



Season 2 Episode 3—When the Family Doesn’t Agree

November 20 2025

Jamie Mardis

The “On the Heir” podcast is designed to provide accurate, authoritative information about the subject matter covered for educational purposes only. The information in this podcast does not and is not intended to constitute legal advice.

Jamie Mardis

You’re live with On the Heir, where the airways are buzzing with stories of land, legacy and lineage. I'm your host, Jamie, and today we're diving into what happens when family members just can't seem to agree about their land. Maybe you've been there. A family meeting where tempers flare, discussions stall, or no one wants to step up and take the lead.

Jamie Mardis

How do you keep things moving forward? How do you choose a point person who can guide decisions without stepping on anyone's toes or causing more conflict? That's exactly what we're exploring here today. With practical advice you can start using right now to help your family land stay protected and your relationships intact.

Jamie Mardis

Let's start with the big truth. Disagreements about family land are normal, and they're often deeply rooted. Family land isn't just about soil, trees, or acreage. It holds generations of memories, identity, and shared legacy. That emotional weight means that people often have very different visions for the land's future. Some may want to sell to unlock cash. Others want to hold it to preserve family history.

Jamie Mardis

Some want to farm or develop the land while others may be more focused on conservation or passive ownership. Add that to the complexity of joint or mixed ownership, where multiple heirs hold different kinds of interest, and the fact that many families are spread out geographically. Communication can become difficult. Beyond the property itself, there's often a history of unresolved family dynamics.

Jamie Mardis

Past conflicts, hurt feelings, or distrust that spill over into land discussions. All these factors can make reaching a consensus challenging. There's no designated leader or clear process for decision making. The natural tendency is for decisions to stall, frustrations to rise and sometimes for families to drift apart. So the first step is to recognize that disagreement is not a sign that your family is broken.

Jamie Mardis

It's a natural part of the process, especially with something as complex and emotional as family land. One of the most effective ways to keep family land matters moving forward is to designate a point person. Think of this role as the family's captain or quarterback for property decisions. This individual acts as the central communicator, reaching out to all ears, organizing meetings, gathering relevant information, and helping move discussions forward towards actionable decisions.

Jamie Mardis

But how do you choose the right person for this important role, and what should their responsibilities and limitations be? Here are four key qualities to look for in your point person. Number one trustworthiness. They need to be someone. Family members belief will be fair, honest, and transparent. Two. Availability. This role requires time and effort, so the person must be willing and able to invest the necessary time.

Jamie Mardis

Knowledgeable. Ideally, they understand the legal and practical sides of heirs property, or at least know where to find help like resources through the Alabama Heirs Property Alliance or the AHPA. Four. They need to be a strong communicator. They should be able to keep everyone informed, manage disagreements diplomatically, and encourage open dialog. It's important to stress that the point person is not a dictator.

Jamie Mardis

Their role is to facilitate, coordinate, and guide decisions. Not to make them unilaterally or override others. Designating this role helps prevent confusion, avoid stalemates, and builds a foundation for cooperation. While informal agreements about who leads can work temporarily, families often benefit from formalizing the point person's role to avoid misunderstandings down the line. This can take several forms, such as drafting a family agreement that outlines the decision making process, or establishing a power of attorney.

Jamie Mardis

Granting the point person specific legal authority to act on behalf of the family in property matters. Legal documentation sets clear expectations, provides protections if disputes arise, and can be especially valuable when family members live far apart, or when there's a large number of heirs involved. The Alabama Heirs Property Alliance is a great resource to help families connect with legal experts who can draft these kinds of agreements, making sure everyone understands the scope and limitations of the point person's authority.

Jamie Mardis

Tools and tips for effective family decision making. If your family is ready to improve how decisions get made. Here are some practical tools and tips to keep things on track. First schedule regular meetings. Consistent check-ins help keep everyone informed and reduce surprises and build momentum. Use clear agendas. Having a focused list of discussion topics keeps meetings efficient and productive.

Jamie Mardis

Documents and Decisions. Writing down agreements and sharing them with everyone provides clarity and a reference point. Bring in outside help when needed. Neutral mediators, attorneys or family counselors can facilitate difficult conversations and help manage emotions. If you're unsure where to find these resources, contact the Alabama Heirs Property Alliance. Finally, practice patience. Building trust and cooperation takes time, especially in families with long histories or complex ownerships.

Jamie Mardis

Remember, the goal isn't to eliminate disagreements entirely. You and I both know that's rarely possible, but to manage them constructively so your family land is protected and relationships are preserved. Before we close, take a moment to reflect on your family situation. Is there already someone naturally stepping into the point person role? Our communication and decisions happening openly and transparently.

Jamie Mardis

What's one specific step your family could take this month to improve decision making? If you're unsure where to start or need guidance, the Alabama Heirs Property Alliance is ready to help. We offer educational materials, technical assistance and connections to professionals familiar with heirs property challenges. Visit our website at www.aces.edu/go/heirsproperty for more information. That's www.aces.edu/go/heirsproperty.

Jamie Mardis

“On the Heir” is a product of Auburn University and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. Support for this program is provided by the Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Development Program, project award no. 2023-49400-40876 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this podcast are those of the participants and should not be construed to represent any official USDA or U.S. Government determination or policy. More information about activities and publications related to heirs property in Alabama can be found by visiting our website at www.aces.edu/go/heirsproperty.” “On the Heir” podcast is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting or other professional counsel. If legal advice or other expert assistance is required, please seek the advice of services of competent professionals.

Jamie Mardis

Thanks for tuning in to On the Heir. Be sure to subscribe. Leave us a review and share your thoughts with this. Together we'll continue to explore the fascinating world of heirs property. One episode at a time. Until then, keep protecting your legacy.