

Preparing for Off-Grid Survival

How to live a self-sufficient, modern-day life off the grid.

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Introduction

It is possible to live a comfortable lifestyle residing in the convenience of modern accommodations without being dependent upon utility companies and government services. Situating yourself into a completely self-reliant existence has affectionately become known as living off the grid. That terminology, however, is a bit misleading. Most people who are interested in self-sufficient living are not trying to hide from anybody. They simply see advantages to this type of life, which might include:

- Preparation for an economic collapse of society
- Living in a scenic, rural area of their choice
- Fulfilling a desire for returning to an era of simpler living
- Escaping modern society, seeking seclusion
- Ending utility bills and dependence on public works
- A fun project for someone with too much money/time

...among others. For some, the necessity of establishing living quarters in a rural area that is not accessible by normal services forces the issue (for example, building a fishing or hunting cabin on a specific piece of land). For others, off-grid living has simply become a way of life. After the Grateful Dead stopped touring, they realized they would need to buy a cheap lot somewhere to park their bus on, and consequently needed appropriate ways to handle waste management and power the falafel grill. Still others think the battle of Armageddon will be fought in Montana or something, and are building a self-

sufficient compound with more rounds of ammunition stored than some small countries have.

Whatever your personal reasons, you are not alone. Going off the grid is starting to become downright trendy. There is just something about providing yourself with your own food and water that nurtures the American spirit. Cooking dinner in a modern-style kitchen and then watching a movie afterwards on a big home-theatre system, with no utility bill to have to pay for it afterwards, somehow makes one feel more in touch with nature. Home-schooling is more meaningful when gym class includes toting a shotgun into the brush for a grouse hunt.

Let's face it - with all the cool technological perks modern society offers, it also leaves a person feeling empty at times. We can begin to suspect that life has gotten out of balance. We realize we work too hard, and don't spend enough time on wood carvings and fence-mending. Many of us are beginning to sense this, and have started looking to nature for an escape. Buying a beautiful piece of land far from any utility services is usually quite affordable, because most people have no use for such a thing. There you can start an exciting new project which is truly satisfying. It will eventually become both a vacation abode and retreat from society. Your self-sufficient sanctuary will be there for you, should the grid ever shut down. That's nice.

In the following pages, we will examine the primary concerns anyone interested in off-grid survival will need to address. Fortunately, by now other pioneers have blazed this trail quite visibly, which means we can learn from those who know what they are doing and don't have to try and reinvent the wheel. We will get you setup with housing,

power, water, and food sources. We will address transportation and security considerations. Finally, we will take a serious look at providing quality off-grid education for your kids, and even discuss how you can have a healthy social life. There is no need to grow a long beard and get all uni-bomber on us; in fact, off-grid survival might just end up being a more fulfilling life than the one you are currently living.

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Housing

Living off the grid usually entails getting away from major cities entirely, in search of an affordable plot of land which won't have any zoning issues in regards to digging wells, building windmills, and installing septic tanks. Climate is a consideration as well. Land at higher elevations is usually more suitable for an off-grid lifestyle in terms of affordability and privacy. Washington and Oregon are popular destinations, as is Colorado. The winters in Colorado are not suitable for most people, however, and can seriously interfere with construction projects. Land in desert areas such as Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas is often very affordable, but only suitable for some types of people. Lack of scenery, unbearable summer heat, and toothless neighbors is not a scenario for everybody.

Additional considerations when seeking a location may include the amount of sun the land receives (for potential solar panel usage and gardening benefits), what kind of water can be naturally acquired in the area without digging a well, and soil nutrients. If you have the proper amount of sun, water, and healthy soil, you can go far. Moving into a location lacking in any of these areas isn't necessarily a bad thing; it just means you will have a lot more work to do.

Once you have found a suitable plot of land, you will need to research housing options. Parking a trailer on it in the meantime is a good way to start, as it lets people in the area know the spot is

occupied. If you plan on doing the construction yourself, you should build some kind of basic shelter right off the bat, which will protect the materials you will be hauling up there. This can be a simple carport covering to keep the rain off of them. Otherwise, it is time to start shopping nearby construction companies. Many contractors in rural areas don't have websites, so you should inquire at the real estate offices in the closest towns.

You also might search the internet for hardcore off-grid home builders. A few of these guys do really weird stuff that you might like, and usually it is done in an environmentally-friendly manner (see the links at the end of this section for a few specific referrals). There are some interesting existing standards for off-grid housing, at least one of which will probably appeal to you.

Eco-Housing

A variety of eco-housing (also known as green housing) techniques are available, which can be used for an off-grid lifestyle. You can buy these homes as kits, or already built complete with the land. You can also design your own, with the help of a professional green architect. Eco-housing can be as complex or as simple as you want it to be, and the pricing can vary drastically depending on what you are going for. These kinds of homes are built with conservation in mind, and thus will utilize a number of green techniques.

Rammed Earth Housing

Rammed Earth housing is a method of building where dirt, rock, and naturally occurring minerals in the earth are constructed together, or rammed, to create the outer shell of the home. These houses have proven to be reliable in different climates, and can be very sturdy and

long-lasting if constructed correctly. Their biggest downfall is that if the outer coating is not sealed properly, they can degenerate quickly or suffer from mold infestation. The negatives of this type of housing can be easily ramified with careful and accurate construction.

Rammed Earth housing can be designed to meet the needs of families as well, as even larger structures are quite solid. Construction costs for these types of houses tend to be much lower than for conventional residential building contracts, and with a bit of land you can easily find the materials needed to get started. You want to make sure you have done your own research and are working with an experienced professional, so the house is constructed properly. The building can be quite labor-intensive as well. Rammed Earth housing takes a bit of time to complete, so be sure to allow for ample construction time.

Cob Housing

Similar to Rammed Earth housing, Cob is a mixture of soil or sand, clay, and hay or straw, for building a residential structure. It can create stunning results. If you are new to the concept of Cob house construction, you might think it is impossible for a structure made of these materials to be useful for long-term living. However, Cob housing techniques have been used for centuries. They are not only extremely sturdy (with the possibility of standing for a hundred years with no maintenance), but fireproof as well. The only downside to Cob is it takes some time for the materials to dry into a hard enough structure to live in, so one must have patience when attempting this form of construction.

Earthships

“Earthships sustainable with recycled materials... the Earthship is the epitome of sustainable design and construction. No part of sustainable living has been ignored in this ingenious building.” – www.earthship.com

Like other eco-friendly housing options, the Earthship is designed with both the inhabitants and the earth in mind. This type of house utilizes natural materials, renewable energy sources, and eco-design to create a living space which is thermally regulated and comfortable. These homes are built by a company called Earthship Biotechture. You can buy already-created spaces in almost any environment. They are easy to maintain because of their indigenous design, but can be expensive to acquire because they come pre-built and are already placed on a plot of land. The website above has ideas on building your own in addition to listings of prebuilt units currently for sale.

Cabins

One of the most popular options for off-grid housing is a good old-fashioned cabin. Cabins are versatile and can be constructed out of a number of materials, the most famous being logs. You can buy these pre-made, hire homebuilders, or do them yourself. The cabin has a sturdy design and can be made in a minimalist setting which requires little startup cost, if planned properly. If you are living in a well-forested area, you may even be able to supply some of your own building materials. Always be sure to replant new trees to replace old ones.

Manufactured Homes and Trailers

Manufactured homes are the modern answer to kit homes. They come in two forms, one type being a trailer, which is the more portable of the two. Both housing types are constructed from more lightweight material than traditional housing, and can be moved to your location with a truck. You simply pick your home and have it moved. Both housing types are not generally set up for non-traditional energy sources, and require some plumbing for sinks, toilets, and bathtubs to work as well. Before you decide that this is going to be the type of housing you use, consider whether or not your land can support it, and how much it will cost to get plumbing, septic systems, and energy systems set up.

The Smaller the Better

It is certainly possible to build an environmentally friendly and well-functioning, large-compound off-grid housing structure. Smaller home structures are much more popular, however, for both cost and practicality reasons. The most convenient size of a simple cabin is 16' x 16', but this depends on your particular needs. Obviously, if you have a larger family, you will want to take that into consideration. Many individuals who endeavor to live off the grid intend to actually start a commune of some kind, so the option of building several small living domains with one common living space (common to ancient village techniques) is also a possibility.

Regardless of what type of structure you build on your land, you will want to make sure that you have built the proper foundation beneath the building - one which is conducive to energy and water acquisition.

Resources

Off the Grid Housing For Sale – Complete lots and green housing that is ready to

<http://www.greenhomesforsale.com/off-the-grid-homes.php>

One Man's Journey with his Solar Cabin:

<http://www.livingasimplelife.com>

More information on Cob Housing:

<http://small-scale.net/yearofmud/>

Find a Cabin Contractor:

<http://www.loghome.com/category/log-home-professionals/builders-dealers/>

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Power

Living off the grid is not for everyone, primarily because it involves a lot of hard work, and nothing comes easy - at least, not until you have been at it for a while. In the beginning, everything is going to be a learning experience. The first question you need answered is: How are you going to get power to your home? This issue stops many people in their tracks, but it doesn't have to. Power supply problems are not as difficult to solve as they may seem. Once mastered, understanding how to provide for your own power supply needs is a valuable skill. Having this skill not only gives you a sense of security in your own living situation, but can lead to an income source if you choose to market it to other like-minded folks.

Suppose you have just purchased a piece of land in the middle of nowhere, far away from cities, population, telephone poles, and underground wires. Deciding what to do at this point will dictate how the rest of your off-grid living experience is going to go. Using battery backups and generators to generate power is a popular option. There are several different ways of going about this:

Gasoline Generators

Gas generators burn at relatively low temperatures, and the energy produced can be used for powering appliances and heating systems. This has been the most common form of living in the wilderness, primarily because it has a relatively high ease of access (if you don't

mind going into town and getting more fuel when you get low). However, using gasoline generators does tend to keep you attached to civilization in one way or another, because it is not possible for you to create more fuel on your own. You have to go into town, or at least to a roadside gas station. In the event of a natural disaster, it might become quite difficult to obtain fuel because most gas stations cannot pump gas without electricity.

Gas generators also produce massive quantities of noxious fumes (despite the cool burn) which makes it impossible for the generator to be located within the house. This means that rain or shine you will have to go outside to get that machine going, which can be inconvenient at times. Storing gasoline can create a dangerous condition because of its extreme combustibility. Many people see relying on gasoline as defeating the entire point of living off the grid, as it is the antithesis of green energy.

Ethanol Generators

Ethanol generators can run off of corn oil for long-term usage. Producing your own fuel for these may or may not be a project you are interested in. Breaking corn down for usage in fuel is a time-consuming process by which you must have access to a considerable supply of grain. It is ground into meal and mixed with water, then let set for a long enough period of time to encourage the active yeast cultures which produce the fumes that are burned as ethanol. If you are ambitious and dedicated enough, you could definitely create fuel on your own, providing you have the time, corn supply, and proper equipment. A more practical solution is to simply stockpile a supply of corn oil. Storing corn oil is much more environmentally-friendly, and

much less of a potential fire hazard than storing fuel for gasoline generators.

Solar Generators

Solar power generators are an excellent, low maintenance way to bring power to your home. Most of these produce up to 1800 watts of electricity, which is enough to power several appliances. The power can be used in both AC and DC appliances. Solar generators produce constant electricity with little maintenance, and almost no noise. There are no fumes, which makes it possible for them to be kept indoors when fully charged, as long as they have access to the light source which powers them.

Wind Power

Wind Power is the process of acquiring energy through the use of wind turbines (windmills) in order to make electricity. Wind power is commonly produced at wind farms throughout the world. On a large scale, a wind farm can possess several hundred individual windmills, which can serve power needs over hundreds of miles, depending on power requirements for that area. On a smaller scale, if you were to learn to master the skills behind utilizing wind power, you could easily power a large acreage of land with a few windmills. This form of renewable energy requires a lot of effort and problem-solving skills, but it is extremely beneficial. The only downside is that wind is not dependably constant; therefore windmill-powered homes typically need a backup power supply of some sort.

Hydropower

Hydropower is energy derived from falling water. It has its origins in ancient times, when it was used for irrigation techniques in farming. The mass production of hydropower is a result of harnessing the power of massive bodies of water, using dams in rivers and lakes, or the energy in natural waterfalls. On a smaller scale, the force of flowing water in rivers and streams can be used to create power. Landowners who are harnessing this energy on the small scale attempt to generate around 500 kilowatts for power.

Hydropower is currently being used to fight poverty in such areas as Peru and Kenya. In those places, the power plants are designed using 'run of the river' systems that divert water from local streams to drop into a turbine, which in turn, power generators. If you have a river or stream running through your property, it is definitely feasible to use this energy source. Trying to get this power from a smaller creek is going to be susceptible to weather conditions, however, and will require a backup source. Weather can also be detrimental to hydropower systems setup from a larger stream. Flooding is just as much of an issue as drought, because your equipment can be destroyed in a flood.

Solar Paneling

Solar paneling is a more permanent (and more expensive) power source than a solar generator. It is also much more reliable, and provides a lot more power. Solar energy systems in homes are typically used to supply electricity and heat water. They can also charge solar batteries so you have some power reserved during the night. Their main drawback is the initial cost of installation. For any serious off-grid residential construction project, however, they are a must.

Conclusion

Which power solutions are best for you will depend upon your housing situation, and how serious you are about the project. If all you have is a trailer parked on your piece of land, a couple of generators will do the trick nicely. The better your structure, and the more permanent your residence, the more you should consider solar paneling, windmills, and/or hydro power. Try to learn from any contractors you employ. Becoming self-dependent means being able to handle most repair jobs yourself.

Appliances are a modern convenience. Their sustainability is dependent upon the comforts of modern living remaining as the status quo. If there is a complete collapse of society and we all return to living simpler lives, washing clothes in the stream and hanging them on a line will become a weekly chore again. There won't be refrigerator repairmen that you can call. Wood stoves will provide heat. Many people who go off-grid are seeking to establish survival conditions which mimic those of households in the 1800's.

Still, there can be no denying that the convenient, modern appliances of the late century existed. The technology to repair them is not difficult to learn. It might not be a bad idea to learn how to repair them yourselves, and how to create basic replacement parts from items you can find in junkyards. Once you have the ability to supply your own electricity, there is no reason you cannot retain many of the modern conveniences we have all come to take for granted, even under the most apocalyptic of conditions.

Resources

Make your own ethanol:

http://journeytoforever.org/biofuel_library/ethanol_motherearth/meToC.html

Build your own wind turbine:

http://www.mdpub.com/Wind_Turbine/

Hydropower generators:

<http://www.utilityfree.com/hydro/>

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Water and Waste

Now that you have learned about living without utility-company supplied power, you can move onto the essential task of removing your dependence on government-supplied water as well. The first rule of thumb is to remember that you will need a lot of water. You may not realize this at the onset. The more you are trying to do on your land, the more water you will need.

Be prepared to invest in a sufficient initial water supply. This can be as simple as hauling a bunch of coolers up to the land. Many people choose to place a water tower on their property, and hire a service to come out and fill it. That is a good temporary solution, but of course it involves dependency upon a company to supply your water needs, which is defeating the point of self-sufficiency.

Finding water off the grid can be a chore, especially if you didn't bother to look into it before purchasing a plot. Hopefully you did your research on this issue beforehand. If you have access to running water in a stream or river, then you have less of an issue. Know your water rights before purchasing the land. There can be specific laws in your area, so it is best to be educated.

Drilling and Well Creation

Fortunately, water is everywhere. Depending on your location, it is usually possible to dig a hole or drill deeply enough into the ground to strike ground water, which will enable you to create a well for your

property. One thing to take into consideration when drilling is there are a number of unhealthy contaminants that can leak into your well if you aren't careful. Therefore, you will likely want to contract a professional well-drilling service.

Drilling can also cause water waste, because as you drill, water will flow out and spill over. If you have a limited source this could be an issue. Again, this is where a drilling specialist will come in handy. Wasting the least amount of water and ensuring that you don't contaminate it whilst drilling is essential to having a continuous, healthy flow of potable water. You do not want to risk something this important on amateur fumbling. The deeper you go down, the more pure and delicious your water will be. Once you have your own source of water, you are then in complete control of how you use it and where you send it throughout your property; such as to your gardens, to your septic tank, your bathroom, your kitchen, etc.

Rain

An excellent way to contain your own water is by using something called a cistern (or rain barrel). Cisterns are mainly just tanks or receptacles that can hold water. Some are small and can be hung from trees, for example plastic gallon jugs with the tops cut off. You can hang dozens and dozens of them to catch rain water for simple uses around the house, including boiling the water for drinking. If your needs are larger than that, you might want to consider creating a whole system of cisterns for your property.

Larger cisterns are made from concrete, steel, durable plastic, and sometimes even fiberglass. You can choose to build your cistern above ground, so that you are able to catch rain water in large quantities. The

above-ground cistern will have pipes attached to the underside, which are drilled down to the groundwater as a supplemental source for your well. You might consider building a holding tank underneath the earth with an attached piping system that will travel throughout your property. Cisterns are only beneficial if you live in an unpolluted area that receives a lot of rainfall, so keep that in mind. (They are a very efficient solution in the Pacific Northwest).

Natural Springs

If you are fortunate enough to have tasted natural spring water, then you already know that springs are an excellent (and tasty) water source. In rural areas, springs occur naturally as water shoots up from the ground, usually settling into its own little creek or pool during rainy seasons. It is advisable to find the springs early in the season, as the snowpack melt begins. Sometimes during the winter months, especially in mountain environments, you can find frozen springs and then know where they will be. You want to work with the springs while they are still free flowing to get the most use out of them.

Spring water is usually safe to drink - but that being said, you still have to get it tested. While the ground is a natural water purifier, you don't know if the underground water source has been contaminated. Pay to have the springs tested by a professional before counting it as an open resource. You also have to check your water rights on springs, being as they originate from underground water sources.

A spring can also be used for cleaning purposes, or as a natural refrigerator that will keep items cool to as low as 38 degrees.

Water Traps

Water traps are literally traps designed to hold liquids. Wood or metal constructs can be used to direct and trap water. These methods are best used for gardening and wastewater flow, because they can evaporate quickly and are sometimes unreliable. They can be used in conjunction with springs and rivers to divert the water, and also be combined with methods of refrigeration, plumbing, and water storage. Avoid metal with contaminating qualities and instead stick with plastic (when available), wood, and non-rusting metals.

Drinking and Cooking

Water used for consumption needs to be purified and clean. It is important to make sure there is no cross contamination by pollution or sewage. This is common sense, especially now that we are aware of diseases and sickness caused by contaminated water. However, even clean water sources can be contaminated if not cared for properly. Drinking and cooking water needs to be stored separately. If you are using rain water, for example, you can't collect your water where run off or contamination is likely.

Rain can be collected in plastic barrels (or diverted by guttering and then stored in wooden barrels) but it must be treated if it is sitting for any length of time, so that it doesn't become contaminated by parasites, bacteria, and bugs.

It is a good idea to take potable water straight from the source of a well or spring, and collect and save it as needed. During dryer months when you are relying on stored water, it is a good idea to use iodine or boiling to make sure that your saved water stays clean. Consider investing in water containment tanks, or find ways to create your own.

Irrigation

Irrigation is usually necessary for keeping your crops alive. A good way to do this is to create a drain at your rooftop that will fall into a barrel or collection tank of some sort. The collection tank will have a valve which can be opened and drained into a series of irrigation pipes that run through your garden. When it is raining, the crops don't need watering, so with this method you store some of the rain water for later use. (This water is typically not safe for drinking and would need to be boiled and filtered first.)

Sewage

Citizens of modern society tend to shy away from the concept of having to deal with their waste. They do not want to think about it, let alone see it or potentially have to smell it. If this is you, refer to the section on septic systems. For those brave souls who want to do it themselves, read on.

For hundreds of years man has survived in the wilderness by simply: Digging a hole. This may seem strange to some, but that's the way it is. If you are prepared to utilize an old-fashioned approach, then you will want to determine where you are going to build your very first outhouse on your property. An outhouse is a small building, usually portable, that is placed over the top of a hole that has been dug for the purpose of receiving human waste. The outhouse has a toilet installed, but instead of piping which would attach to a septic system, the waste falls directly into the hole and that is the end of it. Outhouse holes need to be replaced regularly, and the outhouse structure moved to the new hole.

Most people want to dig their waste pit only once per year. Your outhouse hole needs to be relatively deep, in order to contain an entire

year's worth of waste. The earth absorbs excess materials as the year progresses, so you don't have to worry about an overflow situation. What you want to be aware of is the necessity of moving your pit every year. This means you will likely need a forklift or some other kind of machinery that will make it easier for you to pick up the outhouse and relocate it to its new hole. After you have moved it, you simply fill the old hole with fresh dirt and cover it up. You will want to mark the location and leave it alone for several years. The plots need to be somewhat away from your well, preferably downhill from it, so as to not contaminate your water supply.

Septic Systems

Professionally-installed septic systems are the best way to handle your waste situation in a permanent housing situation. There are varying degrees of complications involved in the installation process, but essentially, a septic system is made up of a large metal tank that receives, treats, and releases wastewater. The natural bacteria and chemicals, which exist in the tank, break waste down into a more dissolved form, including a sludge layer on the bottom of the tank. As new wastewater enters the tank, existing (treated) wastewater exits through a pipe into a drain field. This is usually all installed underground, and completely gravity-fed. Consequently, septic tanks and the drain pipes go downhill from the house.

Bacteria (which could be potentially dangerous to humans) is then conveniently buried under ground where it is absorbed and recycled into the earth. Septic systems involve a lot of planning and can be somewhat pricey, but are the only practical solution for enjoying the comforts of modern plumbing.

Conclusion

If you have a well and a septic system in place, you have a green and self-sufficient plumbing solution that will allow you to live with the convenience of many modern appliances. Water from the well can be reliably fed to sinks, toilets, washing machines, and refrigerator ice-makers. Gravity removes the wastewater through your septic system. There is one caveat; if the well pump goes out, so does the water flow. Well pumps can be repaired and replaced, of course, but that involves expense and depends on society still existing as we know it. For that reason, you may want to also keep an above-ground manual well pump as an emergency backup. You could install it if the need ever arose.

If your land has river access, natural springs, or receives a lot of rainfall, you can supplement your groundwater supply as you see fit. You could also survive solely on those other sources, but would likely have to forego the conveniences of modern plumbing and plumbing-fed appliances.

Resources

Build your own rain barrel:

<http://www.marc.org/environment/water/buildrainbarrel.htm>

Water sterilization methods:

http://www.ehow.com/how_2050318_sterilize-water.html

Drip irrigation system design:

<http://www.irrigationtutorials.com/dripguide.htm>

How to dig an outhouse hole:

<http://www.instructables.com/id/Outhouse/>

Food

Deciding whether you are going to be vegetarian or carnivore is a key element in the kind of compound you must create for your new life off the grid. If you are a strict vegetarian, that is going to dictate the types of fruit and vegetables you need to grow in order to sustain yourself and your family. Protein is of key importance to the survival of the body, regardless of whether or not you consume meat products. If you are a vegan, therefore, you will need to plant certain beans and grains as well as nut trees that will provide to you with a protein source.

This may affect the size of the land you need to have in order to grow these things. Nut trees such as almonds or walnuts take time to grow strong enough to produce fruit. In the beginning, while your trees are growing, you may need to stockpile canned nut products. Soybeans are an excellent source of protein, but sometimes have negative hormonal repercussions for women. Of course, what types of crops will grow in the climate and elevation where your land is, will force these decisions somewhat.

If you are a vegetarian who consumes dairy products, then you will want to consider the kinds of animals that you will need on your land. If you consume eggs and cheese, and use butter, you will need to have chickens or ducks, as well as goats or a milk cow, in order to have the proteins you need available.

Carnivorous Living

If you are a carnivore, you will probably want to raise some of your own food source animals, in addition to hunting and fishing possibilities. You can have a very successful small farm without the need for large animals if you are satisfied with chickens, ducks, and maybe goats. The rest of your diet can be supplied by your garden, and possibly foraging (especially if you happen to be in an area where wild berries grow naturally). Remember that having animals for food stock also means you have to be able to care for those animals. Ideally you will be able to grow the food source for your animals as well.

Duck eggs are extremely high in protein, but ducks can be difficult to keep and are incredibly messy creatures. You will want to have an area specifically designated for them, set up as an ideal wetland kind of environment for them to produce eggs in. That probably means maintaining a pond of some type on your property.

Chickens are ideal as an off-grid food source. They produce a tremendous amount of eggs, some of which can be allowed to develop into more chickens. You can start with a small coop and just a few hens and a rooster, and soon have a full-on production egg farm. Eggs and chickens can be traded with neighbors for additional food sources or other supplies. A person who owns a small chicken farm figures to do OK in a post-apocalyptic environment.

Goats will eat through anything, and will have no qualms going through your garden and eating everything in sight and then leaving forever. They need to be fenced in. Installing a woven-style metal fence with holes small enough to keep them on the property (and out of the garden) will be effective. Woven wire hurts their extremely

strong teeth, so you will need to keep a close eye on them, because they may manage to sneak through now and again despite your best efforts. Goats provide very healthy milk which can be used to make other dairy products. They reproduce well, resulting in trade goods and maybe a delicious goat-feast once in a while.

Deer will also come eat everything in your garden, and can jump relatively high. So the fencing that you use to protect your vegetables must be strong enough to keep goats out as well as tall enough to keep deer from jumping over it.

Some prefer to install electric fences just to avoid having to maintain a constant watch on their animals. However, power can be a limited resource when living off the grid, so it is more likely that you will want to conserve that energy and use other creative fencing methods. You will need some relatively thick lumber to keep the male goats inside, as they can sometimes be quite aggressive. Bear in mind; gates are always their primary focus when trying to ram their way out.

Hunting

Deer can be a good food source, but you need to pay attention to your local hunting laws and seasons. Wild birds can be a plentiful food source as well, one which the low cost of shotguns and ammunition can make attractive. In many places, doves, pheasant, grouse, and even turkeys can be taken regularly without a negative impact on the environment. If you have a little hillbilly in your blood, you can also add snakes and certain rodents to your menu (especially rabbits). Certain venues even offer the possibility of hunting wild boar.

When hunting for any food source in the wild, you need to be familiar with skinning and the process involved for harvesting the

meat off of the carcass. Invest time and knowledge in knowing how to both properly kill the animal and treat the meat. For a small number of people, a deer can produce too much meat to eat in a timely fashion. Before killing a large animal, be sure that you have a way to preserve the meat so that it will not go to waste. Consider jerking venison, as a meat dehydrator is an easy piece of equipment to own and maintain. If you have energy for a freezer, venison also freezes well and is excellent in stews.

Some meats must be cooked properly in order to be safe for human consumption. This is especially true of rabbits, chickens, and pigs (including wild boar). Make sure you learn the proper ways of curing, cooking, and storing all forms of meat that you will be harvesting yourself.

If your land is near a productive fishery such as a river or lake, lucky you! You will need to know the local fishing regulations of course. Basic fishing equipment is inexpensive and easy to stockpile. Lures can be made from materials found in the wild, and earthworms for bait can be dug up almost anywhere. In addition, wilderness fishing techniques such as hand-catching and spearing will always be available. Make sure you properly cook your fish. Forget about off-grid sushi, as many freshwater fish species can give you tapeworm if eaten raw.

Trees and Gardening:

Vegetables are a necessity for a healthy human diet. It is important that you provide yourself with them. Fortunately, they are very easy to grow in almost any area. What you want to do is grow a bunch of them during the peak seasons, and then freeze (or can) a large enough

portion to sustain you during the off-seasons. Otherwise, some vegetables can be grown year-round, indoors as well as out.

Gardening tactics are going to vary depending on your climate and soil conditions. Each region has its own peculiarities. For example, in Colorado you will always start planting after Mother's Day because you want to avoid the last frost. In California, you can garden almost throughout the year.

Hearty vegetables that are easy to grow include: peas, green beans, peppers of all types, tomatoes, squash, onions, potatoes, lettuce, broccoli, cauliflower, beets, radishes, cucumbers, corn, and carrots.

Tree planting is important as well. They can help preserve your property and provide shade. Depending on your location, they can also provide food. Certain areas can't maintain fruit trees because it is too cold, while others will be too warm or dry. It's all about where you are and knowing your environment.

Recommended Nut Trees: Almond and Walnut.

Recommended Fruit Trees: Apple, Lemon, Plum, Orange, Grapefruit, Apricot, Avocado, Tangerine, and Peach.

Food Preservation

Preserving your food is a necessity in off-grid living situations, because you never know when you will have need of the food you have in storage. This could happen for any number of reasons. Say, for example, all of your animals die at the same time as your vegetables in a freak storm, and you need to start over – or, perhaps you simply had a bad season. You will want to create storage rooms both in the house and outside, which will be used for dry storage as well as wet/meat storage.

Ideally for meat, you would have a decent-sized freezer in which to store your excess. Should this become impossible or impractical, you will want to learn how to salt your meat to keep it preserved. Bacteria and fungus cannot survive in salty environments, so learning how to brine or salt meats is going to be a very helpful survival skill. If you are experiencing a cold winter and your power dies, you might be able to save your meat by placing it in containers in an outside storage room such as a cellar, which will act as a form of refrigeration (or sometimes even keep your meats frozen). As already mentioned, meats can be jerked and kept in dry storage as well.

Canning is a simple method to preserving your fruits and vegetables. It is highly recommended for off-gridders. If you have a particularly abundant season, good for you! Just can your excess. The process of canning uses boiled water to suck all of the air out of a container; thus sealing the insides into a sterile and – and delicious – environment. Please note that in order to safely can vegetables, you must either pickle them (in a brine that has a 1:1 vinegar to water ratio or higher) or use a pressure canner. Fruits and tomatoes can be safely canned in boiling water, as long as the sealed jars are then also submerged and boiled for 20 minutes.

Resources

Chicken coop

<http://www.backyardchickens.com/atype/2/Coops>

Raising goats:

<http://www.motherearthnews.com/Sustainable-Farming/1983-07-01/Raising-Goats-My-Way-If-I-Could-Do-It-Over-Again-Part-One.aspx>

Hunting and fishing regulations by state:

<http://www.huntinfo.org/>

Growing Nut Trees:

<http://www.nutgrowing.org/>

Indoor vegetable growing:

<http://voices.yahoo.com/how-grow-great-vegetables-indoors-298199.html>

Home canning:

http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_home.html

OceanofPDF.com

Transportation

Living off the grid can present transportation challenges. On one hand, you will often find yourself needing a hauling vehicle for getting supplies. This is especially true if your land is far away from supply sources. On the other hand, gasoline is expensive and being dependent upon gas-powered vehicles may be something you are trying to escape. Fortunately, there are alternatives. You might want to consider using more “traditional” methods of transportation the majority of the time.

If you have a plot of land that is relatively large, you will need to have a form of transportation just to get around on it. What type is going to depend on both the needs of your land as well as the availability of the fuel sources you need. If you are planting a bunch of trees, or if you need to haul soil around, you are probably going to need some sort of vehicle more powerful than a horse.

If you are facing a natural disaster situation, you will want to get all of the big moving out of the way first with your fuel guzzling machines (such as tractors, plows, or even cranes). Then when you run out of fuel, you can use the parts of the machines for other necessities around the land, or you can wait until you are generating reusable ethanol for your machinery, providing they can be modified to run off of alternative fuel.

Cars

Cars (especially Jeeps) are a great standby for basic transportation. Gas mileage considerations can be managed by the type and size of the automobile. Certain cars and SUVs have engines that are a pain to work on, however, and will make even the most experienced mechanic squirm. Be sure that your car has an accessible engine and uses standard replacement parts, in case you need to make repairs. You should stockpile a decent supply of basic replacement parts for your vehicles.

Trucks

If you choose to use a vehicle on your land (at least until you figure out what else to do), the most useful kind to have is a pickup truck with four wheel drive. A late model should not die on you for many years, and it will help you transport heavy loads. A truck will be a tremendous help in getting your orchards planted. During the building phase especially, there will be many trips hauling supplies and equipment to the land. Four-wheel drive vehicles with off-road tires have the advantage of not needing well-kept roads to traverse, which comes in handy in an emergency. Also, these types of vehicles typically come with large fuel tanks, and some have optional even-larger fuel tanks.

ATV's

All-terrain vehicles are an excellent short-distance transportation option, primarily because they are so portable. They can take you over all manner of landscape, from muddy to dry, sandy to brambly, with no problems. Again, you are going to be confronted with the potential problem of fueling the ATV's, but they do get great mileage. New developments are being made all the time to make them more fuel efficient.

Dirt Bikes and Motorcycles

Motorcycles (of all varieties) can be the perfect accompaniment for those living in rural areas. Besides being fun to ride, they can often get you to town and back. Motorcycles are low on gas consumption, and typically easy on the wallet in terms of mechanics and repairs. Most bikes are also easy to work on. They don't help with big loads of course, but they can be used for short trips as well as going around property lines.

Alternative-Fuel Vehicles

Biodiesel fuel is a green alternative to diesel gasoline, which can be used to run both equipment and vehicles in place of regular diesel fuel. There is a bit of a learning curve involved in both using this fuel source and converting regular diesel engines to run on waste vegetable oil. The primary way to obtain your own biodiesel fuel is from used cooking oil. The oil, frequently recognized as WVO (waste vegetable oil), can often be acquired free of cost from restaurants or individuals. Most of the time used cooking oil goes to waste, and restaurants have to get rid of it anyway - so it's no harm to them to just give it away to you for free. You also might be able to use lard as biodiesel fuel.

Even vehicles that use normal gasoline can often be run on alternative fuel such as ethanol and other alcohol-based fuels. There are motorcycles that use moonshine and potato-based alcohols. Alcohol-based alternative fuel sources can be very combustible, so caution is advised with their storage and use.

Horses

If you choose to have horses, they can both be put to work and can take you long distances in travel. Horses cost a lot of money initially, and they need considerable care in the way of basic shelter, food, and water. If properly cared for, a horse can live for 20-30 years. You could be living off the grid with the assistance of these animals for a long time to come, which is a nice thing to know. The economic collapse of society is unlikely to affect your ability to take care of your horses. If you are not a savvy horse trader, seek help from somebody who is when purchasing your animals.

Motorhomes

Motorhomes are behemoths that consume gas and resources like none other, but also offer protection and shelter even if they are not running. There are definite plusses and minuses to them. One of the biggest issues with motorhomes is that they need a lot of care, and require a good mechanic in order to keep running. From waste tanks to windshields, you should make sure you know your vehicle inside and out before taking it on the road. There are multiple types of motorhomes, different lengths, and different manufactures to choose from. Some are more drivable than others. In general, maneuverability is traded off for living space. Some motorhomes can be converted to run on alternative fuel sources such as biodiesel, which makes them much more sustainable in a post-apocalyptic-society.

Resources

Biodiesel kits:

<http://www.backwoodshome.com/articles2/yago101.html>

Horses for sale:

<http://www.horsefinders.com/>

ATV's for sale:

<http://www.atvtraderonline.com/>

Motorcycles for sale:

<http://www.cycletrader.com/>

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Security and Self-Defense

For the most part, when you get away from society you also get away from crime. You still have to protect yourself however, because it is not like you have your own police force on hand. Living out in the sticks might make you seem like an easy target for criminals, and some desperate types may come into the area specifically because they are running from the law. Keep in mind that you may have to protect yourself from animals as well. Many people who are attracted to off-grid living are expecting a collapse in society resulting in general lawless conditions, and are stockpiling weapons and ammunition in anticipation.

Boundaries and Fencing

Your border can be identified and strengthened with perimeter fencing. You will want to build your home at a secure distance inside your border, so that intruders can be clearly seen inside as they approach. You also may wish to consider natural boundaries against the elements.

Wind and erosion can wreak havoc on a farm or homestead, especially on windswept plains. It is important to plan where you place your home with protection from elements in mind, as well as security from poachers. Choose a flat land that gives you a vantage point. Once your plot is chosen, consider how you can protect the land with trees and shrubs. Tall trees should go on the windiest side. Trees provide shade in addition to a windbreak. They can protect you from heat, wind, and flooding.

The negative side of using trees and brush is the fire hazard potential, and landslides. It is imperative that you maintain the landscape, especially in fire-prone regions. Using native trees that thrive well in low water / harsh conditions will be the best option. Look into homesteading and permaculture for more ideas on what is going to work best in your location and climate.

You can design natural water boundaries using existing rivers or lakes on your property. Water rights need to be researched before you redirect any water flow. If you have full water rights to your land, consider redirecting water flow so you have one side of your property lined by a difficult terrain for animals and humans to cross. Having the back end of your property, for example, facing a stream (that is far enough away to be clear of flooding dangers) helps to create a secure boundary.

Signs are often an overlooked aspect of protection. Sure, we think about putting them on our houses when living amongst people, but why would you need them out in the wilderness away from everybody? Just because you are off the grid does not mean you are off the human radar. Travelers, back country hikers, county police, vagabonds, and neighbors are still going to be around. Signs are a first defense, simply because they notify others that you are on the premises. Without them, your property can look abandoned and inviting to squatters. Make your boundaries clear and let others know you take a dim view upon trespassers.

Your fencing options may range from temporary boundary partitions to more secure and long lasting structures. For example, a

barbed wire fence will inhibit strangers from jumping over. You could build tall stone walls instead, at a significant cost in time and materials. Many who are trying to protect their lands from both animals and humans go the extra mile and put up some kind of electric fence. To save money, instead of surrounding your entire perimeter with electric fencing, you might want to just put one up around the general vicinity of your home. Stick with regular wire fencing around the outer land perimeter, making it tall and thick enough to keep out larger predators. The electricity you are utilizing from your generators can be used for the electric fence as well.

Electric fencing is beneficial because it is long-lasting and takes little time to install. Because most electric fences are structured to keep out wildlife (or to keep in cattle), you will want to specify upon purchase if you are trying to keep out human interference as well, so you can get the right voltage to suit your needs. If you are installing the fence yourself, make sure you have grounded the power appropriately with an 8-10 foot grounding rod; otherwise the circuit is not complete, and the electric charge will be weak. There are also now portable electric fences that run off battery packs. These are easy to place and can be used for animal as well as human deterrents.

Some take it a step further and install flood lights that are activated with an electric fence. These light up at night should something larger than a dog cross the pathway. Flood lights can be attached to an alarm system that is installed inside your house, which will ring if the motion sensors are tripped, causing the lights to turn on. It is recommended (if you do not acquire solar-charged flood lights) that you make sure to have quality bulbs which last for many years, because flood light systems can be difficult to maintain.

Panic Room

To protect from human invasion, some off-grid homes have a designated “panic room” inside the house. It doesn’t have to be a big room, but it should be discreetly located and basically impregnable. It is a place where you and your family can hide out for a period of time and feel safe if there are invaders in your home. The panic room is usually located under the house, and oftentimes is not listed on any schematic as to be kept secret. It should be a room which only you and your family know about, and you would only use it under the worst of circumstances. Keep it stockpiled with several days’ worth of supplies, including: Toiletries, buckets, water, food, lights, power generators, first aid kits, medicine, blankets, and portable ice packs. The key to an effective panic room is being able to secure it from the inside against the outside world. Building one can be rather expensive, but it is an important feature if you want to have an extra layer of security.

Pets

A good dog or two can be a great addition to your off-grid home. Dogs have long been used as alarm systems and house guards. You have to take into consideration what kind of dog you want to have based on the size of your home and the land. Larger dogs such as German Shepherds, Doberman Pinschers, and Huskies are excellent choices for protection from both human and animal invaders. Smaller dogs can function as an effective burglar alarm. In fact, smaller dogs like Shih Szus were bred and trained to be barking alarms! Many small breeds are also prized for their protective instincts. Of course, having dogs means keeping them fed. Fortunately, making nutritious home-made dog food from meats and basic starches is quite easy.

Weaponry

When thinking about weaponry, you need to be aware of the local laws regarding what is legal and what requires a permit. Each state will have its own requirements, but in general, handguns need to be registered while rifles and shotguns do not. Unconventional weapons such as nail guns and archery equipment can also be effective.

Firearms are a common consideration when living off the grid, and are a basic staple of home protection regardless of where you live. First and foremost, know how to shoot. Many people purchase guns for protection but don't know how to properly use them. Take time to get familiar with the weapon and spend some time at the shooting range, so that your firearms are actually useful. Learn how to care for your weapons and become familiar with safety precautions.

Most people have a primary protective piece that they are comfortable with, and keep it where it is easily accessible. No one can tell you what gun is going to be right for you. Often though, a shotgun is a good choice. A standard 12 gauge is easy to load and can be placed in a high location which is quick to grab in an emergency. A shotgun is a long barreled gun with a spread shot that takes three types of shells. There is the birdshot, buckshot, and a slug. You can also get protective rounds. For the cost and protective value, buckshot or protective rounds are the best bet. The nice thing about shotguns is they double as a bird hunting weapon.

Hand guns are portable and convenient, but truth be told, they are not that useful (for law abiding citizens, anyway) because of their extremely limited effective range. Rifles offer much better protection,

and are more fun to target shoot with. They have a much longer effective range than a pistol or shotgun. Also, rifles are good for hunting larger land animals like deer. If you see a stranger walking up your driveway holding a hand gun, pointing a rifle at him will probably be all the convincing he needs to go away and leave you alone.

Resources

Perimeter fence making:

http://www.survivalblog.com/2010/07/creating_secure_perimeter_fence.html

Electric fence installation:

[http://www.afence.com/Electric Fence/how to elec fence/elecinstall.htm](http://www.afence.com/Electric_Fence/how_to_elec fence/elecinstall.htm)

Panic room examples:

<http://home.howstuffworks.com/home-improvement/household-safety/security/panic-room.htm>

Best protection dogs:

<http://ultimateprotectiondogs.com/top-8-best-protection-dogs>

Guns for sale:

<http://www.gunbroker.com/>

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Education

Having children can add a complex dynamic to living off the grid. It is one thing if you want to shun cultural norms and go out on your own away from society, but bringing along children can complicate your plans. Aside from concerns over stunting their own development (and possibly turning them into reclusive weirdoes), there are specific laws which need attention, especially regarding schooling.

People on the grid have a multitude of options regarding the education of their kids. You may be surprised to learn that many of these options are still going to be available to you out in the sticks. As a parent, you have to decide how much interference from the government you will tolerate while raising your children. Let's take a look at the different options with their pros and cons, in order to help you make an educated decision.

Online Public Schools

Most states have an online schooling option, where you can use your home computer for public education. If you have reliable internet access, and you don't want to be the one educating your child, you can check www.k12.com and see if your state has this option. With the advent of satellite internet service, all a person needs is electric power to be able to get the internet these days. K12 schooling (and other similar options) requires a certain amount of hours and lessons to be completed by your child. You will help to instruct them based on the curriculum that is chosen.

Pros:

- No need for a constructed curriculum – everything including books, instruction, and lesson plans are included in most online schooling options.

- Low-cost. Most online options cost very little or nothing. Many will even supply a computer if you don't have one for your child's primary access.

- Customizable to your child's learning level.

- Depending on where you are and how far out you are from civilization, there are usually social functions that your child can attend such as co-ops, field trips, and fun social events.

Cons:

- Government-funded means that there will be monitoring and expectations placed that are similar to if your child went to a standard public school. There are often lectures or online class lessons that your child has to attend, and active participation is required.

- Standard testing requirements that are put forth by the state. The government will not only dictate when your child must be present, but also how much they learn. Certain states will give consequences if your children do not perform.

- Public school curriculum means they will be taught things you may not agree with (for example, evolution).

- Requires a reliable internet connection.

Hybrid Charter Schools

Even the most rural of areas may have charter schools. This option is popular in small community environments. If you are living far off the grid, then you will have to drive your child to school functions.

Every state has its own laws governing these types of schools, but usually each regulates itself. Homeschool-style charter school options often have a regular schedule of one or two days a week where the children come together and experience a standard school environment. The education they receive will vary based on the institution. Some only provide supplemental classes like the arts, electives, and academic booster classes. Others will provide a full array of classes including standard academic courses like math, science, literature, and history. The hybrid charter school is designed to supplement your own homeschooling curriculum.

Pros:

- Socialization for your children, as they have contact with others their age.
- Supplemental classes provide instruction from trained professionals.
- Limited school hours, so you can plan your schedule around the one or two days the children are in school.

Cons:

- Often located in populated areas, which could mean a long drive to make sure your child gets to classes.
- Government-regulated, with truancy and grade requirements for students.

Homeschooling

It is likely you will have to choose a non-public schooling option if you are not close to populated areas, or are constantly on the road. You need to be mindful that children do need contact with others their own age as part of their education requirements. Not only is socialization

important to a child for curing boredom, but also as a means of learning from others.

Younger children especially develop and learn by interacting with their peers. Unfortunately, many homeschooling parents don't realize the importance of this. That doesn't mean you need to have them around other children every day. Often, the off-grid lifestyle lends itself to ways for socialization which would not be considered the societal norm. This can happen through rural 4-H programs, online classes, and even allowing your children to get out with other kids at parks, bowling alleys, or public pools. Get to know any neighbors who have children around the same age. How you choose to socialize your children is up to you, but it is worth designing your off-grid lifestyle so that it is successful for your entire family.

You can buy premade curriculums such as Abeka, Sonlight, and Oak Meadow. The curriculums are ready-built and include a full assortment of educational resources such as work and study books. The good thing about these sets is they are easy to use, give a guide for you to educate your children, and give them the tools to have a standard learning environment. They can be pricey though, and you have to plan for the cost of them to be paid up front.

Online curriculums vary drastically depending on what you are looking for. There are complete curriculums that provide education online but are not government-approved. Basically, you pay for the education to have your child get through the public school online option rather than having it free and provided by the state. K12 has a private option as an example. Of course, online options require that you have internet access. Because they are not regulated by the public

school system, your connection can be intermittent and you can schedule the classes (for the most part) to your liking.

Designing your own curriculum is possibly the hardest, but also the most rewarding, option for homeschooling your children. As a parent, you are going to be more invested in your child's well-being than any other person. When you create your own lesson plan for the year, you know what your child will be getting out of their education, what they are learning, and how they are doing throughout the year. Most self-designed lesson plans require a heavy time investment in order to get them tailored to your individual needs. You want to make sure your lessons are balanced and allow your child to be challenged without overly-frustrating them.

Consider both your lifestyle and environment when figuring out what lesson plans will work best for your household. Tailor the plans towards their strengths, and spend as much time as needed on the harder subjects. You can pull from both online and book sources to make a hybrid homeschool experience that is unique to your family.

Unschooling

Unschooling is a concept that has come from the idea of 'child-led education.' Unschoolers do not follow specific curriculums, and instead allow children to learn naturally and follow their own interests. Sounds like every kid's dream, right? Today's lessons will include snail races and tree climbing. This is a bit of a liberal concept, which suggests that children do not need constant instruction and oversight. That being said, if you find that your child is naturally inquisitive (as most kids are), you may be surprised at how well unschooling can

work for you and your family. For some off-gridders, it may be the only option. You will plan curriculums based on what your child wants, but will not push them to excel until they are ready to do so on their own. Your job as the parent is to provide books, movies, and other resources which help them pursue their passion.

Resources

Online schooling:

www.starfall.com

www.homeschoolacademy.com

Homeschooling curriculums:

www.khanacademy.com

www.crrclick.com

Unschooling support:

<http://www.unschooling.org/>

OceanofPDF.com

Social Considerations

When choosing to go off the grid, you may find that your friends and family do not agree with what you are doing, especially if children are involved. While off-grid living is becoming more popular these days (and thus more acceptable) it is still certainly not the norm. In the eyes of society, you are likely to seem as a bit of an oddball. Perhaps you will have the last laugh.

The interesting thing is that the off-grid community tends to be accepting as a lot. They welcome newcomers and often will offer help if you ask for it. There is always someone online, for example, that you can reach out to and ask how to deal with a certain problem. Even if your family and friends don't agree with your choice, you will find a friendly community that will want to help you succeed. That doesn't mean your immediate neighbors will be happy about your moving in, however. Most off-gridders are very helpful as long as you don't move on to the lot next to them!

Perhaps one of the more heart-wrenching issues that can arise as a result of leaving society and moving to unpopulated lands is losing social contact with the loved ones you leave behind. If you have been a social butterfly in your past lifestyle, off-grid living may be a difficult transition for you. Fortunately, there are ways you can adapt. We live in a world of technology, so by using the satellite online access that is now available you will still be able to update your Facebook page. It is up to you to decide how much contact you want with the outside

world, but it is certainly possible to have contact with others through phone and internet from remote locations via satellite services.

There are many personal considerations before making the move to the Great Outdoors. Come mentally prepared for an adjustment period. Expect a little resistance from your existing family and friends. They are going to have concerns, and you will likely be faced with a lot of what if situations from them as they challenge your decision. That can actually be a good thing, as they may bring up things you have not thought of, which will help you prepare better. It may be prudent to imagine worst-case scenarios, and count on Murphy's Law working.

Changing from the life you are used to is going to be hard at first. Often, it is a romantic idea to move away from it all, but it is not so romantic when you are out in the middle of nowhere, low on supplies, and haven't slept well because coyotes howling keep you up at night. We all know people who left the grid at one time, only to return again with their tail between their legs.

It will take some time to get used to the silence of nature when you have moved away from the bigger city. Expect to have moments of weakness where you are frustrated or afraid. Not everything will go as well as you hope right off the bat. Mistakes will be made and problems will occur when taking on such a monumental endeavor. In time, everything will be OK.

Leaving the grid does not have to mean the end of any meaningful social life. These days, no matter how far out in the sticks your plot of land is located, you will have some neighbors. Granted, they may be a dozen miles away, but they are neighbors nonetheless. There is no piece of land left in America (that is accessible by roads) which is not

within a couple hours' drive of a town or a general store. More than likely, there will be a roadside restaurant or pub located within reasonable proximity as well.

When you go to town for supplies, stop in at that little shack of a restaurant or bar. Have a beer and a sandwich and get to know the local business owners. Let them know who you are and what plot of land is yours. They will be wondering who just built that cool little eco-hut with the windmill, or whatever you got going.

After a few of these trips, you will start to meet some of the neighbors and become accepted in the local community, however small and scattered it may be. This has many benefits, not the least of which is an increase in security. Neighbors in rural areas tend to help each other out, as each one has different skills that are valuable to the community. Before you know it, you will have some friends - and you might even get invited to a social event once in a while.

If you have children, part of your responsibility as an off-grid parent is to see to the welfare of your kids. You are probably rolling your eyes right about now. Of course you have YOUR children's best interest at heart, they're YOUR kids and you know what's best for them. That being said, you have to consider that just because you think you know what is best for your children, that doesn't mean the local Child Protective Services is going to agree. Many states have laws requiring certain housing conditions be up to code, education standards be met, and levels of health care are provided. Are you going to be able to meet these requirements, even if you don't agree with them?

If you aren't moving with other groups or families, you may find the move is harder for your children to adjust to than it is for you, having left friends and activities behind. Kids are often more dependent on the conveniences of modern life, because they have never even conceived of a world without them. While children are resilient, they also need a certain level of socialization, or they can become depressed. You need to take all aspects of your family's needs into account before making such a huge change.

Resources

Satellite internet providers:

<http://satellite-internet-review.toptenreviews.com/>

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Conclusion

The process for moving off the grid involves research, mental preparation, and the courage to take action. If that process is done through the building of a second home, the transition is much more gradual and preparatory in nature. That is a great way to start; maybe someday you will decide to unplug yourself from society and retreat to your wilderness compound permanently. If you have the structure built and stockpiled, the plumbing working and the power supply established, a reliable food source and communication system in place, why not? Peek inside many off-grid homes and you might see the kids playing pinball while the parents relax in leather easy chairs watching big-screen satellite television.

The first step, of course, is to buy a piece of land. Live where you want to, wherever you think you would be happy, but keep in mind the power supply, food, and water provision methods which appeal to you. Certain climates will lend themselves more to your ideologies than others. Fishing and hunting regulations may play a part in your decisions. You might want to research residential building contractors in the areas you are interested in. If a solar cabin is your heart's desire, make sure the guys who build those will do it on the land you have in mind before you buy it! Find out if ground water is deep or shallow in the area, and get an idea on what the well-drilling cost will be in advance.

Zoning is another consideration, especially if you will be selling some of your crops locally. If you plan on keeping horses, building a chicken coop, and raising goats consult the local zoning office to make sure there will be no issues with all of that. Planting tall trees on the wind side may ruin a neighbor's view, so think about how everything you want to do will have an impact on the area. Hopefully, your presence will be an asset and not a liability.

The cost to build is a deterrent for many people whom otherwise have a heart for this kind of project, which is unfortunate. I would urge you to not let financial issues keep you from your dream. Undeveloped land in off-grid areas can be purchased relatively cheaply, and the research is free. Get the land now, and work on developing it later on down the line, as you can afford to. Maybe that will be ten years from now, but the land will be there, waiting for your dream to materialize upon it. This is how America was built.

Resources

Land for sale:

<http://www.eaglestar.net/Properties/Off The Grid/index.html>

<http://www.survivalrealty.com/>

<http://www.landwatch.com/>

<http://www.landsofamerica.com/america/>

<http://www.landflip.com/>

Other Books by Nicholas Hyde

Harvesting A prepper's guide to the collection, treatment, and storage of drinking water while living off the grid.

Recipe for A prepper's guide for putting self-sustained food on your off-grid table.

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About the Author

Nicholas Hyde is a scholar, researcher, and enthusiastic hobbyist. He writes how-to articles and eBooks on a wide range of topics that interest him, from home brewing to survival techniques (actually he considers home brewing to be a survival technique). His style is one that presents a practical education on the topic at hand, which enables the reader to approach their project with both the knowledge necessary to succeed, and the enthusiasm to enjoy it. Hyde lives in Southern California with his wife and writes when he is not kayak fly-fishing.

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