



# Wisconsin State Cartographer's Office



Your resource for mapping and geographic information in the state of Wisconsin

January 2009

## PLSSFinder

Online Public Land Survey System information ————— [www.sco.wisc.edu/plss/help.php](http://www.sco.wisc.edu/plss/help.php)

PLSSFinder is a free, Internet-accessible catalog designed to help users locate current information about Public Land Survey System (PLSS) corners in Wisconsin. PLSS corner information accessible through this application comes directly from county contributors. Some information is stored in the application, while other information is available via direct links to information maintained by the county on their Web site.

### Delivering PLSS information

Our office has been involved in cataloging and reporting section corner remonumentation status since 1975 through various publications.

In our continuing effort to make this information more accessible as a central point of access, we released PLSSFinder in the fall of 2007.

### What's inside?

To date, we host records of corner information for 17 Wisconsin counties (see illustration). Corners are shown in a common view so that users can visually navigate, locate and identify them.

Furthermore, as an additional service, we've recently introduced map-based status and links from the initial statewide view to other local Web sites (currently eight counties) where PLSS information may be found, providing a common entry point for PLSS corner information in Wisconsin.

For records within PLSSFinder, remonumented corners are displayed as solid-filled squares that include various attribute information such as name, coordinates, datums, metadata, and other pertinent characteristics for that corner.

When provided, records of non-remonumented corners are included (symbolized as a hollow square) and while they do not have updated coordinates, they often are linked to scanned historical tie sheets or records located at the county.



### Navigating

There are five ways to navigate the PLSSFinder state map, all of which may be used at any time:

- Draw a rectangle by selecting the Zoom Box under Tools
- Use the navigation buttons in the left pane
- Zoom to a county
- Use the directional pan buttons around the map
- Zoom by township and range

Another option is the ability to change the size of the PLSSFinder application window to better fit your screen size by selecting the links "Small, Medium, or Large" located toward the upper-right corner. By default, PLSSFinder opens in the "small" window size.

### Printing

At any time, you may print a PDF of the map image you are viewing by selecting the "Print Map" button located in the lower left corner of the map view. Also available is the ability to save your "identified" corners for exporting as a text file which can be imported into other software.

### Status

County PLSS information is updated regularly depending on the county's publishing schedule. Consult either the metadata or the date given in the "view full record" for the dataset inventory date.

Contributing PLSS corner information is easy. Simply give us your dataset in any of the following formats: shapefile (preferred), xls, csv, dbf, mdb, or txt.



*PLSS corner monuments and associated witness posts*



*Survey-grade GPS*

### **Protecting/reporting disturbance**

If a PLSS monument has been disturbed, report this immediately to the county ([surveyor](#)<sup>1</sup> or [land information office](#)<sup>2</sup>) or municipality (surveyor or engineer). Do not attempt to “repair” or “restore” any such damage as you may actually make matters worse.

### **PLSS in Wisconsin**

By Wisconsin State Statute, the county is custodian of the [Public Land Survey System](#).<sup>3</sup> Many counties in Wisconsin have been very active in their county corner restoration efforts to remonument and reference corner locations that were established during the original Public Land Survey.

### **Remonumentation**

As county PLSS remonumentation activity increases, more information is generated. Coordinates are established on the PLSS corners using a combination of conventional survey techniques and GPS technology meeting or exceeding the [FGDC geospatial positioning accuracy standards](#).<sup>4</sup> This information, if made readily accessible, is beneficial to users at the private, local, and state levels.

Geodetic and PLSS control is a vital component of surveying, mapping, and engineering projects and the development of geographic/land information systems.

Through the use of GPS, the location of the monuments can be tied together by angles and distances to the adjacent corners. This creates a geodetic framework so that each corner of the PLSS can be defined with individual coordinates and referenced to a geographic framework.

For more information on PLSSFinder visit:  
[www.sco.wisc.edu/plss/help.php](http://www.sco.wisc.edu/plss/help.php)

### **Web References**

1. Wisconsin County Surveyors  
[www.sco.wisc.edu/surveying/wi\\_county\\_surveyors.php](http://www.sco.wisc.edu/surveying/wi_county_surveyors.php)
2. Wisconsin Land Information Officers  
[www.wlion.org/lios.asp](http://www.wlion.org/lios.asp)

3. Public Land Survey System  
[www.sco.wisc.edu/plss/index.php](http://www.sco.wisc.edu/plss/index.php)
4. FGDC Geospatial Positioning Standards  
[www.fgdc.gov/standards/standards\\_publications/](http://www.fgdc.gov/standards/standards_publications/)



[www.sco.wisc.edu](http://www.sco.wisc.edu)

The State Cartographer's Office has been Wisconsin's source for information about maps and geographic data for over 30 years. Located in Science Hall on the UW-Madison campus, the SCO maintains a large and diverse Web site including an online newsletter, catalogs, calendar, contact lists, and background information on mapping topics. Our staff presents educational programs and workshops, and participates in a wide range of organizations.

State Cartographer's Office  
 550 N. Park Street  
 Rm. 384 Science Hall  
 Madison, WI 53706-1491  
 phone: (608) 262-3065  
 fax: (608) 262-5205