



Woodlot Boundary Line Marking

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One of the most common recommendations foresters make to forest landowners has little to do with the management of their trees. Although most landowners generally know where their boundary lines are and some may even have accurate survey maps, few have their lines marked very well on the ground. “I’ve got a good survey map, so what’s the big deal?” you say.

Clearly marked boundaries are the best evidence that you know where your lines are. They minimize the risk of problems, such as timber trespass, caused by others making inaccurate assumptions about your boundaries. They also help you avoid trespassing on your neighbors’ land when you cut trees or build roads and trails.

Colored plastic ribbon or “flagging” is often used to mark the location of boundary lines. It is suitable only for temporary use and should be followed by more permanent blazing and/ or painting trees along or near the line. You can do this yourself, *but first be certain of the exact location of the line*. Seek professional surveying advice if you have any doubts. General guidelines for blazing and painting include:

- (1) Consult with your abutters and obtain their permission to blaze and paint individual trees on their side of the line.
- (2) Make the blaze with an axe at 4 to 5 feet above the ground, removing only enough bark and outer wood to make it visible (5-6” long and 3-4” wide), and make one or two final cuts so as to leave a chip of wood firmly attached but sticking part-way out from the trunk. Do not blaze over old blazes. Leave them as supporting evidence of the original location of the line. For best results, allow the blazed surface to dry before painting.
- (3) Paint both the blazed surface and the surrounding 1-2” of bark. This will allow the uncut, painted surface to remain visible later, if the blazed mark becomes covered with callous tissue as the tree grows. Repaint only the outer edge of old blazes to make them more visible. Use a bright (fluorescent blue, red, or orange seem to work best) durable brush-on paint, such as a marine-enamel or a polyurethane-based paint. Some hardware supply stores and mail order companies sell paint especially made for marking boundary lines.
- (4) Blaze the side(s) of the tree facing the line (see diagram).
- (5) Use two **fair spots** when the line goes through the center of a tree (one spot where the line goes “into” the tree and another, on the opposite side of the trunk, where the line “comes out of” the tree). Two **quarter spots** can be made on a tree which the line just “grazes,” or goes through the edge but not the center of the trunk, with the diagonally-placed spots facing the line. One **face spot** is used on a tree which the line goes by but does not touch. Avoid marking any trees that are farther than three feet from the line.
- (6) Mark trees close enough so that from any mark you can see the next mark in either direction.

- (7) Property boundary corners or corner monuments should be identified by three **witness** trees. These are differentiated from **line** trees by blazing and painting three face spots in a vertical row, facing the corner, on each of the three trees. Otherwise, follow the same guidelines as for blazing and painting line trees.

Land surveyors and foresters can help you with your boundaries. Land surveyors must be licensed by the State of New Hampshire. They are specialists in the technique of measuring land, recognition of field evidence, and the relevant law for the surveying of real property. They draw maps, write property descriptions, and establish and mark boundaries of properties as they exist and also have the ability to subdivide properties according to the landowner's intent. More information is available from the NH Land Surveyors Board: <http://www.state.nh.us/jtboard/ls.htm> or 57 Regional Drive, Concord, NH 03301.

Foresters are allowed to re-mark known boundary lines in order to carry out forest management. They can also research deeds and help determine if a survey is required. Only licensed land surveyors are allowed to establish boundaries common to another owner when the corners or lines aren't known (RSA 310-A: 74). Anyone offering forestry services for compensation to private landowners in New Hampshire must be licensed by the state. More information is available from the NH Board of Foresters: <http://www.state.nh.us/jtboard/fr.htm> or 57 Regional Drive, Concord NH, 03301.

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