GUIDE to LEGAL DESCRIPTIONS

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY | EXTENSION
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This page is provided for optional use.

Using Cadastral to find and look at your property

Montana Cadastral is a program you can use to look at your property and see the surrounding area in photo or topography views.

- Go to https://svc.mt.gov/msl/cadastral/?page=Map
- In the SEARCH column, select "Owner."
- Fom the “County:” drop down list select the county in which your property resides.
- Enter the name on the tax records in the Owner Name box. (If you recently purchased your property this information may not be updated yet, you can also search by Geocode or address by selecting another option found at the bottom of the search bar)
- In the lower left you can select aerial or topo to see photography or topography.
- If you want a better view click the blue arrow on the upper right of the landowner information box to hide this information and broaden the usable screen. You can zoom in and out and move around to see the land around you by using the little wheel on your mouse or the + - buttons at the top right of the screen.

You will be drawing management units on the maps you received. For those who prefer, mapping can be done on a computer. There are free and for purchase mapping programs and apps available. Or, you can take screen shots save them into a word document or .jpeg and draw within word or a photo editing program. If you choose to do your mapping on a computer, don’t forget to save and print your maps so they don’t get lost. Also, keep in mind that you may have to produce your own scale. Following are instructions for some of the functions of Google Earth Pro.

Using Google Earth Pro to draw management units

Once you know where your property is, you can go to Google Maps, Google Earth, or Google Earth Pro and find your parcel location. Those programs might have better options and visuals. Some programs can be difficult to use if your internet connection and speed is less than optimum. The following contains instructions for using Google Earth Pro. Pay attention to the following sections: The Google Earth Pro Toolbar, Navigation, Drawing Paths and Polygons, and Making Sure you Save your Work Property.
https://serc.carleton.edu/sp/library/google_earth/UserGuide.html

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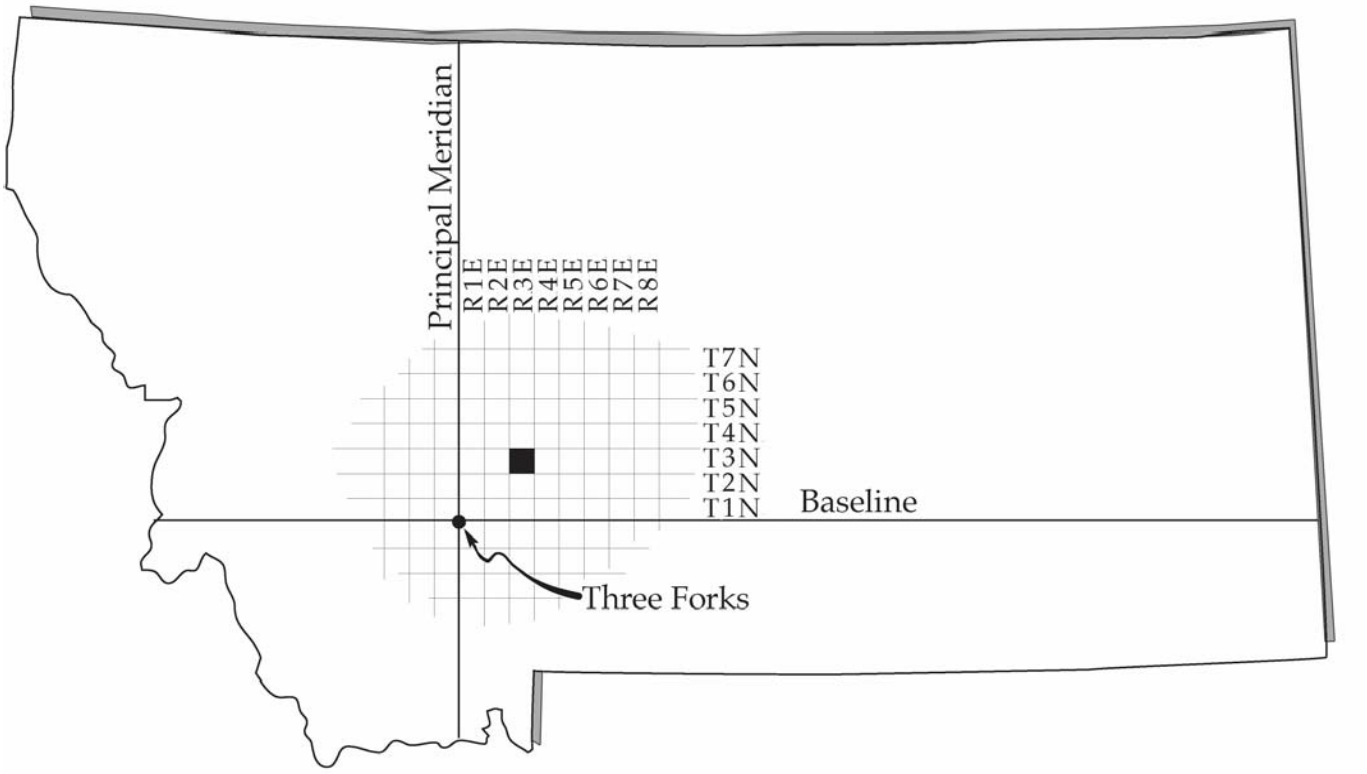
This is not essential but can be helpful. As we get closer to the workshop time consider using a free 7 day (limited use, more is available through purchase) trial of the onXhunt map https://www.onxmaps.com/ (There are other mapping apps and programs that available such as Gaia GPS, which have some of the same functions.)

The onXhunt app has private ownership information and boundary lines and can be used to draw stand or management units as well as measure areas and distances. Inventory plot locations can be stored. An area map can be downloaded for use when there is no cell service at your parcel and used to navigate and to see the photo and topography of the land.

How the SURVEY SYSTEM
Was Set Up in Montana

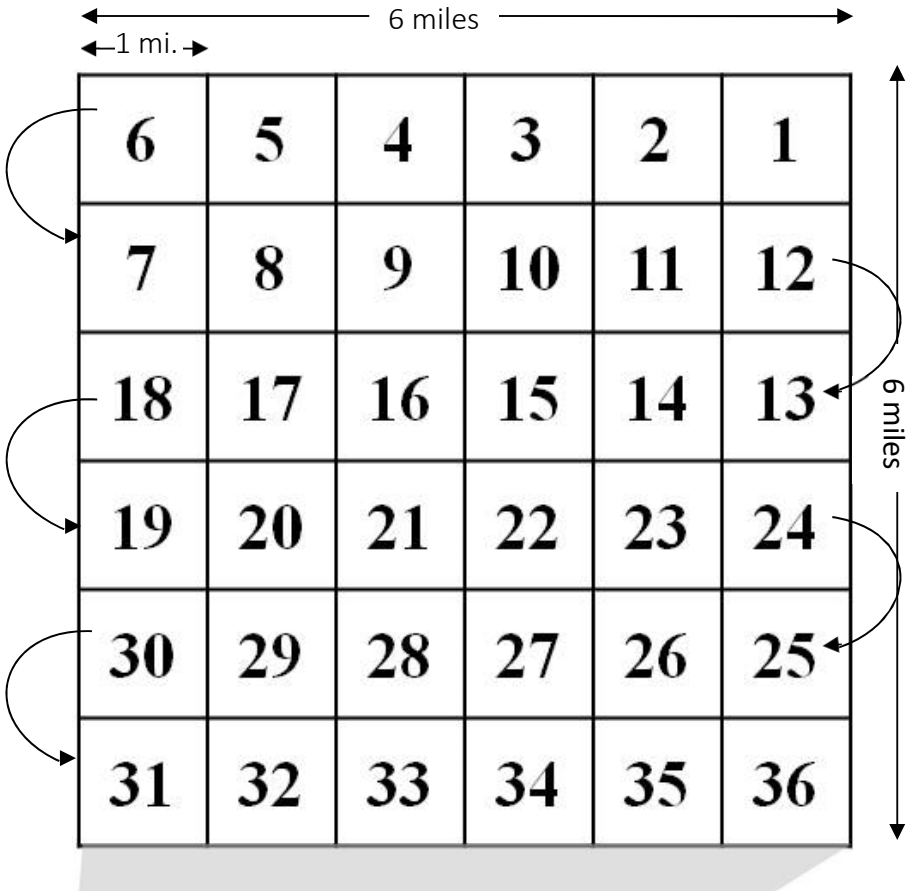


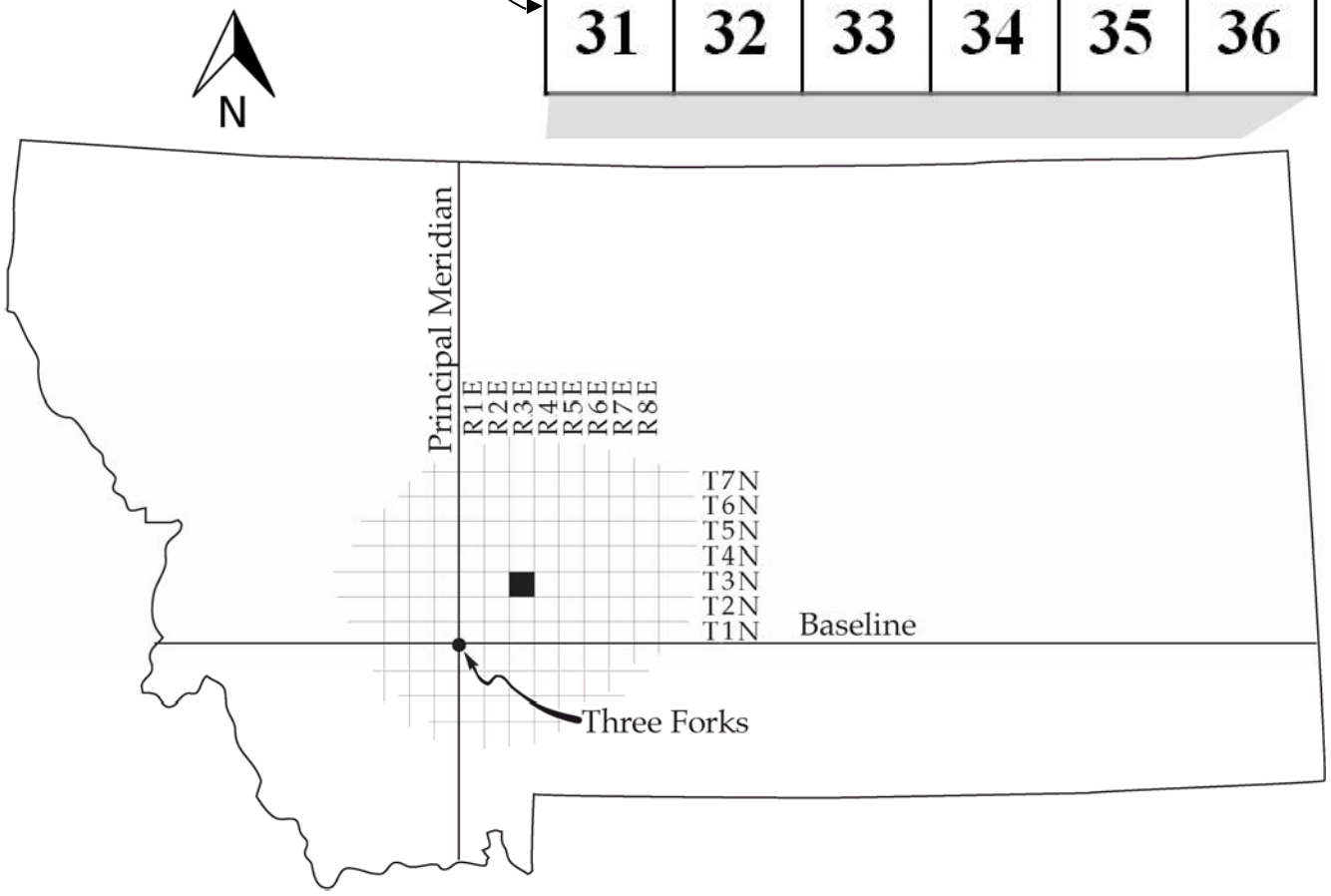
The Principal Meridian and Baseline were first established in 1867 at a point near Three Forks, Montana. Starting at Three Forks, surveyors established Montana's baseline and principal meridian by surveying north, south, east, and west. These lines serve as the base for referencing townships. Each township is six-miles square and contains 36 square miles of land area. Townships are assigned a description based on their location. For example, the shaded township is three townships north of the baseline and three townships east of the principal meridian. It is called Township 3 North, Range 3 East (T3N R3E).

The BREAKDOWN of a TOWNSHIP

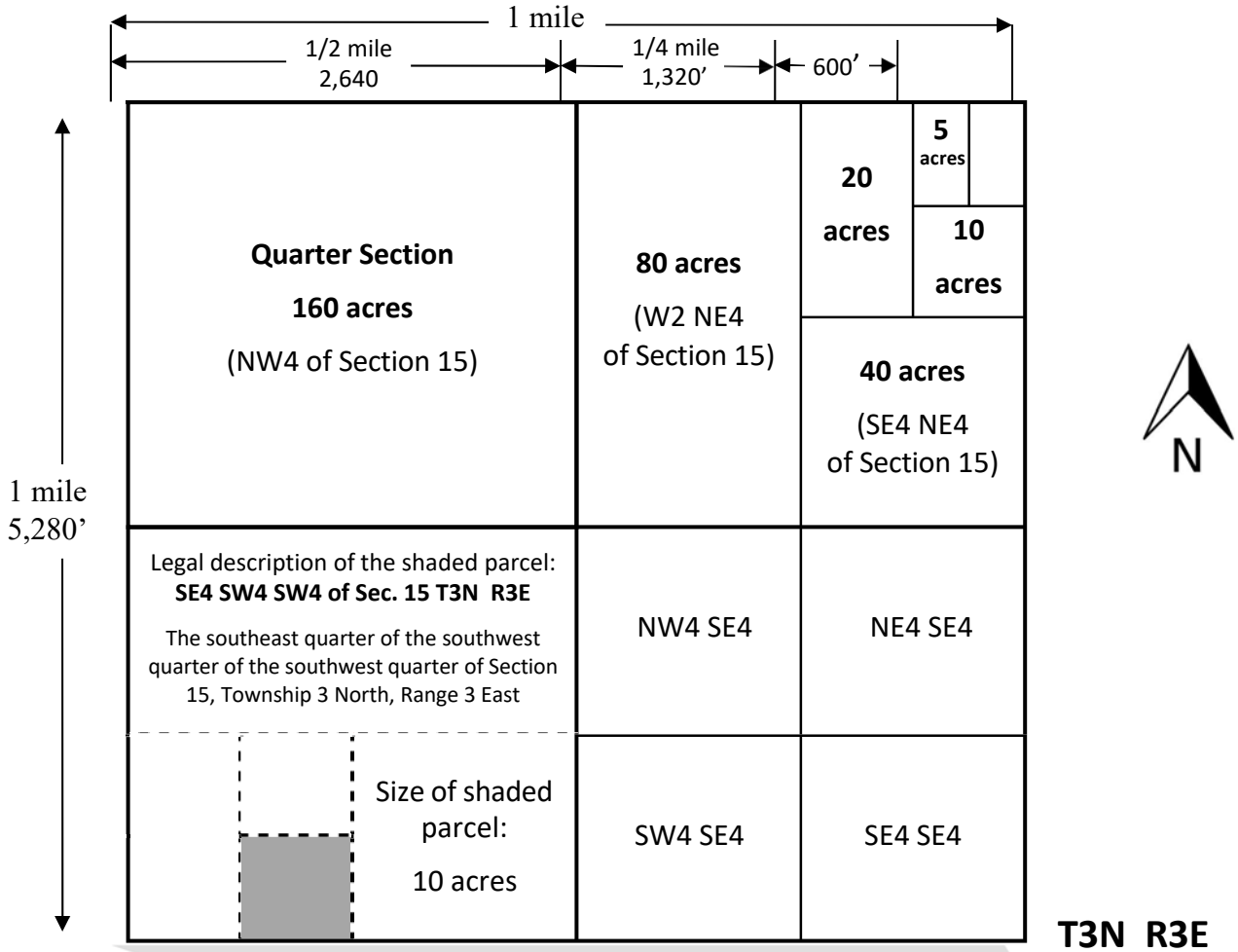
Township 3 North, Range 3 East (T3N R3E)

A township is 36-square miles in size. Each side is six miles in length. A township contains 36 sections. A section is 1-mile square. Note the order in which sections are numbered. Section 1 always begins at the northeast corner of the township.





A SECTION of LAND
Typical Breakdowns and Legal Descriptions



T3N R3E

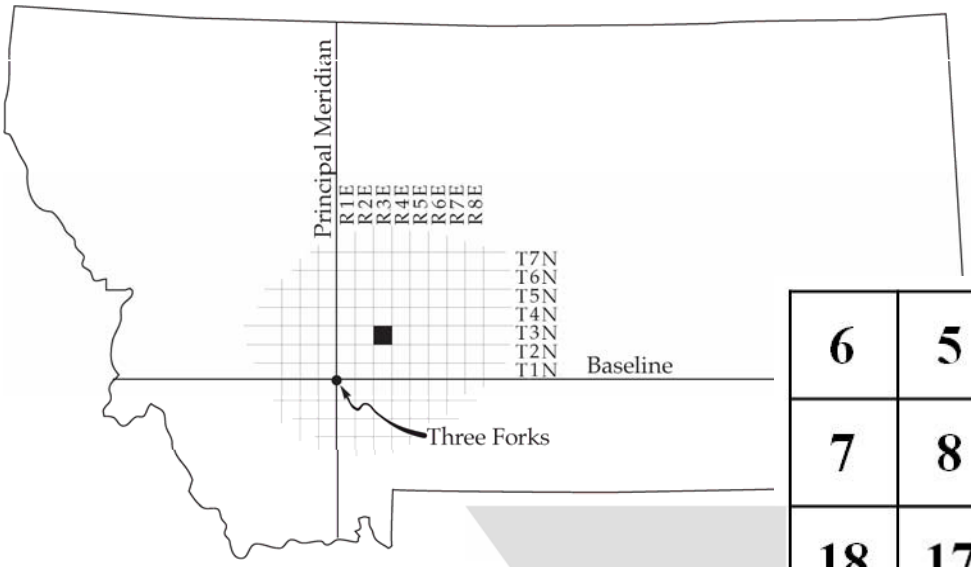
6	5	4	3	2	1
7	8	9	10	11	12
18	17	16	15	14	13
19	20	21	22	23	24
30	29	28	27	26	25
31	32	33	34	35	36

Each section in a township is one-mile square, containing 640 acres (typically). A section of land can be further divided into smaller parcels.

A legal description tells you where in the section a parcel is located and also the township and range in which the section is located.

The legal description can also help determine the acreage of the parcel.

The BIG PICTURE



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32	33	34	35	36	

Quarter Section **160 acres** (NW4 of Section 15)	**80 acres** (W2 NE4 of Section 15)	**20 acres**	**5 acres**
			10 acres
		40 acres (SE4 NE4 of Section 15)	
Legal description of the shaded parcel: **SE4 SW4 SW4 of Sec. 15 T3N R3E** The southeast quarter of the southwest quarter of the southwest quarter of Section 15, Township 3 North, Range 3 East	NW4 SE4	NE4 SE4	
Size of shaded parcel: 10 acres	SW4 SE4	SE4 SE4	

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