



Survey Committee Meeting

October 15, 2025 | 11:15 a.m.

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In person:

Washinton State University

Sloan Hall, Room 146

405 NE Spokane St

Pullman, WA 99163

Committee: Matt Rasmussen, PE, PLS, Chair
David Peden, PE, SE
Jon Warren, PLS

Support staff: Ken Fuller, PE, Director
Kristina Horton, PLS, Deputy Director
Shanan Gillespie, Regulatory Program Manager
Mackenzie Wherrett, Executive Assistant
Bryce Dickison, Administrative Assistant
Vonna Cramer, Licensing Lead
Kevin Ballard, Internal Control Manager

Discussion topics

- DNR Rule Change on Legal Descriptions
- New PLSS NCEES Exam Impact

Action Items

- None at this time

AGO Opinion 1974 No. 61 - Legal Descriptions on ROS

WAC 332-130-050 - Updates 3/1/25

LEGAL DESCRIPTION REQUIRED FOR RECORDS OF SURVEY

AGLO 1974 No. 61 - Jun 28 1974

Attorney.General.Slade.Gorton

ENGINEERING AND LAND SURVEYING -- LEGAL DESCRIPTION REQUIRED FOR RECORDS OF SURVEY

The legal description for real property required by RCW 58.09.060 to be included in records of survey for land surveyors is simply that description of a tract of real property which is sufficient to meet the requirements of a valid deed of conveyance.

June 28, 1974

Honorable James E. Carty
Prosecuting Attorney
301 County Court House
Vancouver, Washington 98660

Cite as: AGLO 1974 No. 61

Dear Sir:

By recent letter you have requested our opinion regarding the meaning of the term "legal description" as it appears in RCW 58.09.060 with respect to the contents of records of survey of real property. We respond to this inquiry in the manner set forth below.

ANALYSIS

By its enactment of chapter 50, Laws of 1973, now codified as chapter 58.09 RCW, the legislature provided,

" . . . a method for preserving evidence of land surveys by establishing standards and procedures for monumenting and for recording a public record of the surveys. . . ."1/

RCW 58.09.040, codifying § 4 of this act, provides for the filing of records of survey by land surveyors " . . . with the county auditor in the county or counties wherein the lands surveyed are situated," and RCW 58.09.060, codifying § 6 of the act, details the requisite contents of those survey records. With emphasis on the portion of this statute to which you have called our attention, RCW 58.09.060 reads as follows:

"(1) The record of survey as required by RCW 58.09.040(1) shall show:

"(a) All monuments found, set, reset, replaced, or removed, describing their kind, size, and location and giving other data relating thereto;

"(b) Bearing trees, corner accessories or witness monuments, basis of bearings, bearing [[Orig. Op. Page 2]] and length of lines, scale of map, and north arrow;

"(c) Name and legal description of tract in which the survey is located and ties to adjoining surveys of record;

"(d) Certificates required by RCW 58.09.080;

"(e) Any other data necessary for the intelligent interpretation of the various items and locations of the points, lines and areas shown.

"(2) The record of corner information as required by RCW 58.09.040(2) shall be on a standard form showing:

"(a) An accurate description and location, in reference to the corner position, of all monuments and accessories found at the corner;

"(b) An accurate description and location, in reference to the corner position, of all monuments and accessories placed or replaced at the corner;

"(c) Basis of bearings used to describe or locate such monuments or accessories;

"(d) Corollary information that may be helpful to relocate or identify the corner position;

"(e) Certificate required by RCW 58.09.080." (Emphasis supplied.)

In your letter you have addressed yourself to the above-underscored portion of this statute and said:

"The question is regarding the definition of 'legal description' in this section and the intent thereof. Some land surveyors believe it means only the general description such as would appear in the title block of a subdivision plat, i.e. 'Portion of D.L.C. in the , 1/4 of the 1/4 of Section T. R. W.M.' Others feel it means a reference to a recorded deed, with recording information shown. Still others feel that it means a complete written [[Orig. Op. Page 3]] description on the face of the survey plat. Up to this time very few of the survey plats presented for record have a complete written description on them, which raises the question as to whether they are in compliance with the act."

Since the term "legal description" is not specially defined in the act, its meaning is thus to be ascertained in accordance with the well-established principle that in the absence of anything in context to the contrary, words in a statute are to be taken as understood in their ordinary and popular sense. See, e.g., *Featherstone v. Dessert*, 173 Wash. 264, 22 P.2d 1050 (1933), and cases cited therein. Applying this rule, we reject a reading of this particular statute which would include any such specialized or technical meanings of this term as are alternatively above referred to in your letter. Instead, we conclude that the "legal description" required by the statute is simply that description of a

tract of real property which is sufficient to meet the requirements of a valid deed of conveyance under the long-standing provisions of RCW 64.04.010; i.e.,

" . . . a description of land sufficiently definite to locate it without recourse to oral testimony, . . ."2/

It is hoped that the foregoing will be of some assistance to you.

Very truly yours,
SLADE GORTON
Attorney General

PHILIP H. AUSTIN
Deputy Attorney General

*** FOOTNOTES ***

1/RCW 58.09.010, codifying § 1, chapter 50, supra.

2/See, *Bigelow v. Mood*, 56 Wn.2d 340, 341, 353 P.2d 429 (1960), and cases cited therein.

WSR 25-04-014
PERMANENT RULES
DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

[Filed January 23, 2025, 3:50 p.m., effective March 1, 2025]

Effective Date of Rule: March 1, 2025.

Purpose: Revision to update the current auditors' checklist for land survey maps to provide for clear and concise requirements without ambiguity. Proposed revisions were developed by the department of natural resources with cooperation and input from Washington Association of County Auditors.

Citation of Rules Affected by this Order: [New WAC 332-130-055]; and amending WAC 332-130-050.

Statutory Authority for Adoption: RCW [58.09.110](#) Duties of county auditor.

Adopted under notice filed as WSR 24-23-001 on November 6, 2024.

Changes Other than Editing from Proposed to Adopted Version: WAC 332-130-050 (4)(c) has the minimum line width as 0.01. That was a typing mistake in rounding up the current 0.008. That whole section was eliminated since it repeats language in WAC 332-130-050 (1)(B)(d)(ii) [(1)(c)(iii)].

Number of Sections Adopted in Order to Comply with Federal Statute: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; Federal Rules or Standards: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; or Recently Enacted State Statutes: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted at the Request of a Nongovernmental Entity: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted on the Agency's own Initiative: New 0, Amended 1, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted in Order to Clarify, Streamline, or Reform Agency Procedures: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted using Negotiated Rule Making: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; Pilot Rule Making: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; or Other Alternative Rule Making: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Date Adopted: January 22, 2025.

Michael Kearney
Acting for Todd Welker
Deputy Supervisor

OTS-5927.3

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 22-04-049, filed 1/27/22, effective 2/27/22)

WAC 332-130-050 Survey map requirements.

The following requirements apply to ~~((land boundary))~~ survey maps and plans ~~((, records of surveys, plats, short plats, boundary line adjustments, and binding site plans))~~ required by law to be filed or recorded with the county.

(1) All such documents filed or recorded ~~((shall))~~ must conform to the following:

(a) They ~~((shall))~~ must display ~~((a county recording official's))~~ information blocks which ~~((shall))~~ must be located along the bottom or right edge of the document unless there is a local requirement specifying this information to be displayed in a different format. The ~~((county recording official's))~~ required information blocks ~~((shall contain))~~ must include:

(i) The title block, which ~~((shall))~~ must be on all sheets of maps, plats or plans, and ~~((shall))~~ must identify the business name, phone number, and address of the firm and/or land surveyor that performed the survey. For documents not requiring the surveyor's certificate required by RCW [58.09.080](#), the title block ~~((shall))~~ must show the firm name, phone number, and business address of the preparer and the date prepared. Every sheet of multiple sheets ~~((shall))~~ must have a sheet identification number, such as "sheet 1 of 5";

(ii) The auditor's certificate, where applicable, which ~~((shall))~~ must be on the first sheet of multiple sheets; however, the county recording official ~~((shall))~~ must enter the appropriate ~~((volume))~~ book and page and/or the ~~((auditor's))~~ county recording official's file number on each sheet of multiple sheets;

(iii) The surveyor's certificate, where applicable, which (~~shall~~)must be on the first sheet of multiple sheets and (~~shall~~)must show the name, license number, signed seal of the land surveyor who had responsible charge of the survey portrayed, and the date the land surveyor approved the map or plat. Every sheet of multiple sheets (~~shall~~)must have the signed seal of the land surveyor and the date signed;

(iv) The following indexing information must be written out, either full text or abbreviated, on the first sheet of multiple sheets:

(A) The section-township-range and quarter-quarter(s) of the section in which the surveyed parcel lies, except that if the parcel lies in a portion of the section officially identified by terminology other than aliquot parts, such as government lot, donation land claim, homestead entry survey, townsite, tract, and Indian or military reservation, then also identify that official subdivisional tract and call out the corresponding approximate quarter-quarter(s) based on projections of the aliquot parts. Where the section is incapable of being described by projected aliquot parts, such as the Port Angeles townsite, or elongated sections with excess tiers of government lots, then it is acceptable to provide only the official GLO designation;

(B) Additionally, if appropriate, the lot(s) and block(s) and the name and/or number of the filed or recorded subdivision plat or short plat with the related recording data;

(b) They (~~shall~~)must contain:

(i) A north arrow;

(ii) The vertical datum when topography or elevations are shown;

(iii) The basis for bearings, angle relationships or azimuths shown. The description of the directional reference system, along with the method and location of obtaining it, (~~shall~~)must be clearly given (such as "North by Polaris observation at the SE corner of section 6"; "Grid north from azimuth mark at station Kellogg"; "North by compass using twenty-one degrees variation"; "None"; or "Assumed bearing based on..."). If the basis of direction differs from record title, that difference should be noted;

(iv) Bearings, angles, or azimuths in degrees, minutes and seconds;

(v) Distances in feet and decimals of feet;

(vi) Curve data showing the controlling elements(~~(-)~~);

(vii) A legend containing line types and symbols that are not otherwise identified by notations;

(c) They (~~shall~~)must show the scale for all portions of the map, plat, or plan provided that details not drawn to scale (~~shall~~)must be so identified. A graphic scale for the main body of the drawing, shown in feet, (~~shall~~)must be included. The scale of the main body of the drawing and any enlargement detail (~~shall~~)must be large enough to clearly portray all of the drafting detail, both on the original and reproductions;

(d) The document filed or recorded and all copies required to be submitted with the filed or recorded document (~~shall~~)must, for legibility purposes:

(i) Have a uniform contrast suitable for scanning or microfilming;

(ii) Be without any form of cross-hatching, shading, or any other highlighting technique that to any degree diminishes the legibility of the drafting detail or text;

(iii) Contain dimensioning and lettering no smaller than 0.08 inches, vertically, and line widths not less than (~~(0.008)~~)0.01 inches (equivalent to pen tip 000). This provision does not apply to vicinity maps, land surveyors' seals and (~~(certificates)~~)logos.

(e) They (~~shall~~)must not have any adhesive material affixed to the surface;

(f) For the intelligent interpretation of the various items shown, including the location of points, lines and areas, they (~~shall~~)must:

(i) Reference record survey documents that identify different corner positions;

(ii) Show deed calls that are at variance with the measured distances and directions of the surveyed parcel;

(iii) Identify all corners used to control the survey whether they were calculated from a previous survey of record or found, established, or reestablished;

(iv) Give the physical description of any monuments shown, found, established or reestablished, including type, size, and date visited;

(v) Show the record land description of the parcel or boundary surveyed (~~(or)~~)with a reference to (~~(an)~~)the instrument of record;

(vi) Identify any ambiguities, hiatuses, and/or overlapping boundaries;

(vii) Give the location and identification of any visible physical appurtenances such as fences or structures which may indicate encroachment, lines of possession, or conflict of title.

(2) All signatures and writing (~~((shall))~~must be made with permanent black ink or ink capable of being imaged.

(3) The following criteria (~~((shall))~~must be adhered to when altering, amending, changing, or correcting survey information on previously filed or recorded maps(~~(, plats, or plans))~~):

(a) Such maps(~~(, plats, or plans))~~ filed or recorded (~~((shall))~~must comply with the applicable local requirements and/or the recording statute under which the original map(~~(, plat, or plan))~~ was filed or recorded;

(b) Alterations, amendments, changes, or corrections to a previously filed or recorded map(~~(, plat, or plan))~~ ~~((shall))~~must only be made by filing or recording a new map(~~(, plat, or plan))~~;

(c) All such maps(~~(, plats, or plans))~~ filed or recorded (~~((shall))~~must contain the following information:

(i) A title or heading identifying the map(~~(, plat, or plan))~~ as an alteration, amendment, change, or correction to a previously filed or recorded map(~~(, plat, or plan))~~ along with, when applicable, a cross-reference to the (~~((volume))~~book and page (~~((and auditor's))~~and/or county recording official's file number of the (~~(altered map, plat, or plan))~~original map;

(ii) Indexing data as required by subsection (1)(a)(iv) of this section;

(iii) A prominent note itemizing the change(s) to the original map(~~(, plat, or plan))~~. Each item (~~((shall))~~must explicitly state what the change is and where the change is located on the original;

(d) The county recording official (~~((shall))~~must file, index, and cross-reference all such maps(~~(, plats, or plans))~~ received in a manner sufficient to provide adequate notice of the existence of the new map(~~(, plat, or plan))~~ to anyone researching the county records for survey information;

(e) The county recording official (~~((shall))~~must send to the department of natural resources, as per RCW [58.09.050](#)(3), a legible (~~((copy))~~image of any map(~~(, plat, or plan))~~ filed or recorded which alters, amends, changes, or corrects survey information on any map(~~(, plat, or plan))~~ that has been previously filed or recorded pursuant to the Survey Recording Act.

(4) Survey maps(~~(, plats and plans))~~ filed with the county (~~((shall))~~must be an original that is legibly drawn in black ink and is suitable for producing legible prints through scanning, microfilming or other standard copying procedures. The following are allowable formats for the original that may be used in lieu of the format stipulated above:

(a) Any standard material as long as the format is compatible with the auditor's recording process and records storage system. Provided, that records of survey filed pursuant to chapter [58.09](#) RCW are subject to the restrictions stipulated in RCW [58.09.110](#)(5);

(b) An electronic version of the original if the county has the capability to accept a digital signature issued by a licensed certification authority under chapter [19.34](#) RCW or a certification authority under the rules adopted by the Washington state board of registration for professional engineers and land surveyors, and can import electronic files into an imaging system. The electronic version (~~((shall))~~must be a standard raster file format acceptable to the county(~~(-)~~);

~~((5) The following checklist is the only checklist that may be used to determine the recordability of records of survey filed pursuant to chapter [58.09](#) RCW. There are other requirements to meet legal standards. This checklist also applies to maps filed pursuant to the other survey map recording statutes, but for these maps there may be additional sources for determining recordability.~~

CHECKLIST FOR SURVEY MAPS BEING RECORDED
(Adopted in WAC 332-130)

~~The following checklist applies to land boundary survey maps and plans, records of surveys, plats, short plats, boundary line adjustments, and binding site plans required by law to be filed or recorded with the county. There are other requirements to meet legal standards. Records of survey filed pursuant to chapter [58.09](#) RCW, that comply with this checklist, shall be recorded; no other checklist is authorized for determining their recordability.~~

ACCEPTABLE MEDIA:

- ~~• Acceptable media are:~~
 - ~~[] Any standard material compatible with county processes, or, an electronic version of the original.~~
- ~~• [] All signatures must be made with black ink.~~
- ~~• [] The media submitted for filing must not have any material on it that is affixed by adhesive.~~

LEGIBILITY:

- ~~• [] The documents submitted, including paper copies, must have a uniform contrast throughout the document.~~

- ~~[] The documents submitted must be legible and reproducible by the auditor's recording system regardless of media used for recording.~~
- ~~[] No information, on either the original or the copies, should be obscured or illegible due to cross-hatching, shading, or as a result of poor drafting technique such as lines drawn through text or improper pen size selection (letters or number filled in such that 3's, 6's or 8's are indistinguishable).~~
- ~~[] Signatures, date, and seals must be legible on the prints or the party placing the seal must be otherwise identified.~~
- ~~[] Text must be 0.08 inches or larger; line widths shall not be less than 0.008 inches (vicinity maps, land surveyor's seals and certificates are excluded).~~

INDEXING:

- ~~[] The recording officer's information block must be on the bottom or right edge of the map.~~
- ~~[] A title block (shows the name of the preparer and is on each sheet of multiple sheets).~~
- ~~[] An auditor's certificate (on the first sheet of multiple sheets, although Vol./Pg. and/or AF# must be entered by the recording officer on each sheet).~~
- ~~[] A surveyor's certificate (on the first sheet of multiple sheets; seal, date, and signature on multiple sheets).~~
- ~~The map filed must provide the following indexing data:~~
 - ~~[] S-T-R and the quarter-quarter(s) or approximate quarter-quarter(s) of the section in which the surveyed parcel lies.~~

MISCELLANEOUS:

- ~~If the function of the document submitted is to change a previously filed record, it must also have:~~
 - ~~[] A title identifying it as a correction, amendment, alteration or change to a previously filed record.~~
 - ~~[] A note itemizing the changes.~~
- ~~For records of survey:~~
 - ~~[] The sheet size must be 18" x 24".~~
 - ~~[] The margins must be 2" on the left and 1/2" for the others, when viewed in landscape orientation.~~
 - ~~[] In addition to the map being filed there must be two prints included in the submittal; except that, in counties using imaging systems fewer prints, as determined by the auditor, may be allowed.))~~

NEW SECTION

WAC 332-130-055 County recording official's checklist.

The following checklist is the only checklist that may be used to determine the recordability of records of survey filed pursuant to chapter [58.09](#) RCW. There may be additional requirements for other maps to meet legal standards. This checklist also applies to maps filed pursuant to the other survey map recording statutes, but for these maps there may be additional sources for determining recordability.

No other checklist is authorized for determining their recordability.

Recording Map Checklist (chapter 332-130 WAC)

Acceptable media:

Acceptable media are:

- Any standard material compatible with county processes; or electronic version of the original.
- All signatures must be made with black ink or ink capable of being imaged.
- The media submitted for filing must not have any material on it that is affixed by adhesive.

Legibility:

All maps must meet the following requirements:

- Uniform contrast throughout the document.
- Symbols and line types that appear to be illegible must be identified in a legend at a drawing scale.
- Fully reproducible by the auditor's recording system regardless of the media used for recording.
- Legible signatures, date, and seals. If seals are not legible, they must be otherwise clarified.
- Text 0.08 inches or larger (vicinity maps, land surveyors' seals; and certificates are excluded).

Indexing:

Maps must include:

- The county recording official's information block must be on the bottom or right edge of the map and must include a space for a recording date, official and deputy official signature, book and page and/or county recording official's file number.

- A title block (shows the name of the preparer, phone number and address, and is on each sheet of multiple sheets).
- Surveyor's certificate must be on the first page, if multiple sheets; seal, date, and signature on each additional sheet.
- The map must provide the following indexing data: Section, township, range and the quarter-quarter(s) or approximate quarter-quarter(s) of the section in which the surveyed parcel lies in written format. A graphical representation may also be used but not in lieu thereof.

Miscellaneous:

If the function of the document submitted is to change a previously filed record, it must also have:

- A title identifying it as a correction, amendment, alteration, or change to a previously filed record.
- A note itemizing the changes.
- Reference number to original recording.

For all maps:

- The sheet must be 18" × 24" unless otherwise designated by the recording official's county code.
- The margins must be 2 inches on the left and 1/2 inch for the others when viewed in landscape orientation.

• In addition to the map being filed there must be two prints included in the submittal; except that, in counties using imaging systems, then fewer prints, as determined by the county recording official, may be allowed.