

Updated June 9, 2023



## Town of Excelsior, Sauk County

# Rural Living Guide

## Introduction

Rural communities in Wisconsin are facing many changes. Many people from urban areas are choosing to spend more time in rural areas. However, living in a rural area is in many ways much different than living in an urban community. This Rural Living Guide has been developed to inform those who are considering purchasing a rural property and those that already have. It is hoped that this information will help people consider issues that may affect them when living in a rural area.

## Emergency Services



### Law Enforcement and Rescue

The Sauk County Sheriffs Department is responsible for responding to calls in the Town of Excelsior. Response time tends to be longer than in urban areas and can be affected by inclement weather, illegible address signs, travel time, and poorly maintained and designed private driveways.

### Fire Protection

The Town of Excelsior is a member of the Reedsburg Rural Fire Department. Reedsburg Rural serves the entire town, however to enhance response time, Reedsburg Rural contracts with the North Freedom Fire Department to serve the sections adjacent to North Freedom. Each fire department is staffed with volunteer fire fighters. The level of protection provided depends on the access to water, distance of a structure from a fire station, type and number of vehicles, and number of volunteers and training. Your homeowner insurance rates will also be affected by these factors.

### Severe Weather

Severe weather can be very dangerous. The Town of Excelsior does not have a severe weather warning siren system. Residents are encouraged to purchase weather radios.

### Ambulance Service

The Town of Excelsior is served by two ambulance services. Reedsburg Ambulance serves the NE, NW and SW quadrants of the town. Baraboo Ambulance serves the SE quadrant of the town. Both agencies

offer paramedic level of service. Service may be affected by distance, weather conditions, and condition of private drives.



### 911

In case of emergency call 911. Sauk County has E911 or enhanced 911. Responders will have access to your address as well as your fire or ambulance district when you call. Please ensure that your fire number is visible from the road.

### Cell Phones

A majority of the town has adequate cell phone service. However, due to the rugged terrain, some pockets within the town have limited service where cell phones may not be reliable means of communication.

### Helpful Websites

**Town of Excelsior:**  
[www.townofexcelsiorwi.gov](http://www.townofexcelsiorwi.gov)

**Sauk County:**  
[www.co.sauk.wi.us](http://www.co.sauk.wi.us)

**Lake Virginia Management District:**  
[www.lakevirginiawi.org](http://www.lakevirginiawi.org)





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# Building/Development

## Permits

Prior to building in the Town of Excelsior you must receive a land use permit and a septic permit from the Sauk County Land Resources & Environment's office (608)355-3285. The Town of Excelsior issues building, land use and driveway permits. New buildings, additions, out-buildings or certain repairs require town building permits. If you are planning a building project contact the Town Clerk at (608) 522-5115 and Building Inspector Dennis Butteris at (608) 745-4070.

## Drinking Water

Most rural homeowners obtain their drinking water through a private well. It is recommended that well owners test their drinking water about once every 14 months. Testing kits are available through the Sauk County UW-Extension office (608)355-3250, the State Lab of Hygiene or private labs. Homes with pregnant women and infants can receive well testing through the Sauk County Health Department (608)355-3290 at a free or reduced rate. Many private wells also do not have fluoride. Check with the Sauk County Health Department for supplements.

## Septic Systems

In the Town of Excelsior private onsite wastewater systems or septic systems treat the wastewater from your home or business. Private septic systems are the responsibility of the landowner and they must be inspected at least once every three years and the Sauk County Land Resources & Environment Department requires proof of pumping. Never dispose household hazardous waste in sinks or toilets and don't drive or park vehicles on any part of your septic system. To learn more about septic system dos and don'ts get a copy of "So Now You own a Septic System" available at the County and online at:

<https://www.co.sauk.wi.us/cpz/septic-systems>

## Natural Gas & Propane

Currently natural gas is provided within village and city limits, with a limited number of exceptions. Propane, also known as LP, is the most common fuel used in rural settings. Propane tanks are set by the LP supplier and are filled on an "as needed" basis or on a "keep filled" basis. There are numerous LP supply companies in Sauk County which can be located in the Yellow Pages.

## Public vs. Private Roads

The county or town are responsible for the upkeep of public roads. It is the responsibility of the owners along a private road or driveway to build, maintain and plow snow.

## Electric Service

Electric service is provided by Alliant Energy. Some interruptions in service may occur as a result of severe weather. Call Alliant Energy to report a power outage or an electric emergency.

## Sauk County Zoning

The Town of Excelsior follows Sauk County zoning regulations. The primary zoning classification is Exclusive Agriculture. Zoning regulates how land may be used, minimum size of lots, height of structures, set backs, etc. The purpose of zoning is to provide for orderly development and to minimize conflicts between incompatible land uses.

Sauk County also zones lands within 1,000 feet, of lakes, ponds and flowages and lands within 300 feet of rivers and streams. Waterfront properties must maintain a natural shoreline. DNR regulations also apply near rivers, streams, lakes and wetlands. Check for requirements before doing work near water. For more information read Protecting Your Waterfront Property Investment at:

<http://clean-water.uwex.edu/pubs/pdf/waterfront.pdf>

Floodplain regulations may also affect a rural property. The program is designed to provide additional insurance and relief when natural disasters occur. Please contact the Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department (608)355-3285 for more information.

## Town Planning & Ordinances

The Town has an adopted Comprehensive Plan. The Plan is used to guide decision making by the Town Plan Commission, Town Board and Sauk County. The Comprehensive Plan is on the Town's website.

The Town has an adopted Public Nuisance Ordinance. The purpose of the ordinance is to regulate public nuisances for health and safety reasons.

The Town also has a Land Division Ordinance, Outdoor Wood Burning Ordinance and Driveway Ordinance. See the Town's website for copies of the Town ordinances.

## Lake Virginia Management District

Lake districts are special purpose units of government that can enact regulation and levy taxes. The purpose of lake management districts is to protect, and improve the quality of a lake. Lake Virginia lies within the Town of Excelsior and has created a lake management district to help manage and protect the future of the lake.

Lake Virginia Management District: [www.lakevirginiawi.org](http://www.lakevirginiawi.org)



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## Wildlife



### Driving

Each year thousands of deer are killed and injured by automobiles. Extra caution is needed when driving, especially at night. Seasonally, deer activity increases starting in early October through November. During the rut (or mating season) bucks chase more frequently and through all hours of the day and night.

### Pets and Stray Animals

Pets need to be licensed and current on their rabies vaccinations. Contact the town clerk for regulations regarding your pets. Dog licenses may be obtained from the Town Treasurer. Stray animals can be taken to the Sauk County Humane Society. For more information contact (608)356-2520.

### Living with Wildlife

Living in a rural area requires thoughtful consideration of wildlife. Deer can ravage a garden. Carefully consider which plants you use in your landscaping or your garden.



Wood and deer ticks are parasites that suck blood from people and animals. The deer tick can spread Lyme Disease. The symptoms vary in degree and include a bull's eye bite rash, muscle pain and swelling and fatigue. It is usually treated with antibiotics. Awareness of the risk of Lyme Disease is important and daily checks for ticks should be done on people and pets. Mosquitoes, deer flies, and black flies are also a part of living in rural areas.

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## Government Services

### Town Government

The Town of Excelsior is governed by a five member Town Board, which are elected in the spring of odd numbered years. The Town also has an elected clerk and treasurer. Candidates for Town offices are placed on the ballot through a petition and primary election process. Town government is responsible for road maintenance, snow removal, and local land use policies. The Town of Excelsior also has a five member Plan Commission, which are appointed by the Town Board. The Plan Commission is responsible for the implementation of the Town's Comprehensive Plan, land divisions, rezoning and local land use policies.

### County Government

Sauk County provides multiple services to residents of the Town of Excelsior. The Sauk County web site at [www.co.sauk.wi.us](http://www.co.sauk.wi.us) is filled with information regarding the services county government provides to rural residents including, but not limited to: a skilled nursing facility, a human services department, a law enforcement agency, a state circuit court system, a highway department, a tax administration and collection effort, planning and zoning, conservation, and other government related functions.

### Mailboxes

Customers must use only approved roadside mailboxes for new installations or replacements. Mailboxes are to be 41—45" from the roadbed to the bottom of the box and set back no more than 6—8" from where the tires would set along the side of the road.

### Garbage

The Town of Excelsior has roadside garbage pick-up, which is provided by:

Peterson Sanitation: (608)524-6603

Appliances, tires and other bulky materials may be collected for a fee.



### Recycling and Yard Waste

The Town of Excelsior has roadside pick-up for recycled materials. However, the town does not have pick up or drop off sites for yard waste. Many rural residents must compost these materials. Contact the Town Clerk to find out specific information for your community or visit the Sauk County website:

<https://www.co.sauk.wi.us/search/site/recycling>

### Snow Plowing

The Town of Excelsior roads are plowed by the Sauk County Highway Department. The town has 51 miles of roads, so snow removal can take some time. Do not expect your road to be plowed before you have to leave in the morning. Major roads such as state highways and county roads get first priority. Property owners are responsible for snow removal on private drives. Property owners are prohibited from depositing snow on public roads which will impact public safety.





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# Agriculture, Forestry and Resource Management

## Manure

Manure is an inevitable and valuable by-product of livestock production. Unfortunately the odor does not smell like money to some people. Some farmers have a nutrient management plan for their farm, which is based on a soil test and the crops grown. Manure applications are done to grow crops efficiently and reduce run off. Sauk County has a manure management ordinance which spells out procedures required to build new manure storage facilities.

## Fences

State law (Ch. 90 of State Statutes) states that if livestock is present on one property, BOTH property owners must share the expenses of maintaining a fence on the property line. Other accommodations can be made if both parties agree. Fences make good neighbors. See the UW Extension **Country Acres** publication for more information

<https://learningstore.uwex.edu/Country-Acres-A-Guide-to-Buying-and-Managing-Rural-Property-P93.aspx>

## Leasing Ag Land

For sample leasing agreements, estimated rental rates, and available land rental contact the Sauk County UW-Extension office at (608)355-3250.

## Logging

The Town of Excelsior has approximately 7,765 acres of forest lands. Both public and private woodland owners participate in logging for both revenue and habitat improvements. Your neighbor's mature woods may not be that way for long. Logging permits must be obtained from the DNR.

## Slow moving vehicles

Farm vehicles are allowed on all roads and may back up traffic. Please watch for and be patient with slow moving vehicles.



## Pesticide Application

Farmers are not required to report their pesticide applications or post warning signs on recently sprayed fields. They are required to complete pesticide applicator training in order to purchase and use restricted use pesticides. Most herbicides are not on the "restricted use" list.

## Invasive Species

Non-native, exotic, alien, non-indigenous—no matter what you choose to call them, non-native species are plants and animals present in an ecosystem beyond their native range. Some of these species become "**invasive**", and may threaten native species and interfere with commercial, agricultural or recreational activities. In their native environments, there are typically predators, parasites, pathogens and competitors that keep these invasive species in check and create a balance. For information on how to identify and remove invasive species, contact the Sauk County Conservation, Planning & Zoning office at (608) 355-3245 or the Sauk County UW Extension office at (608) 355-3250.

## Resource Management

So you bought some land, now what? The Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department (608)355-3245 can help you create a resource management plan and identify possible funding sources to help you make the most of your property.

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# Recreation



## Hunting, fishing and trapping

Harvesting game and fish through hunting, fishing, and trapping is a tradition. There is a season for many species some of which are open the entire year. Most hunting however is done in the fall. Wisconsin has hunter harassment laws that make it criminal to interfere with legal hunting. Contact the DNR for additional information on access to Managed Forest Law (MFL) and wildlife damaged lands.

## Trespass

You are criminally trespassing on private land unless you get permission from the owner. Land does not have to be posted with signs unless it is adjacent to public land. Respect private property and ask before you use.



## ATV Use

The Department of Natural Resources enforces strict rules that are in place for ATV use on public lands and roads. Town roads are open to ATV/UTV's.



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# Fire Danger

## Housing in Forested Areas

Living in the forests of the Town of Excelsior is very rewarding. However, those trees can also be threats to your home. Maintain a 30—100 foot non-flammable buffer between your house and the forest to reduce the fire danger to your home. To learn more contact your local DNR Forester at (608)355-4476 or visit: <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/forestry/Fire/index.htm>.

## Fireworks



Restricted fireworks require a permit from the Town Chair. These permits are only issued for fireworks use for a certain time and place. Restricted fireworks are defined as those that move, jump, explode or emit balls of fire and include such types as bottle rockets, firecrackers, jumping jacks, and roman candles. Restricted fireworks are much

more likely to cause a forest fire or injury because of their erratic and unpredictable behavior.

## Outdoor Burning

Wildfires happen most often during the months of April and May. The primary cause of these fires is debris burning. Get a permit: Obtain a free permit online instantly with an email address. Or call the hotline 1-888-WIS-BURN (947-2876) from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily to have a burning permit mailed to you. <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/forestfire/permits>

It is recommended you notify the fire department and sheriffs department prior to burning.

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# Living in an Agricultural Community

While many people find that living in or near a rural setting is an attractive alternative to an urban environment, you are advised that the Town of Excelsior and the State of Wisconsin have established goals of preserving agricultural land and the business of farming. While farming practices can sometimes be in direct conflict with residential uses, Wisconsin has "right to farm" statutes which protect agricultural production and the use of modern agricultural technology. As a resident in a predominately "rural" farm area you should know about some of the farm practices that could impact your use:



**Noise:** Farm equipment can be noisy and may be operated at night and even round-the-clock. Farm animals also create noise at all hours.

**Slow Traffic:** Farmers must move animals and equipment between, over and along local roads at very slow speeds. This equipment is often of such size that passing is difficult causing traffic delays.

**Quarries:** While the opening of new mineral extraction sites requires government conditional use approvals, existing quarries may remain in operation for many years which may generate noise, dust, vibration and traffic.

**Odor:** Manure is generated by livestock. It is often spread on fields as fertilizer. It may smell bad for a time and it may attract insects.

**Dust:** The cultivation of fields at different times of the year can generate large amounts of dust which may drift onto adjoining properties.

**Chemicals:** Commercial chemicals and fertilizers may be used on crops which, because of wind conditions, may drift to adjacent lands.



## Livestock Premise Registration:

Any location in Wisconsin where livestock are kept or congregated must be registered. "Livestock" includes: Cattle and other bovine animals, swine, poultry, sheep, goats, horses and other equine animals, deer and elk, game birds, exotic birds, bison, llamas, emus, ostriches, & fish. For additional information & registration, please visit the following site: [https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs\\_Services/PremisesRegistration.aspx](https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/PremisesRegistration.aspx)

# For More Information

For additional information regarding Rural Living and living in the Town of Excelsior, please contact the Town Clerk at (608)522-5115.

# Town of Excelsior Officials & Contact Information

## Town Board

### Kurt Muchow, Town Board Chair

Phone: (608)963-0571

E-mail: kurtmuchow2255@gmail.com

Responsibilities:

- Presides over Town Board meetings
- Presides over Annual & Special Town Meetings
- Plan Commission Chair
- Nuisance Officer
- Fireworks Permits

### Jim Gavin, Supervisor I

Phone: (608) 963-8807

E-mail: jim@gavinbros.com

Responsibilities:

- Financial Management
- Rural Reedsburg Fire Department Representative
- Board of Review

### Karl Berna, Supervisor II

E-mail: tnexcsup2@gmail.com

Responsibilities:

- Lake Virginia Management District Representative
- Reedsburg Area Development Council Representative
- Board of Review Member
- Technology (Virtual Meetings, etc.)

### Pat Weber, Supervisor III

E-mail: tnexcsup3@gmail.com

Responsibilities:

- Plan Commission
- Board of Review Member
- Reedsburg Area Development Council Member
- Driveway Permits
- town Hall Building Maintenance

### Dan Biermeier, Supervisor IV

Phone: (608)547-3435

E-mail: tnexcsup4@gmail.com

Responsibilities:

- Road Superintendent
- Driveway Permits
- Board of Review Member
- Reedsburg Area Development Council Member
- Reedsburg Rural Fire Department Representative
- Lake Virginia Management District Alternative Representative

## Town Officials

### Sandra Meyer Swanson, Town Clerk

Phone: (608)522-5115

E-mail: clerk@townofexcelsiorwi.gov

### Erik Larson Town Treasurer

Phone: (608)522-5115

E-mail: excelsiortowntreasurer@gmail.com

### Bob Madvig, Assessor

Phone: (608)374-4207

### Dennis Butteris, Building Inspector

Phone: (608)745-4070

## Town Hall

Phone: (608)522-5115

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 57

Rock Springs, WI 53961

Street Address: 100 Broadway Street

Rock Springs, WI 53961

## Town of Excelsior Map

