

**Forest Service Handbook  
National Headquarters - Washington Office  
Washington, DC**

**Forest Service Handbook 5609.11 – Boundary Management Handbook  
Chapter 60 - Boundary Line Marking and Maintenance**

**Amendment:** 5609.11-2020-1

**Effective date:** August 25, 2020

**Duration:** This amendment is effective until superseded or removed.

**Superseded Directive:**

**Approved by:** Tina Terrell, Associate Deputy Chief, NFS

**Date approved:** August 17, 2020

**Responsible Staff:**

**Explanation of changes:** Following is an explanation of the changes throughout the directive by section.

**60** - Establishes new chapter and sets forth codes, captions, and direction for Boundary Line Marking and Maintenance. Incorporates direction for maintenance of National Forest System boundary lines and property corners previously contained in FSM 7150. Removes direction contained in FSM 7150.

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## **60.2 - Objectives**

To survey, mark, post, and maintain legally defensible National Forest System property lines, special designated area boundary lines and to define the titled interests of the United States of America.

## **60.3 - Policy**

1. Each Forest must develop a boundary line and corner maintenance program that ensures boundary lines and corners are clearly marked, maintained, and visible to facilitate the accomplishment of land and resource management and restoration activities by the Forest Service and the adjoining land owners in order to protect National Forest System lands.
2. Prior to any land, resource, or restoration management activities occurring within one-quarter mile of any National Forest System boundary line, all property corners, property controlling corners, Public Land Survey System corners, property lines, and special designated area boundary lines must be surveyed, located, monumented, marked, and maintained to Forest Service standards.
3. Corners or boundary lines not surveyed, located, and established by an acceptable land survey, cadastral survey, or survey record by a State-licensed land surveyor shall not be maintained.
4. All boundary line maintenance and corner maintenance work by the Forest Service must be accomplished under the direction and guidance of a Forest Service State-licensed land surveyor. All work performed under contract shall be approved by a Forest Service State-licensed land surveyor.
5. The Record Boundary database shall be used by each Region to identify and inventory property and special designated area boundaries to be marked and maintained on each National Forest. Target accomplishments pertaining to marking and/or maintaining these boundaries must be documented and inventoried in the Record Boundary database each fiscal year.

## **60.4 - Responsibility**

### **60.41 - Regional Forester**

See FSM 5604.2 for Regional Forester responsibilities.

### **60.42 - Forest Supervisor**

See FSM 5604.3 for Forest Supervisor responsibilities.

## **60.43 - District Ranger**

See FSM 5604.4 for District Ranger responsibilities.

## **60.5 - Definitions**

Boundary Line Maintenance. The act of perpetuating and re-marking to Forest Service boundary line marking standards previously marked boundary lines determined by a Forest Service State-licensed land surveyor to be acceptable.

Corner Maintenance. The act of perpetuating and re-monumenting, as necessary, previously marked and monumented corners determined by a Forest Service State-licensed land surveyor to be acceptable.

## **61 – Boundary Line Marking and Maintenance**

### **61.1 - Standards**

#### **61.11 - Boundary Lines**

Maintain the visibility of boundary lines to class A, B, or C standards as specified in EM-7150-3, Land Surveying Guide. Class standards are determined by management needs, topography, vegetation, land allocations, management prescriptions, and in cooperation with the adjoining land owner.

Maintain condition inventory and accomplishment records showing the current conditions, and a history of the activities on the line.

#### **61.12 - Property Corners**

Maintain the visibility of property corners and property controlling corners to standards as specified in EM-7150-3, Land Surveying Guide. This guide is maintained on the Washington Office Regional Surveyor's SharePoint site.

Maintain condition inventory and accomplishment records showing the current conditions, and a history of the activities on the line.

### **61.2 - Activities**

#### **61.21 - Boundary Lines**

1. Clear brush as appropriate, and allowed by permission from the adjoining land owners, from the boundary line corridor to ensure boundary line visibility. The boundary line corridor is defined as being two feet each side of the boundary line.
2. Place appropriate property boundary signs on the corner guard post at the corner monument, and at inter-visible locations along the property boundary line.

3. Blaze boundary line witness trees as appropriate, and allowed by permission from the adjoining land owners, to Forest Service boundary line marking standards.
4. Paint boundary line witness tree blazes to Forest Service boundary line standards.
5. Verify survey records and measurements, as appropriate.
6. Collect repeatable and reliable geographic coordinates (Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS)) as necessary along the boundary line being maintained.
7. File and maintain of appropriate records and documents in the Forest Service database.

#### **61.22 - Property Corners**

1. Clear brush from the corner area to ensure visibility.
2. Place appropriate signs on a corner guard post near the corner monument, and on the corner references.
3. Blaze and scribe corner trees, corner posts, and corner reference trees as appropriate to Forest Service corner monumentation standards.
4. Paint corner monuments, stone mounds, corner guard posts, corner reference trees, and tree blazes to Forest Service standards.
5. Verify survey and corner perpetuation records and measurements.
6. Establish new corner references as necessary to meet Forest Service, State, and professional land survey standards of practice.
7. Replace existing corner monuments as necessary to ensure visibility and continued durability in good condition.
8. Collect repeatable and reliable geographic coordinates (GNSS) at corner positions.
9. File and maintain corner records and documents in the Forest Service database and local jurisdictional offices as required or allowed by State and local statutes and professional standards of practice.

#### **61.3 - Priorities**

The priority for marking and maintaining boundary lines and corners are:

1. Litigation is either pending or expected with a high degree of certainty. A valid title claim has been asserted, and requires that the boundary of National Forest System lands be determined.

2. The boundary is considered a “critical boundary,” recognizing that certain National Forest areas have imminent risk of encroachment, unauthorized use, or potential resource damage.
3. Encroachment, trespass, or unauthorized use and occupation on National Forest System lands is suspected, or encroachment by the Forest Service on an adjoining land owner is suspected.
4. The condition of title, or location of land that is about to be added to the National Forest System by purchase, exchange, or donation is vague or ambiguous, or the actual acreage is in doubt.
5. Forest Service or adjoining land owners are planning land and resource management activities, and significant cost efficiencies may be achieved through cooperative land survey agreements to correctly survey, locate, and mark the common property lines and property corners.
6. Urban interface and complex land ownership patterns are present and have significant impacts on resource management and restoration of National Forest System lands.
7. All remaining property lines and special designated area boundary lines.

## **62 –Trespass and Title Claims**

If an encroachment or unauthorized use and occupation are discovered during property line marking activities (see FSH 5509.11), check the status of the lands in question to verify the affected parcel is National Forest System land. Check with staff on the Forest to ensure there are no special uses or other uses authorized within the area. If record research reveals the United States of America has clear title, the suspected unauthorized use and occupation will be treated as an encroachment or trespass. A land survey must be completed with United States of America property corners and lines marked, a State-compliant land survey plat filed in the appropriate State or local jurisdictional offices, and supporting documentation prepared before the trespass case or unauthorized use and occupation can be processed by the Forest Service.

### **62.1 - Title Claims and Encroachment Management System**

All suspected and known title claims and encroachments on National Forest System lands must be entered into the Title Claims and Encroachment Management System. This National system automates the title claim and encroachment management process, offers training, provides a consistent method to track and report title claims and encroachments, and documents and monitors progress to resolution.

### **62.2 - Record Boundary Database**

The Record Boundary database shall be used by each region to identify and inventory property and special designated area boundaries to be marked and maintained on each National Forest. Target accomplishments pertaining to marking and/or maintaining these boundaries must be documented and inventoried in the Record Boundary database each fiscal year.