

FORESTRY 101



Marking Your Woodland Boundary

by Laurie Taylor Thomas

An important part of caring for your woodlands is ensuring that your boundaries are clearly marked. Unfortunately, many privately held woodlands do not have marked property boundaries, which can lead to a host of problems. This article addresses: the importance of marking and maintaining your woodland boundary lines, determining property boundaries, properly marking the boundary, and materials to use for marking the property boundary.

Why is it important to mark your woodland property boundary?

A clearly marked boundary helps avoid several problems common to many woodland owners. First, it can help avoid conflicts with neighbors. Clear boundary marking keeps

those working on your property, for example a logging operation, from accidentally straying on to your neighbor's property. A properly marked boundary can also keep people from accidentally trespassing onto your property. Lastly, a well-marked boundary can help prove an intentional trespass, which is helpful in timber theft, unauthorized ATV use, and dumping cases. All of these issues indicate a properly marked boundary is a part of good woodland management.

ing a licensed land surveyor. First, choose a surveyor who is familiar with and has experience surveying forested land.

Second, choose a surveyor who is willing and able to represent you in court if a boundary dispute should arise. You should also make sure to understand what the surveyor is going to provide you in their survey and get this in writing as surveyors vary in the way and the rigor that they mark boundaries.

Make sure to specify that you want the boundary lines between the corners marked through the woods with wooden stakes at 50 foot intervals; this will most likely cost extra, but will be helpful when you start marking the boundary. You should also ask the surveyor to notify adjacent landowners to ensure property line agreement. It is in your best interest to meet with your land surveyor on your property to ensure you understand how the property lines and corners are marked. It is also recommended to file a copy of the survey plat at your county courthouse. There are many different variables used to determine the cost of a property survey, such as when the original



If your woodland property boundaries are not known you should work with a licensed land surveyor to make sure they are properly marked, recorded, and communicated to neighbors. Make sure to use boundary marking paint to mark boundary trees soon after the boundaries are established.



A properly marked woodland boundary can help to reduce the risk of timber trespass.

Photo courtesy: Jeff Stringer

Determining and Marking Your Property Boundary

The first step in marking your property boundary is to contact a licensed land surveyor. Most states have lists of licensed surveyors as well as associations of professional surveyors that will help you locate a licensed surveyor in your area. There are several things to consider when choos-



Photo courtesy: Chris Osborne



deed was created and the remoteness and accessibility as well as size and shape of the property. For example, in Kentucky a general estimate would be \$40 to \$100 per acre with larger properties (over 300 acres) \$30 to \$40 per acre. Right after the land surveyor finishes the survey, or even while it is still in progress, you should start to permanently to mark your boundaries. Many times this is done by the landowner, but if the landowner is unable to carry out the task, a consulting forester can be hired to mark the established property boundary. It is important that this boundary marking be done during or shortly after the land survey because the wooden stakes and plastic flagging the surveyor will use are only temporary. There are a variety of materials that can be used to mark your property boundary; the most common are boundary marking paints and aluminum or metal boundary markers or signs.

Boundary Marking Paint

Boundary marking paint is oil-based and typically lasts 5 to 10 years. Make sure you choose boundary marking paint NOT tree marking paint, which is designed for short-term use. Also choose a highly visible color such as orange or blue; red is not a preferred color due to fading, and it is difficult to see for people who are color blind. Boundary marking with paint is the least expensive method of marking your property boundaries, but remember it must be repainted as it begins to fade in 5 to 10 years.

Boundary marking paint comes as “brush type” boundary paint or “gun type” boundary paint. The “brush type” boundary paint is typically purchased in gallon cans and applied using a paint brush. The “gun type” boundary paint can be purchased in quart or gallon cans. The “gun type” paint also requires the purchase of a paint gun. The paint gun screws directly onto the paint can. The “brush type” paint is typically a little less expensive but also messy and can be difficult to carry over rough terrain.

It is recommended to mark trees at frequent enough intervals along the boundary line, so that as you stand at a marked tree you should be able to see your last marked tree. If you cannot see the marked tree, your spacing is too far apart. The boundary marking paint should be applied only to trees on your property. Paint should be applied in bands across the face of the tree trunk at eye level. The boundary paint can be applied with marks facing out toward the adjoining property or facing into your property, depending on your objective; in some cases it is best to paint both sides or make a complete band around the trunk. Property boundary corners should be denoted by painting three horizontal bands. When painting your boundary line you may also have to prepare the tree bark surface to allow for adequate surface area for paint application which can add to the time it takes to mark the boundary. Trees with rough or deeply fissured bark (ex. chestnut oak or black walnut) can be smoothed using a draw knife, and for trees with loose flaky bark (ex. white oak) a bark scraper can be used. You should remove just enough bark to smooth the surface and not damage the tree. You should always wear safety glasses when preparing the bark surface and applying boundary paint. For more information on tree marking refer to Forestry 101 “Tree Painting”; Osborne, C. *Kentucky Woodlands Magazine Vol. 8 Issue 2*.



Photos courtesy: Chris Osborne

Specialized tree marking paint is used to mark boundaries. When applied correctly boundary paint can last ten years.



Boundary Marking “brush-type” Paint and Time Estimates

Distance	Paint Quantity	Work Hours
1,000 feet	24 ounces (if only using one color)	45 minutes (using 3 workers)

These estimates are based on a recent boundary marking done in Eastern Kentucky over rough, rocky terrain using “brush type” boundary paint. The boundary crew consisted of three workers, two to paint and one to carry extra gallons of paint. The time estimates include walking to the boundary line and tree bark surface preparation.

Boundary Markers and Signs

Boundary markers such as metal or fiberglass posts as well as metal or plastic signs can be used instead of paint or in addition to painting the boundary lines. Boundary marker posts can be useful to mark your property line when there are too few trees in an area, the trees are too far apart, or just to improve visibility and permanence. Many of the commercially available boundary marker posts are fiberglass, 5 to 6 feet long, blank or pre-labeled, and can be installed in the ground using a post driver. Other materials such as rebar or steel posts that have been painted with boundary marking paint can also be used. Boundary signs can also help improve visibility and permanence. Property boundary signs are commercially available, range in size and shape from 3" to 5" squares or circles, can be metal or plastic and are typically pre-labeled. The signs should be installed with a long aluminum nail (up to 9" long) to trees on or near the

property boundary line. It is important that these signs not be nailed flush to the tree trunk, you must allow room for the tree to grow. The number of signs used will depend on if they are being used in conjunction with boundary paint; remember using the signs increases visibility. Having a good property boundary project plan before you start marking will be important when considering property boundary posts or signs since most of these must be purchased in advance and with some expense depending on the size of your property. Remember, your property boundary markers will need to be checked periodically and the boundary remarked as needed.

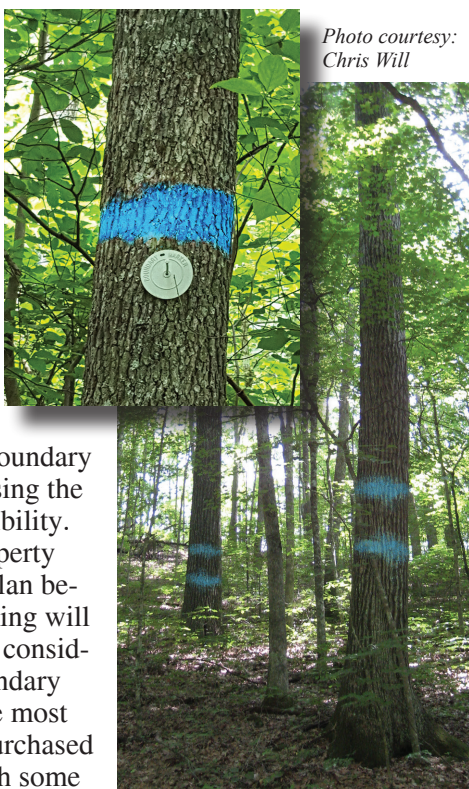


Photo courtesy: Chris Will

Photo courtesy: Jeff Stringer

Trees can be marked with boundary marking paint, signs, or a combination of the two. An advantage of signs is that they are typically more visible.

Property Boundary-Marking Equipment

- Boundary-marking paint: Available from Forestry-Suppliers, Ben Meadows, or Nelson Paint Company (\$23 - \$37 per gallon)
- Hand-held marking guns: Available from Forestry-Suppliers, or Ben Meadows (\$153 - \$275)
- Marking guns with backpack tanks: Available from Forestry-Suppliers (\$450 - \$530)

- Bark or draw knife: Available from Baileys, Forestry-Suppliers, or Ben Meadows (\$40 - \$70)
- Boundary marking posts: Available from Bernsten International (\$14 - \$21 per carsonite post depending on post type and quantity)



Photos courtesy: Chris Osborne

Boundary marking guns and bark knives are tools that can make boundary marking project easier to complete.

- Boundary marking signs: Available from Voss Signs (\$0.20 to \$0.96 each depending on quantity)
- Paint brush and 6"- 8" long aluminum nails: Available at local hardware stores.

Professional Assistance:

To Find a Licensed Land Surveyors in Kentucky
Kentucky Board of Engineers & Land Surveyors:
<http://kyboels.ky.gov>

Kentucky Association of Professional Surveyors:
www.kaps1.com

Kentucky Association of Consulting Foresters:
www.kacf.org/

Marking Your Woodland Property Boundary Webinar



Visit forestry.ca.uky.edu/previous_webinars to watch a webinar on how to go about marking your woodland property boundary.

The author would like to thank the following who provided information for this article: Christopher Will, Central Kentucky Forest Management, Inc.; Chris Osborne, Management Forester, University of Kentucky Robinson Forest; Nathan King of KWM Engineering and Surveying of Kentucky; and Gregg West of Gregg West Land Surveying of Kentucky Incorporated.

About the Author:

Laurie Taylor Thomas, is an extension forester at the University of Kentucky and is responsible for providing forestry and natural resource education programs for youth and adults across the state.

Cooperative Extension Service, Department of Forestry, University of Kentucky, 216 B Thomas Poe Cooper Building, Lexington, KY 40546-0073; Phone: 859.257.2703; Fax: 859.323.1031; E-mail: laurie.thomas@uky.edu