

IT'S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO KNOW WHERE YOU ARE

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I have been kicking around the woods more years than I care to recall at times. In that time, I have become aware that no matter what your reason or role for being there is, it's important to know where you are.

I like open space as devoid of human activity as possible. Since I do and because I believe in private property rights, I do not infringe on those rights if I can help it.

Unlike city streets or communities where property lines are easily identifiable, open areas are not. They vary in size and description from open farmland to vast tracts of unbroken woodland, thousands of acres in size.

Last week's column dealt with the possible timber theft, which as events have unfolded, is verified. The owner has a good case for proving same but it would be all the better if the property lines were more discernable.

The property was surveyed in 1953, but the lines were never blazed and they and the corners were never maintained. Remnants of old stone fences and barbed wire are the only evidence left of that survey. If the lines had been blazed on the trees and painted, anyone would have recognized a change in ownership. Posted signs on or near the boundary with the owner's name and address would have helped even more. Piles of rocks around corner pipes also would have helped identify them.

Blazes are permanent marks placed on trees on or near the property line by licensed surveyors. They are vertical pieces of bark and wood removed with an axe at eye-level. Trees on line are marked with a blaze on either side of the tree in the direction of the line. Trees within 18-inches are marked with three blazes. The middle blaze facing the line. These should only be maintained by painting and should never be reblazed. One reason for this is that they may be boxed out and the growth rings counted to determine the year the survey was made.

Trees surrounding corners can be witnessed by placing two or three horizontal blazes on the lower level, facing directly toward the corner. This helps to relocate the corner if it is removed by intersecting lines projected from their face. Piles of stones placed around the pipes also helps to maintain their integrity.

We are in the process of reestablishing the boundary to amend some of the past shortcomings. Bright flagging tape is taking the place of blazes and the lines are being brushed out. No permanent landmarks are being created. Only licensed land surveyors are authorized to place them. We have advised the owner that a new survey is in order. A survey map should be included.

There has long been a misconception about boundary line trees and to which landowner they belong. The accepted rule is that both parties jointly own them and should not be utilized by either party. They are permanent markers. Many believe they are entitled to every other tree. Wrong.

Well-marked boundary lines, like fences of any kind, indicate changes in land use or ownership. The same goes for gates; they are mean to restrict ingress. One should not assume that the lack of any of the above gives them a legitimate right to be there. When asked to leave, one should do so with apologies. If you end up in court you will be told that it's your responsibility to know where you are at all times. Please mark your boundaries, it helps everyone.