



## Black Hills National Forest

### Forest Headquarters

1019 N. 5th St.  
Custer, SD 57730  
(605) 673-9200

### Bearlodge Ranger District

101 S. 21st St., Box 680  
Sundance, WY 82729  
(307) 283-1361

### Hell Canyon Ranger District

1019 N. 5th St.  
Custer, SD 57730  
(605) 673-9200  
and  
1225 Washington Blvd.  
Newcastle, WY 82701  
(307) 746-2782

### Mystic Ranger District

8221 S. Mt. Rushmore Road  
Rapid City, SD 57702  
(605) 343-1567

### Northern Hills Ranger District

2014 N. Main St.  
Spearfish, SD 57783  
(605) 642-4622



[www.fs.usda.gov/blackhills](http://www.fs.usda.gov/blackhills)

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

# Your Home in the Woods



## A Homeowners Guide to Owning Property Adjacent to the Black Hills National Forest



# Black Hills National Forest



### The National Forest as a Neighbor



Many acres of private land are interspersed within the Black Hills National Forest. If you own one of these parcels or are considering

buying one, this brochure is designed to let you know what you can expect as a neighbor to the National Forest and when you may need to contact your local Forest Service office for more information.

National Forests are lands open to the public. These lands are, by law, managed by the Forest Service to provide a continuing flow of goods and services, including recreational opportunities, minerals, grazing, timber and wildlife habitat. Those who own property adjacent to the Forest can expect to witness management activities and public uses that reflect this multiple use mandate.

The information contained here addresses the most commonly asked questions concerning private land within the Black Hills National Forest.

### Property Boundaries

The most valuable advice we can give you is to have a property line survey conducted by an accredited surveyor. The fence you think is on the property line may not be. The site where you'd most like to build your dream home may be partially on the Forest. If existing improvements are found to be on the Forest, or if you inadvertently construct new ones that encroach onto the National Forest, they will have to be removed. Avoid costly mistakes by knowing exactly where your property lines are — don't rely on existing fences or a non-accredited description of your property lines.

### Access to Your Property

If it is possible to reach your property by crossing neighboring private land, you will need to pursue such access. If your land is completely surrounded by National Forest, you will need a special use permit to authorize you to construct or use an access road. The Forest Service is required by law to charge a fee for such road use. Land developers generally need to provide access to the land they subdivide, and in all cases, access possibilities across private land must be exhausted before we can consider access across the Forest. If in doubt, contact your local Forest Service office for specific advice on your situation.

### Who Maintains the Road?

Road maintenance may be of great concern to you. Because maintenance standards and responsibilities differ throughout the Forest, you



need to be aware of what these are in your area. Some roads are maintained by road maintenance associations (groups of landowners who tax themselves or pay a yearly fee), and some roads are maintained by the Forest Service or by the county. The Forest Service maintains roads for multiple use purposes, not for access to private property. We do not plow snow and we might not maintain the roads in your area to a standard that meets your needs. If you need a higher standard road or wish to plow or maintain the road, please contact your local Forest Service office to see what options may be available to you.

## What About Fire Protection?

Wildfires have damaged property, destroyed homes and taken human life in the Black Hills! You are responsible for reducing fire risk on your property and protecting your home and investment. Use fire resistant building materials, clear vegetation and other fuel

away from structures, thin your trees, and provide proper access so fire trucks can reach



your property. Complete information is available through [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org) or by contacting the South Dakota Division of Wildland Fire at (605) 394-5302, or the Wyoming State Forestry Division at (307) 777-7586.

## Who Provides Law Enforcement?

The County Sheriff is responsible for protecting residents and personal property in your area. Any illegal activity on your property should be reported



to the County Sheriff's Office. Laws involving wildlife and fish resources are enforced by the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks, or the Wyoming

Game and Fish Department. The Forest Service is responsible for enforcing laws regarding forest resource protections. Violations should be reported to your local Forest Service office. Regardless of the agency, officers are responsible for large areas of land and their response time may not be as quick as you would prefer. Please work with them and be patient – they're doing the best they can with limited resources.

## Getting Utilities to Your Property

You may be thinking of building a new home, or updating the services at an existing home. There are some things you need to be aware of about getting utility lines such as power, telephone, water, internet and gas to your property. Access possibilities across adjacent private lands must be exhausted before we will consider permitting access across the Forest. If your land is completely surrounded by National Forest, the utility company will need a special use permit from the Forest Service to install utility lines to your property. If in doubt, contact your local Forest Service office for specific advice on your situation.

## Your Use of Adjacent National Forest System Lands



Your right to use National Forest lands adjacent to your property is the same as any other citizen – you may use and enjoy the Forest subject to a few restrictions designed to protect the area. You may hike, mountain bike or ride horseback almost anywhere on the Forest but you cannot construct roads,

trails or gates. Motorized use must not result in resource damage and may not be permitted adjacent to your land. Some roads and trails are only open seasonally. Motorized Vehicle Use Maps are available at Forest Service offices showing when roads and trails are open. You can hunt and fish according to regulations set by the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks or by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. You may cut firewood after first obtaining a permit and you may remove other forest products subject to the same permitting procedures applicable to all citizens. Cultural resources such as Native American artifacts, old cabins, and old dump sites are protected by law. Contact the local Forest Service office to discuss your opportunities and obligations.

## Management Activities Adjacent to Your Property

National Forests are managed for a multitude of uses. Some activities that may occur adjacent to your property

include: timber harvest, control of insects and weeds, prescribed burning, mineral extraction, livestock grazing, wildlife habitat management and



various recreational activities. Disposal of small tracts of National Forest land may occur. It is possible that exchanges or sales of land could happen adjacent to your property and you could have new neighbors. Your local Forest Service office can give you an idea on what activities to expect in your area.

## Who Maintains the Fence?

Livestock grazing is authorized on most of the Black Hills National Forest and may occur adjacent to your property. Grazing permittees are not required under federal regulations to build and/or maintain fence to keep permitted livestock off



private land. You may (at your own expense and on your own land) create barriers or build fence to keep livestock off your private land. If you intend to graze your own livestock on your property, you are responsible to ensure your animals do not cross onto National Forest land.

## Hazards Near Your Property

There is always the potential for branches and entire trees to fall over from time to time. The Forest Service does not manage individual trees that may pose as a hazard to your private property. If you are concerned about individual trees or any other hazards on Forest land adjacent to your property, please contact your local Forest Service office to discuss how these can be addressed.

## Treating Noxious Weeds

The Forest Service has an active noxious weed treatment program.



While we coordinate with local counties, we do not treat noxious weeds on private land. Landowners are responsible for preventing and treating noxious weeds on their property. Many counties have resources to assist landowners in identifying, preventing, and treating noxious weeds.

## Managing Your Forested Land

Professional assistance in managing your private forest land is available from Wyoming State Forestry Division at (307) 746-4261, or South Dakota Division of Resource Conservation and Forestry at (605) 394-2395.

## Other Things You Need to Know!

- You will be responsible for costs associated with your access or utility requests and permitting.
- Management of the National Forest is ever changing. Please contact your local Forest Service office to verify the information in this brochure.