Twitter Thread by Ovcharka



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OK I am going to be tackling this as surveillance/open source intel gathering exercise, because that is my background. I blew away 3 years of my life doing site acquisition/reconnaissance for a certain industry that shall remain unnamed and believe there is significant carryover.

> If I did thred on finding/acquiring decent raw land would that be something pepo are interested in
>
> I think I know a bunch of weird tips/tricks for selection at this point that it might help u guys, lemme know
>
> — Ovcharka (@ouroboros_outis) January 18, 2021

This is NOT going to be zillow "here is how to google school districts and find walmart" we are not concerned with this malarkey, we are homeschooling and planting victory gardens and having gigantic happy families.

With that said, for my frog and frog-adjacent bros and sisters:

CHOICE SITES:

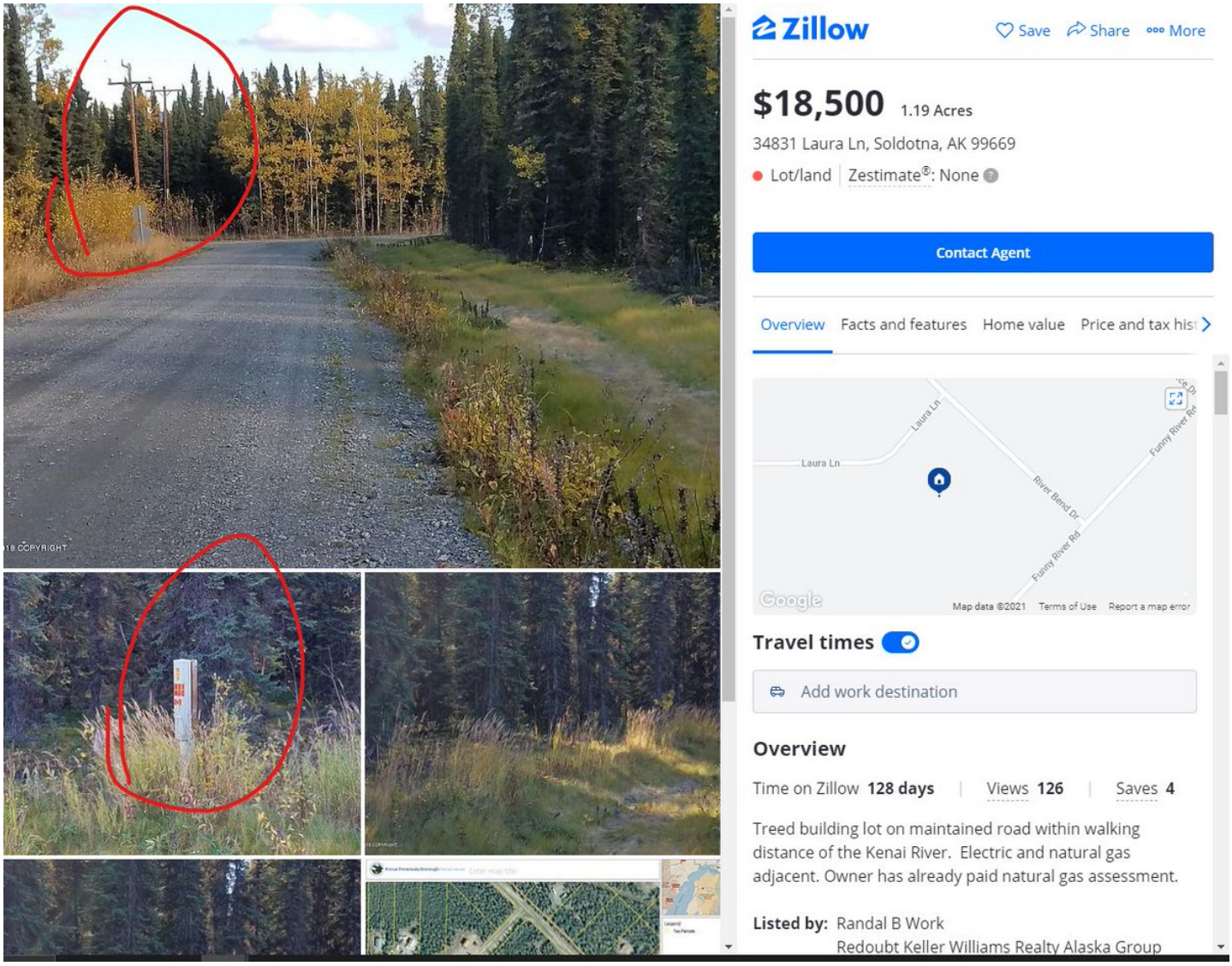
Zillow is obvious one, but there are many good sites like Billy Land, Classic Country Land, Landwatch, etc. and many of these specialize in owner financing (more on that later.) Do NOT treat these as authoritative sources - trust plat maps and parcel viewers.

TARGET IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION:

Okay, everyone knows how to google "raw land in x state" but there are other resources out there, including state Departments of Natural Resources, foreclosure auctions, etc. Finding the land you like is the easy part. Let's do a case study.

I'm going to target using an "off-grid but not" algorithm. This is a good piece in my book - middle of nowhere but still trekkable to civilization.

Note: visible power, power/fiber pedestal, utility corridor, nearby commercial enterprise(s), and utility pole shadows visible.



This is my main way of identifying "can I build something off-grid w/ on-grid backups." Much higher resolution satellite imagery is available - if you go that route, it's going to cost around $800-$1200 and you should get a minimum of 15cm resolution. But it's mostly unnecessary.

We want to do this because getting the power company to run lines is EXPENSIVE AS HECK. $50 a foot in most parts of the country, even if you live next to transmission lines they still have to jump down in voltage and go all the way to your house - with more fees for hooking on.

UTILITIES AND ACCESS:

Everyone knows what a transformer looks like, even if you don't know you know. This is where a transmission or distribution line jumps down in voltage to "consumer" voltage. This is a good sign.

Note the conduit casing down the length of pole.



This means the power is jumping underground - very common in northern latitudes due to icicle formation.

Now for fiber, for my work-from-home homesteaders - I had to pan over a bit to find this, but this is a good indicator that *someone* is pushing wired internet in the area.



Note that this is not a guarantee of currency, and you still may have to look into satellite or fixed wireless options if you want to have your cake + eat it too. FiWi uses microwave repeaters to push signal the way cell towers do.

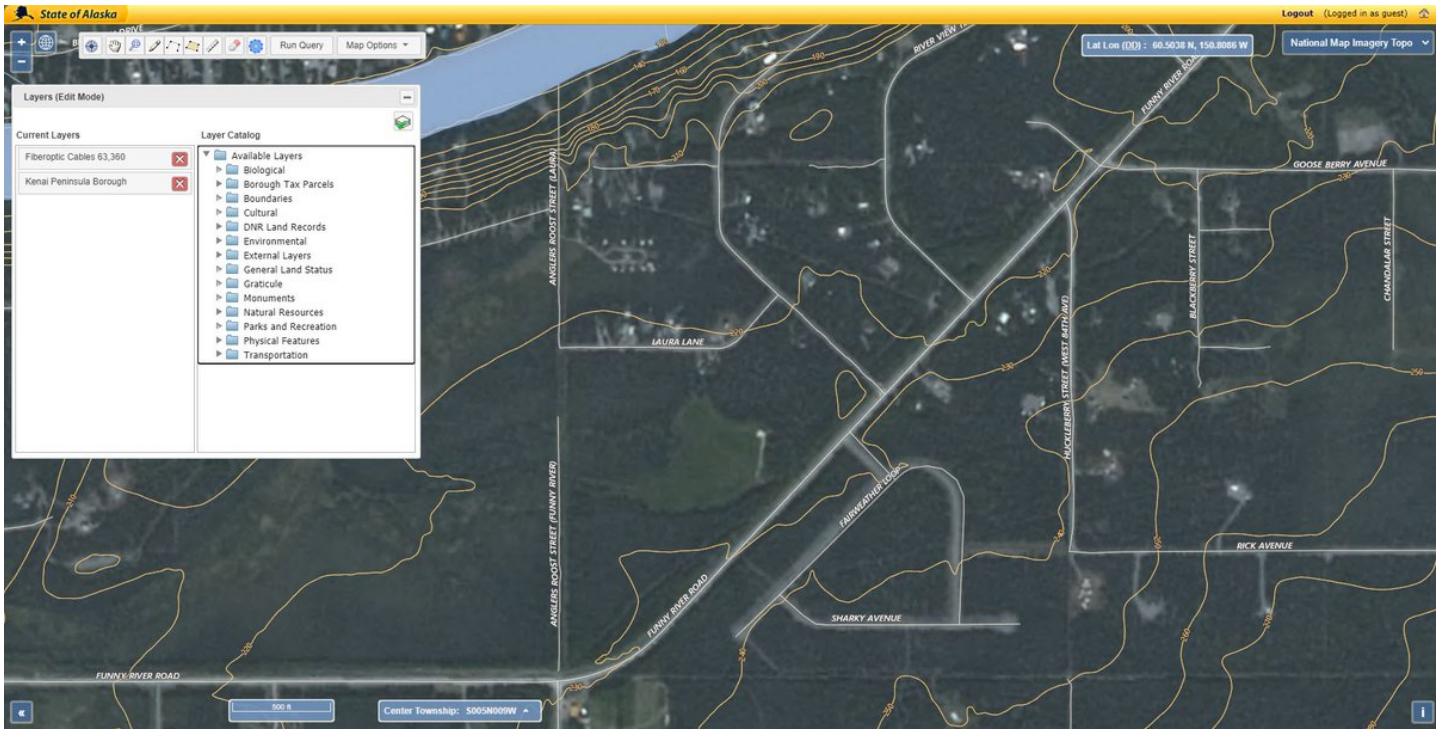
Many ISPs will have coverage maps as well.

A note: A nearby cell tower is a good indicator that either wired or FiWi is available. This is because majority of cell towers are fed by - guess - fiber optics! Either that or LOS microwave.

I designed these networks for years. If a tower is nearby, you can prob get internet.

Okay, so we've got power and fiber in the area. Now let's find out who owns this parcel.

Hey there's our parcel ID number! We can use this to look up tax info at the county/borough level. Kenai's site is down right now but just imagine all the owner info appearing here.



These mappers exist at every level (county, borough, town, state) in virtually every part of the country. Their quality varies, but they all do basically the same thing - take publicly available map data and make it digestible.

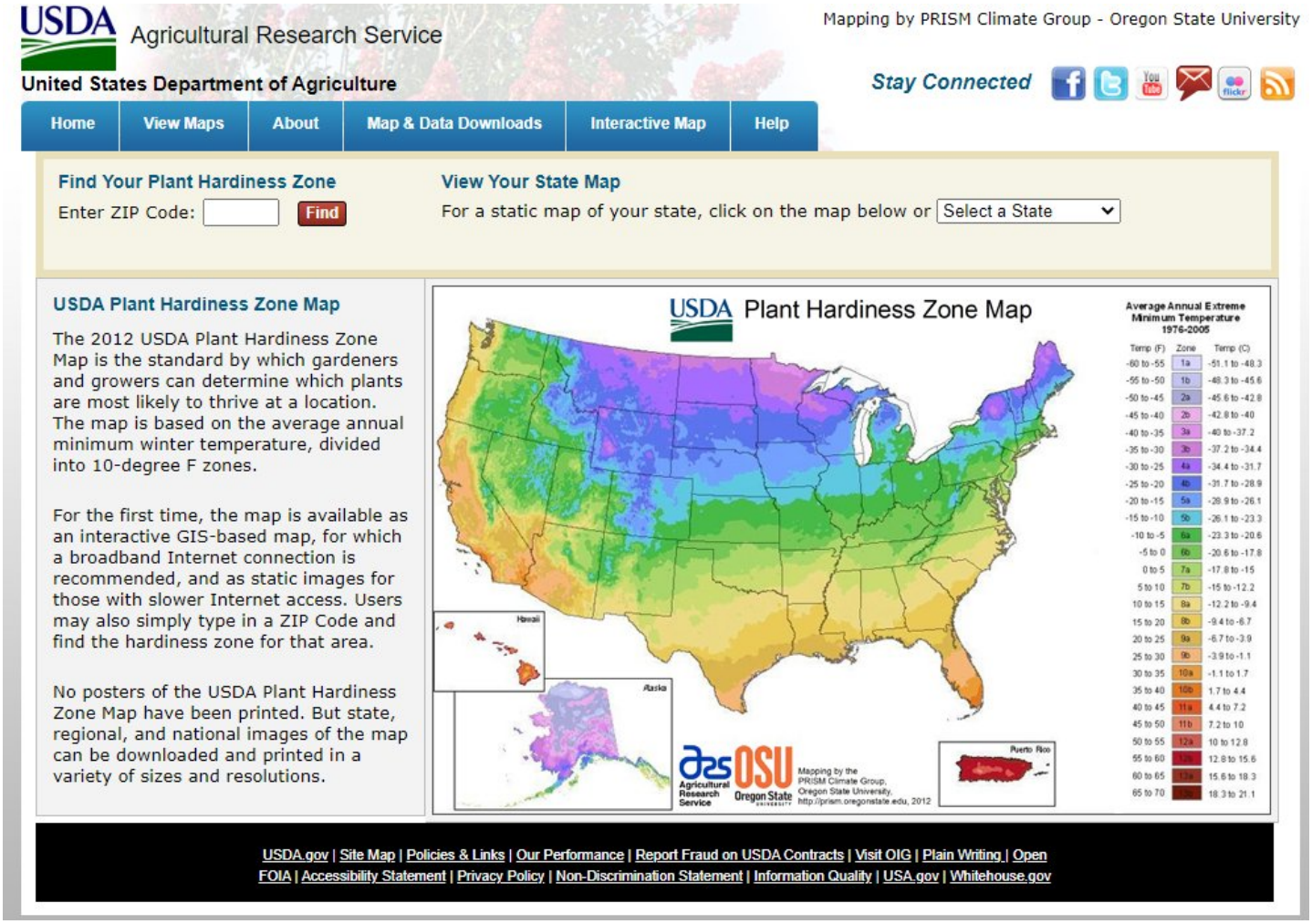
If you prefer, you can do this yourself in QGIS.

This is important because it allows us to be smarter than realtors in two ways: One, we can positively identify ownership ourselves. And two, we can do a LOT of environmental research without ever leaving our homes.

Saves us a lot of travel time and getting our hopes up.

Plant hardiness is a good, easy to investigate example of this. There is an interactive GIS version of this on the USDA's website, but if you're curious about what you can grow without artificial intervention - this is your cheat sheet.

Look at all we can grow in central Kenai!



One of these environmental things you MUST look at is wetlands. There are many layers in mappers like this that reveal that detail - usually put out by the DNR or the Forest Service. But failing that, we can still tell if these are wetlands based on what naturally grows there.

This plot looks like a lot of quaking aspen + birch - a good sign this is fertile soil with good drainage.

It's important to avoid wetlands because in many parts of the country they can be considered protected habitats for waterfowl. They're also a PAIN to remediate.

This leads neatly into my next point. We're kind of off-grid but kind of not. That means we'll probably be putting in a septic system. A septic leech field generally needs good drainage.

Wetlands are obvious indicator septic will not work -

but the only way to know for sure is a PERC test. Be sure to find out if your land already has had one, if it's recent, or if you need one. They can be pricey but it's better than getting up there and finding you have to compost your dookie. It's basically a soil drainage test.

Relatedly: If you can find it, find well depth data for your area. It's pretty common - search "average well depth in x county" stuff like that. The gov't also often maintains their own exploratory wells for monitoring aquifer water quality, and sometimes even has maps of them.

Find this out BEFORE you commit to drilling a well. We have options in our new little piece of Alaska we just peeped - we can drink snow.

But a lot of properties are not so fortunate. Many I looked at in Oregon last year had well depths of over 900'. Not a typo - 900+ feet.

One last bit before the boring stuff. Legal access is super important - unless it's "remote" backcountry land, do NOT commit to any properties that do not have visible (either street view or satellite view) roads nearby.

You should also check for deeded - in writing - access.

This can take a lot of forms, from typical curbside access most homes have to access easements with neighbors, or in some places, guaranteed access to state land.

These can usually be determined via the plat of survey, which you should dig up for every property you look at.

One last bit: Titles and owner financing. We can figure out a lot from tax maps, but one important thing is the title - making sure the seller actually owns it. Lots of title companies that run these checks, but this is a late stage thing to investigate when you seriously commit

to a property.

Finally, one possible route is owner financing. This is where you put a little (usually about 10%-30%) down and have a quick 3-5 year mortgage. This is done because banks do not like lending on land and is a good option - makes the dream accessible to everyone.

Just be sure to do due diligence. A lot of owner financed land is in areas with restrictive covenants or inhospitable areas. If you want to live in the desert there's plenty of options there - but do your homework.