

Did You Know? Quarter/Quarter Indexing

Did you know the purpose of providing the quarter/quarter in written or graphic form on a record of survey is to allow the County Auditor's staff to correctly index the map for future access by surveyors and others?

WAC 332-130-050 (CHECKLIST FOR SURVEY MAPS BEING RECORDED) states (in part):

"...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,

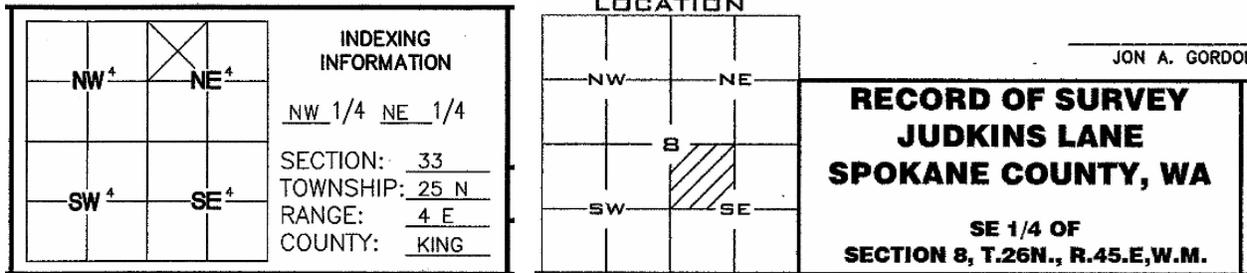
[] Optional: A graphic representation of the section divided into quarter-quarters may be used with the quarter-quarter(s) in which the surveyed parcel lies clearly marked; ..."

The wording of the WAC is clear. Putting only the section quarter on the map, and assuming that the Auditor's staff will conclude that means the survey occupies every quarter-quarter of that quarter section does not fulfill the requirement. Each quarter/quarter needs to be shown or called out on the map. For example in the section quarter case stated: NW1/4 of the SW1/4, NE1/4 of the SW1/4, SW1/4 of the SW1/4, and the SE1/4 of the SW1/4, all in Section 14, Township 10 North, Range 13 East, Willamette Meridian..." would be one correct method of description.

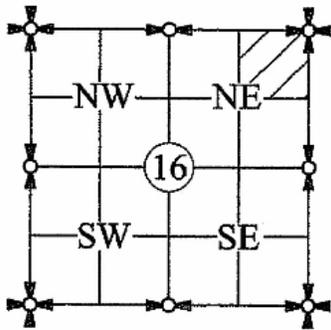
When a graphic representation of the section is used, the quarter-quarter must be "clearly marked" which means the indexing information can be easily and correctly understood by a person familiar with indexing but not necessarily familiar with land surveying. There are several ways to do this. Keep in mind that just putting an "x" in an unlabeled diagram of the section doesn't "clearly mark" the quarter/quarter for most Auditor's staff employees who typically are not conversant with the public land survey system and/or may only see a survey occasionally. If the quarter/quarter isn't "clearly marked" and unambiguous for these people who must index surveys, then the survey map is not "clearly marked" under the WAC.

An abbreviation of all the survey's quarter/quarters next to the diagram is effective at "clearly marking" the location, as is labeling the quarters and quarter/quarters in the diagram. It is also helpful to put the Section Township and Range next to the diagram so it is easily found while indexing, as opposed to having to search to find it somewhere else on the map. Labeling the diagram "Index Location", "Auditor's Indexing Information", or a similar notation will also assist the indexer.

Below are four examples taken from maps around the state that appear to meet the requirements of “clearly marked” that Auditor’s Offices have told us they can understand:

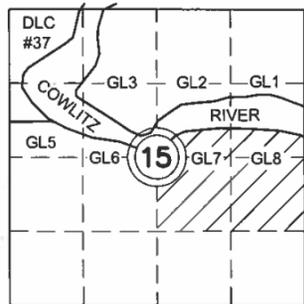


SECTION INDEX:
 S16, T17N, R30E, W.M.,
 GRANT COUNTY, WA



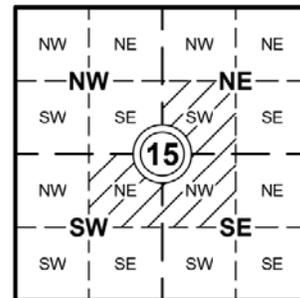
INDEX LOCATION

NE1/4 SE1/4, NW1/4 SE1/4,
 SW1/4 NE1/4, SE1/4 NE1/4
 S15, T9N, R2W, W.M.



INDEX LOCATION

SW1/4 NE1/4, NW1/4 SE1/4, & NE1/4 SW1/4
 S15, T18N, R20E, W.M.



The lower right diagram above is an easily understood and interpreted index graphic that is similar to the training materials previously supplied to Auditor staff by PLSO. Again, an abbreviated quarter/quarter label next to the diagram is strongly encouraged for clarity. The objective of the graphic is to eliminate the Auditor’s staff from having to interpret anything.

The point of putting the quarter/quarter on our maps is so that the Auditor’s staff employees can correctly put that information into their databases. Making it as easy as possible for the Auditor’s to find and utilize this information, without them having need to interpret anything, leading to potential mistakes, is in your best interest and saves time and money for everyone.

In addition to helping Auditor’s indexing staff, the Public Land Survey Office (PLSO) routinely finds improperly indexed maps where the surveyor indicated the wrong quarter/quarter on their map. Adding the abbreviated quarter/quarter next to the diagram also provides another check to assure it is shown correctly. Thousands of survey maps have been improperly indexed by surveyors in this state over the years, such that these maps are not STR locatable in the Counties where surveyed, let alone by Q/Q. Sometimes the PLSO catches these mistakes during its indexing, sometimes not. It is not the PLSO’s duty under the law to review surveys and plats for incomplete and/or inaccurate data, only to store and keep copies. It is up to surveyors to check this information to make sure it is correct prior to recording.

The Auditors around the state have asked that surveyors write out (or at least abbreviate every Q-Q the survey falls in) to help make their indexing accurate. The Survey Advisory Board believes that it is in the best interest of the profession that we comply with this request. We understand that many surveyors have been showing quarter/quarter diagrams for many years in

a manner different than those examples shown here and may not want to change their methods at this point. We also understand that as the law is written now, a surveyor might interpret the law to not require any change to current methods as long as the STR-Q/Q is “clearly marked”. Again, clearly marked for whom? The person who drew it or the person whose job it is to use the data? We believe the WAC is clear in intent – “clearly marked” for Auditor staff.

We also understand that these survey map indexing issues don’t occur in every County, especially those where the County Surveyor or another PLS is in charge of reviewing surveys and plats for completeness and accuracy prior to indexing into the records. The DNR PLSO doesn’t see indexing errors in such Counties. The vast majority of Counties in this state do not operate in that manner however.

Finally, we believe that establishing a good relationship with your Auditor’s Office and offering advice and training on these and other subjects to counter-staff and others can go a long way toward eliminating these sorts of issues and will help to further elevate and establish surveyors as the experts in these matters. If surveyors in these “other” counties can work with their Auditor’s Offices to convince them to have a PLS review indexing information for accuracy and clarity prior to recording, then these issues would be eliminated entirely.