

The Family Cabin: Keeping It in the Family

As summer approaches, many Wisconsinites (and a few from other states) turn towards the annual opening of the Family Northwoods Cabin for the season. Whether yours is a grand estate on a busy lake, or a shack in the woods, the emotional ties are the same. Shared memories of family time at this retreat—lazy days splashing along the shoreline, silently gliding over the still water at dawn in a canoe with Dad, riotous card games out on the screened-in porch on long, rainy days. These are the memories that stick with us. Parents hope it is memories like these that act as beacons to children when they've grown and moved away, bringing them and their own families back to the Northwoods for a visit each summer.

Whether you call your vacation home a cabin or a cottage, you likely want to ensure that your children, and your children's children, can enjoy the same wonderful memories and experiences that you have. That it becomes a common bond across generations. Of course, without careful planning and clear communication, the cabin is more likely to become a battleground than a retreat. And the shared memories will be those of unpleasant family discord.

One surefire way to avoid family discord over the cabin? Sell it. Absent that drastic solution, you need to start by taking honest stock of your own family and their desires for the cabin, and means for supporting it in future years. I encourage clients to talk openly with their adult children about the cabin. Oftentimes, it leads to surprisingly frank admissions of worry about supporting the cabin, or about having their inheritance tied up in the cabin when one child would prefer to have cash for other purposes.

Armed with feedback from family and your own ideas, meet with your personal estate planner to discuss options. Oftentimes, siblings owning such a property as tenants in common is the riskiest plan. One disgruntled sibling could force a sale by bringing a partition action in court. One sibling could feel saddled with paying more than his or her share of upkeep expenses - subsidizing siblings and their families without recourse. These are all situations which breed resentment between family members, which oftentimes end with permanently damaged relationships, or no relationships at all.

Plan to avoid this result. Call your Reinhart Boerner Van Deuren, s.c. attorney today to discuss your own [personal cabin plan](#). Make this the year you not only

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make new memories but ensure future good ones.

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