or when you sell.
- [ ] **What are the outbuildings used for?**
  Shop, barn, storage, hay: understand what you are actually getting.
- [ ] **What condition are the outbuildings in?**
  Look at roofs, foundations, and framing. Repairs add up quickly.
- [ ] **Are there any unpermitted additions to the main house?**
  Unpermitted additions affect insurance, financing, and future resale.
- [ ] **Are there any old fuel tanks, dumping areas, or environmental concerns?**
  These can become your liability as the new owner.

FENCING & LIVESTOCK INFRASTRUCTURE

- [ ] **Is there existing fencing and what condition is it in?**
  New fencing runs $3-$8+ per linear foot depending on type.
- [ ] **Is the fencing appropriate for your intended animals?**
  Poultry fencing, field fencing, and horse fencing are all different.
- [ ] **Are there existing stalls, chicken coops, or animal facilities?**
- [ ] **Is there a water source to the barn or animal areas?**
- [ ] **Is there electrical power to the outbuildings?**
  Critical for heating, lighting, and tools.

> *Amanda's tip: Unpermitted work is the most common surprise we see on acreage properties. It does not always kill a deal, but you need to know about it before you make an offer, not after inspection.*

SECTION 06

Property & Land Basics

Land is not just what you see. Know the boundaries, the history, and the restrictions.

BOUNDARIES & TITLE

- [ ] **Have the property boundaries been recently surveyed?**
  A survey confirms you know exactly what you are buying.
- [ ] **Are there any encroachments from or onto neighboring land?**
- [ ] **Are there any liens, judgments, or title issues on the property?**
  Title insurance protects you, but you still want to know upfront.
- [ ] **Are there any CC&Rs or deed restrictions?**
  Some rural parcels have restrictions that are not obvious from the listing.
- [ ] **Is there a homeowners association?**
  Less common on rural properties, but worth confirming.

SOIL, DRAINAGE & LAND CONDITION

- [ ] **Is the land flat, sloped, or a mix, and how does that affect drainage?**
- [ ] **Are there any flood zone designations on the property?**
  Check FEMA flood maps. Some parcels in Lane County carry flood risk.
- [ ] **Has the land been used for agriculture, spraying, or livestock long-term?**
  Soil health matters if you plan to garden or graze animals.
- [ ] **Is there any timber on the property, and who owns the timber rights?**
- [ ] **Are there springs, creeks, or wetlands on the land?**
  These may affect what you can build and where.

> *Amanda's tip: For any property over 2 acres, I recommend ordering a preliminary title report early and reading it carefully. It reveals restrictions, easements, and encumbrances that do not always show up until you are in contract, and by then the clock is ticking.*

BONUS

Get Listings Before They Hit Zillow

The best acreage properties in Lane County often sell before most buyers ever see them.

HOW TO FIND ACREAGE LISTINGS EARLY

- [ ] **Work with a local agent who is active in the market daily.**
  Not all agents see new listings at the same time. An agent embedded in the local market hears about properties before they go live.
- [ ] **Get set up on an RMLS search, not a Zillow alert.**
  RMLS is the real database agents use. Zillow pulls from it with a delay. Ask your agent to set you up on a direct RMLS feed.
- [ ] **Be specific about your criteria from day one.**
  The more precise you are about acreage, zoning needs, location, and must-haves, the better your agent can watch for the right property.
- [ ] **Tell your agent it is OK to call you immediately.**
  If a great property hits on a Tuesday morning, you want to know Tuesday morning, not when you check email Friday night.
- [ ] **Let your agent know about your timeline and financing early.**
  Pre-approved buyers who are ready to move get shown properties first.
- [ ] **Ask about coming soon or off-market opportunities.**
  Some sellers prefer a quiet sale before going public. Your agent's network is how you access those.

READY TO START YOUR SEARCH?

- DM me ACREAGE on Instagram to get a custom acreage search for Lane County.
- DM me CLARITY to book a free 30-minute call. No pressure, no pitch.
- Visit theamandarichards.com to browse current listings and read the full buyer guide.

ABOUT AMANDA RICHARDS

Amanda Richards is a licensed REALTOR® at LPT Realty specializing in acreage, family, and move-up homes across Lane, Benton, Linn, and Douglas Counties in Oregon. She lives on 7+ acres in the woods near Springfield with her two boys, chickens, and a full homesteading lifestyle. With four years of experience and a contractor network built through her husband Tim's plumbing business, Amanda brings rural property knowledge most agents simply don't have.

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