

How to Locate a Parcel of State Land

If you are interested in applying for a parcel of state land, you are strongly encouraged to first review all the information and then personally inspect the land before filing an application. The land chosen by an applicant is taken as is with no guarantees, expressed or implied, as to its suitability for any intended use.

The State of Alaska offers land for sale at fair market value and includes parcels of land that have all been previously surveyed. To accurately determine the location of the parcel on the ground you will have to locate one or more of the survey monuments for the parcel. Survey monuments look like this:



The survey monuments define the corners of each surveyed lot (often, a lot corner may have only a piece of rebar with an aluminum cap instead of a monument -- the survey plat should tell you this). The monuments are usually very close to the ground, and in many instances are overgrown and obscured. Some monuments may actually be out of the ground due to frost heaving and the playful pulling of bears.

A good way to get oriented is by using a USGS map for your area of interest (at a scale of 1:63,360). These maps contain physical features such as hills, lakes, and rivers that may help you find your way around. USGS maps are available from the Earth Science Information Center on the Alaska Pacific University campus at 4210 University Drive, Room 208, Anchorage, Alaska, 99508-4664 (phone: (907) 786-7011 or toll free within Alaska 888-275-8747). In Fairbanks, University of Alaska Fairbanks, 903 Koyukuk Drive (PO Box 757320), Fairbanks, AK 99775-7320, (phone: 907-474-6960 Fax 907-474-2645). Some private businesses may also carry USGS maps in your area. To find the correct reference for the USGS map(s) of your area, look under the vicinity map on the upper right corner of the state survey plat.

A copy of the survey plat for the parcel or subdivision may be purchased from DNR information offices for \$2.00 per sheet or found online at plats.landrecords.info

The survey number and the Meridian, Township, Range and Section(s), which area listed on the staking area map or in the parcel table under "MTRS", will be used to locate the parcel. The survey plat will show locations and types of monuments at each lot corner, distances along lot lines, and the general configuration of the subdivision. The survey plat will also show if there is a bearing tree for the monument. The easiest way to find a monument is to find a bearing tree. Bearing trees usually have a 4.5"x 6" yellow bearing tree tag (similar to the one pictured) that lists the bearing and distance to the monument.



Note: Don't forget to account for magnetic declination when getting your bearings! Magnetic declinations are dynamic. To determine your current magnetic declination, you can go to www.ngdc.noaa.gov/geomagmodels/Declination.jsp.

Review all the available information on the parcel. The appraisal report (available from DNR information offices) will be especially helpful, as it may have pictures of the parcel and surrounding area. Try to pick out some distinctive features in the pictures that could help you locate the lot on the ground (a uniquely shaped tree, for example).

Get a copy of the land status plat that shows the parcel. The status plat (available from DNR information offices for \$2.00 per sheet or online at dnr.alaska.gov) will show which lots in the subdivision or area have been disposed of previously, and may help you figure out which lots in the area have people living on them. You may try asking people living in the area what their lot and block numbers are. This will help orient you.

Take a compass and measuring tape to help orient yourself and measure distances along lot lines. Look for brushed and cleared lines. These may be the lot lines for the parcel you are looking for. Also look for the surveyor's tape and wooden stakes -- sometimes these were used to mark the locations of the monuments. Also, a metal detector is a very useful tool in locating monuments.

If you use a Global Positioning System (GPS) device, you may find Alaska Mapper (a web-based geographic information system available on the DNR website or online at mapper.landrecords.info) useful for information on the latitude and longitude of the parcel. The parcel can be located on the land estate map in Alaska Mapper by using the Go To Area of Interest tool and entering either the ADL number of the parcel or the MTRS location. The query by point tool can then be used to obtain the approximate coordinates of the corners. You may choose to have the coordinates displayed in decimal degrees or degrees, minutes, seconds. The GPS may not be exact, and may only be accurate to within 10 meters. The Public Information Centers also have latitude and longitude information available for the northeast corner of each section and are a good source of information and assistance.

Once you find a monument, compare the markings on the top of the cap with the survey plat. This will let you know which corner you are at. Compare the survey ASLS number with the status plat to determine which survey you are at. If you are unable to tell what corner the monument is supposed to be for, write down the exact markings from the cap and talk with a surveyor.

If you still cannot locate the monuments, please let us know. Contact one of the DNR Public Information Centers listed below and also on page 3.