

THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND

THE LEGACY OF THE PUBLIC LAND SURVEY SYSTEM IN WISCONSIN
DARLINGTON, WISCONSIN :: APRIL 18, 2019



FINAL REPORT

OVERVIEW

A one-day forum entitled **This Land Is Your Land** was held at the Lafayette County Multipurpose Building in Darlington on April 18, 2019. The forum was free to all attendees.

The event was a sequel to four earlier forums: 2015 in Stevens Point, 2016 in Eau Claire, 2017 in Wisconsin Dells, and 2018 in Rothschild. The overall goals of the forums are to educate county officials, professionals, and the general public about the Public Land Surveying System (PLSS), to facilitate dialog about the importance of PLSS for accurate parcel mapping, and to bring the GIS (Geographic Information Systems) and Surveying communities together to identify and discuss common interests.

The 2019 Forum was organized by the **PLSS Work Group** (see column to the right).

The forum was hosted by the Lafayette County Land Information Program:

- Lauree Aulik** - Land Info. Officer
- Krista Paulson** - Real Property Lister
- Aaron Austin** - County Surveyor

Lunch was sponsored by the **Wisconsin Society of Land Surveyors**. Refreshments were provided by the **Wisconsin County Surveyors Association** and by **Jason Poser, Buffalo County**.

PLSS WORK GROUP

The **PLSS Work Group** was formed to advocate for the Public Land Survey System in Wisconsin. The goal of the Work Group is to educate and encourage state, county and municipal agencies to improve, advance and maintain the PLSS network statewide.

Current membership of the PLSS Work Group is:

State Cartographer's Office (SCO)

- Howard Veregin - State Cartographer
- Brenda Hemstead - Data Services Specialist

Wisconsin County Surveyors Association (WCSA)

- Bryan Meyer - WCSA President/La Crosse County Surveyor

Wisconsin Society of Land Surveyors (WSLS)

- Jeff DeMuth - Professional Land Surveyor
- Steve Geiger - Polk County Surveyor

Wisconsin Register of Deeds Association (WRDA)

- Jodi Helgeson - Adams County Register of Deeds

Wisconsin Real Property Listers Association (WRPLA)

- Brannick Beatse - Monroe County Real Property Lister

Wisconsin Land Information Officers Network (LION)

Wisconsin Department of Transportation

- Mitch Moline - Enterprise GIS Architect, WisDOT

Wisconsin Land Information Association (WLIA)

- Jeremiah Erickson - Monroe County Land Info. Officer

Additional Members

- Jason Poser - Buffalo County Land Info. Officer
- Chris Colney - Grant County Land Info. Officer



OBJECTIVES

The Public Land Survey System serves as the cornerstone of all property descriptions in the Wisconsin. The system was established in the 18th century to facilitate land conveyance from the federal government. Maintaining the PLSS network is necessary to accurately depict land ownership and interest in real property.

Without a properly maintained network of PLSS corner monuments, there is an increased risk of property disputes, inequitable taxation, disagreements about resource rights, confusion over easement locations, and unnecessary expenditures by private citizens and local governments.

Across the state, thousands of monuments need to be re-established and modern geodetic coordinates need to be obtained for them. The high cost of this effort is an impediment to its eventual completion.

The agenda for **This Land Is Your Land** was designed to emphasize:

- The importance of PLSS as the foundation of property ownership determination in the state;
- The role of accurate PLSS information for correctly depicting parcel boundaries;
- The importance of maintaining and investing in the PLSS network; and
- The role of the County Surveyor in PLSS maintenance.



THE UNIVERSITY'S ROLE

The **State Cartographer's Office** (SCO), which has a lead role in the organization of the annual forums, is an office at UW-Madison focusing on geospatial technology and practices. The SCO conducts outreach and education as a core part of its mission.

Outreach and community engagement are ways to guide the development of geospatial practice in Wisconsin. By engaging stakeholders, we can develop a common vision for the state and facilitate the adoption of this vision as a model for the future.

The forums embody the **Wisconsin Idea** by linking UW resources to issues that impact Wisconsin's citizens. The forums help citizens understand how PLSS has molded the landscape and how it affects property boundaries, taxation, land transfers and land use decisions. Over time the forums have reached hundreds of individuals throughout the state, helping them appreciate the importance of the PLSS and the need to modernize the network.



AUDIENCE

As the tables on this page show, the 2019 Forum **This Land Is Your Land** attracted 120 people with a variety of professional occupations and affiliations, including 41 county employees.

The two maps following this page show attendance by county employees for the 2019 Forum, and for all five forums since 2015.

Counties are one of the primary focus areas for outreach because responsibility and funding of PLSS maintenance, parcel mapping, and legal record keeping occurs at the county level.

The maps and tables in this report are based on information provided by people who registered for the event online. Information may not be 100% accurate or completely reflect the composition of the individuals who actually attended the event.

COUNTY	COUNT
Lafayette	11
Grant	7
Dane	4
Green	3
Monroe	3
Trempealeau	2
Vernon	2
Adams	1
Buffalo	1
La Crosse	1
Polk	1
Racine	1
Richland	1
Sauk	1
Washington	1
Waukesha	1
TOTAL	41

SECTOR	COUNT
Surveying	15
County board	11
Real estate	10
County GIS/LIO	8
Banking/taxes/finance	6
County surveyor	6
County RPL	5
County ROD	4
Engineering	4
Property owner/private citizen	4
University/college	4
GIS	3
Retired	3
Agriculture	2
County conservation/zoning	2
County treasurer	2
Insurance	2
County other *	3
Other **	13
Not specified	13
TOTAL	120

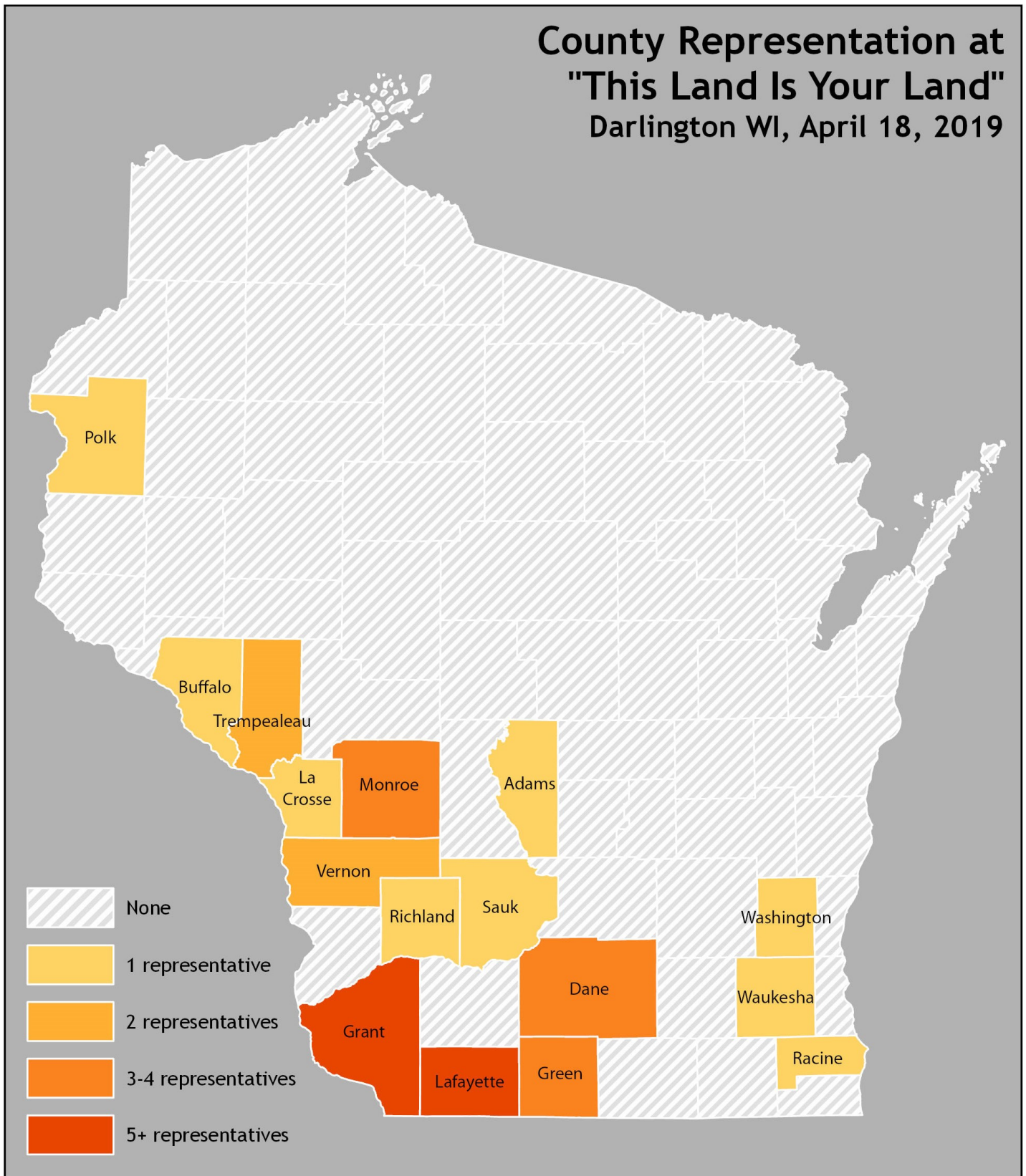
* "County other" includes: County emergency management, County health and County highway commissioner

** "Other" includes Architect, Attorney, Land management, Septic pumper and Town clerk

Many attendees have multiple job titles. This table shows only one of these titles per attendee.

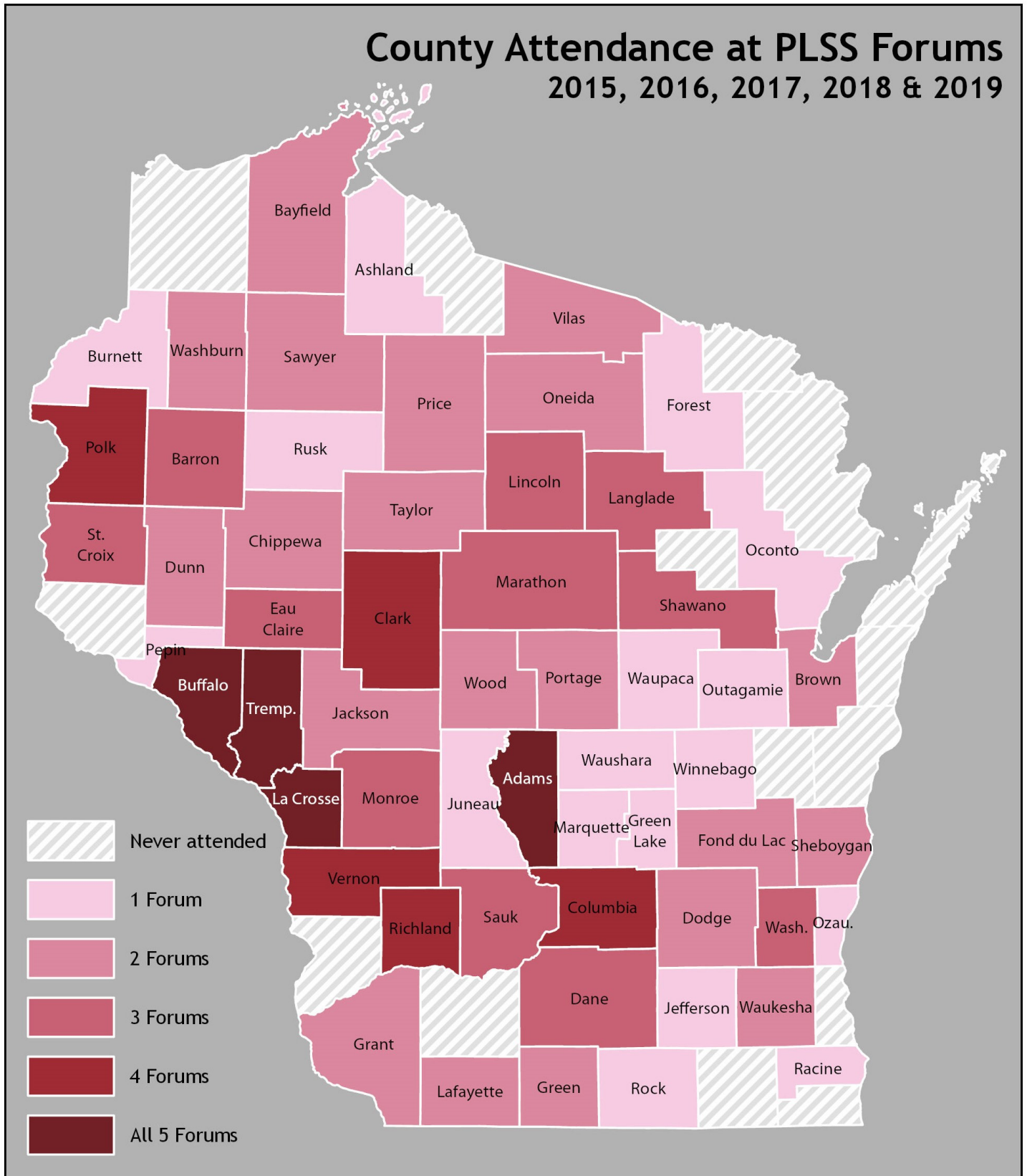


COUNTY ATTENDANCE AT THE 2019 FORUM*



* Map shows county employees only.

COUNTY ATTENDANCE AT ALL FORUMS SINCE 2015*



* Map shows county employees only.

AGENDA

THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND

THE LEGACY OF THE PUBLIC LAND SURVEY SYSTEM IN WISCONSIN

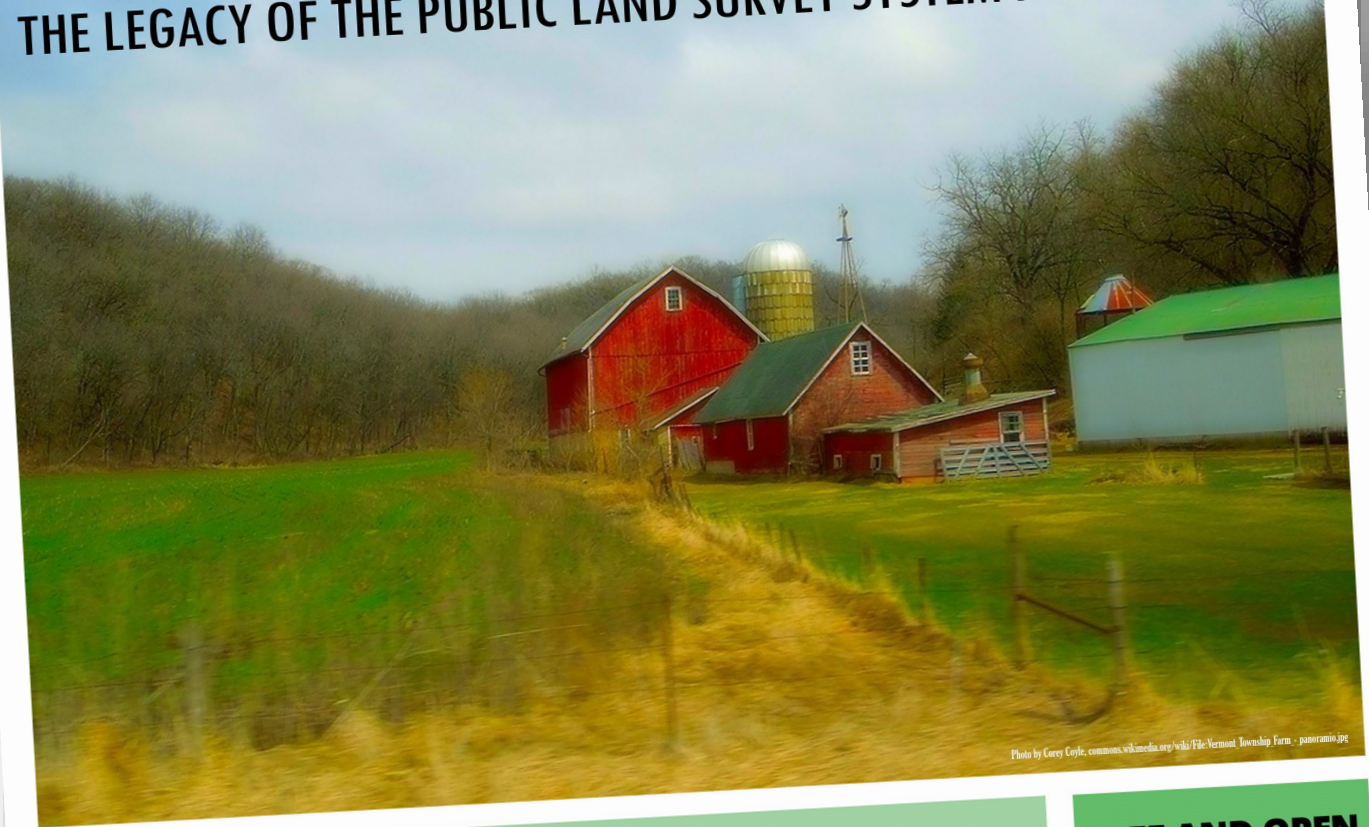


Photo by Corey Coyle, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vermont_Township_Farm_-_panorama.jpg

9:00-9:10 am	Introduction/Overview
9:10-10:00 am	The Public Land Survey System: A Dependable Network for Land Ownership (Bryan Meyer, La Crosse County Surveyor)
10:00-10:30 am	Role of the County Surveyor (Doug Avoles & Laurence Johns, Vernon County)
10:30-10:45 am	Break
10:45-11:15 am	Breakout Session: Research Methods (Dan Frick, Dane County Surveyor)
11:15 am-12:00 pm	Field Trip: Walk to PLSS Corner
12:00-12:45 pm	Lunch (included) <i>Sponsored by WSLs & WCSA</i>
12:45-1:00 pm	Results from Field Trip
1:00-1:30 pm	Boundaries and Easements (Larry Austin, Professional Land Surveyor & Engineer/ Retired Professor, UW Platteville)
1:30-1:45 pm	Break
1:45-2:30 pm	Property Surveys and Legal Descriptions (Bryan Meyer, La Crosse County Surveyor & Brannick Beatse, RPL)
2:30-3:00 pm	Q&A Panel (all speakers)

FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC!

LAFAYETTE COUNTY MULTIPURPOSE BUILDING

11974 AMES RD. DARLINGTON, WI

APRIL 18, 2019

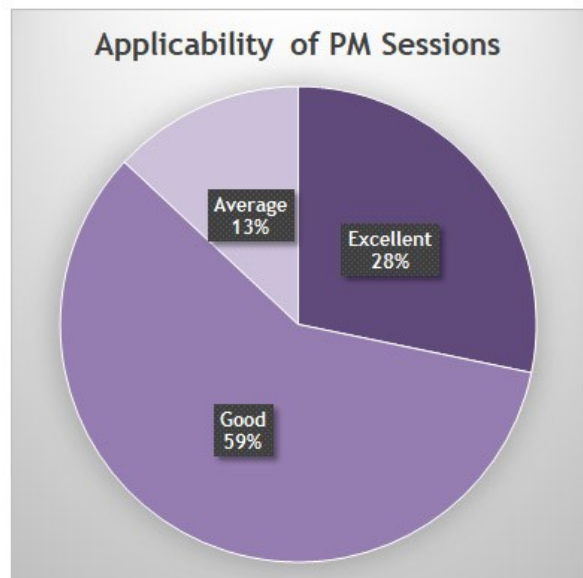
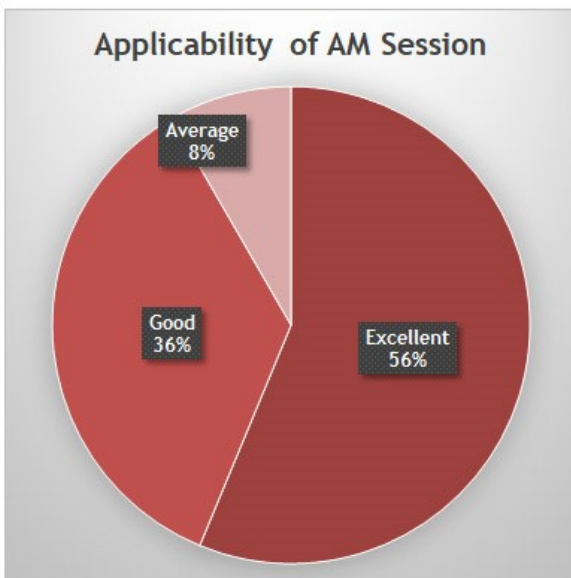
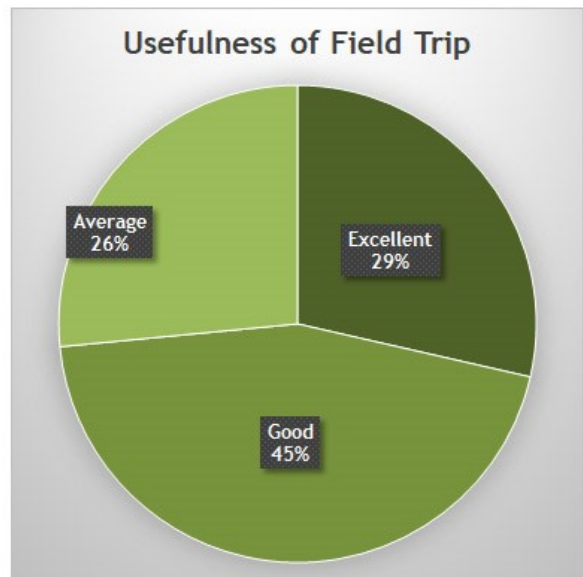
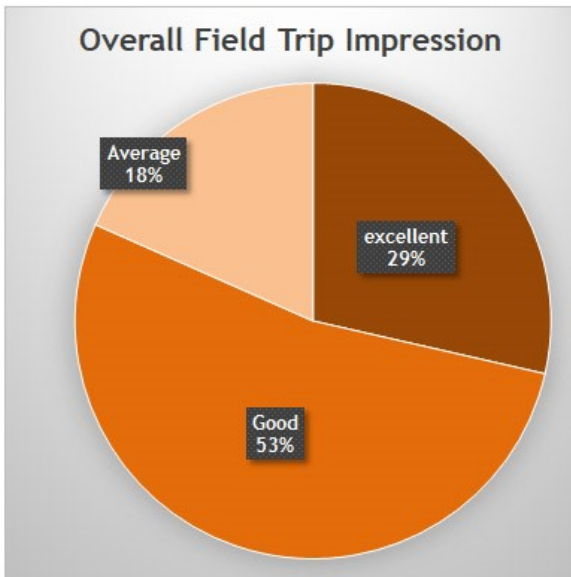
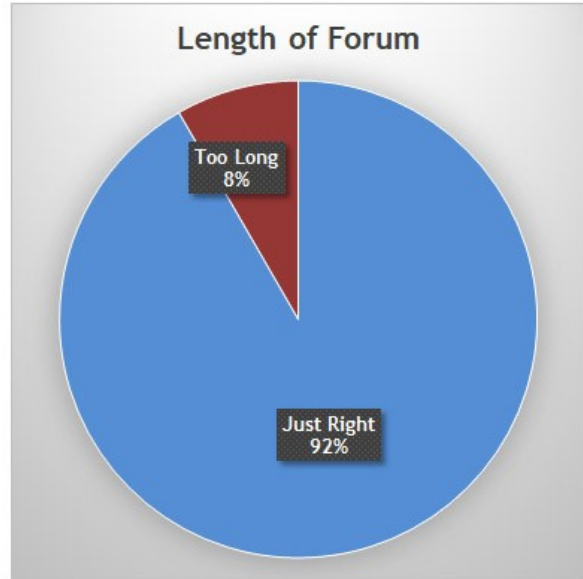
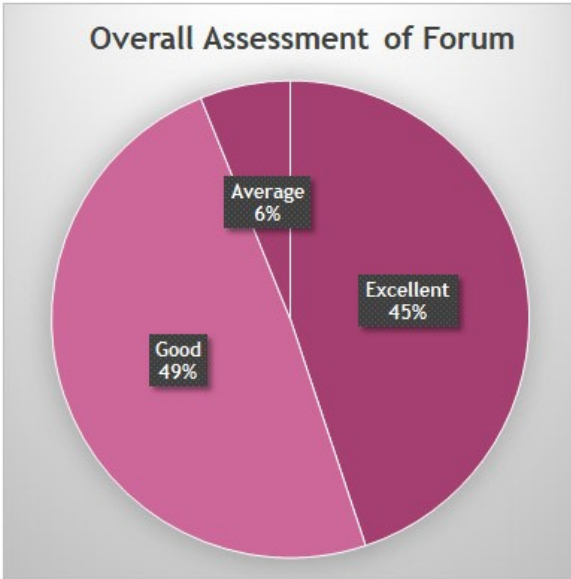
PLSS WORK GROUP



www.sco.wisc.edu/community/PLSS-Work-Group

Register online at
TRAINING.SCO.WISC.EDU/PLSS-SURVEY-FORUM

ATTENDEE EVALUATIONS



PLSS WORK GROUP POSITION STATEMENT*

The PLSS network in Wisconsin can and should be fully re-established. But the work will require the expertise of Professional Land Surveyors and funding. Each of Wisconsin's 72 Counties should have a County Surveyor on staff to oversee the remonumentation and maintenance work. The County Surveyor can serve as an advisor to taxpayers, property owners and/or their private sector land surveyors within each county regarding PLSS concerns. To that end, we believe the following to be critically important.

- An accurate, complete, up-to-date county PLSS network can and should be in place in every county in Wisconsin.
- Counties should make funding a County Surveyor position a priority and provide this individual with the resources needed to do the work of re-establishing and maintaining PLSS corners.
- Counties should fund PLSS remonumentation and maintenance on a consistent, predictable basis.
- Once PLSS corners are re-established, maintenance of those corners should be an ongoing priority.
- Counties should work with neighboring counties to resolve discrepancies in PLSS corner locations so that county boundaries fit together seamlessly.
- Counties have a great resource available to them in the Wisconsin County Surveyors Association. This group can share the importance of the PLSS by giving presentations or talks to County Boards and Committees.
- Counties should not defund existing County Surveyor positions or withhold funding for maintenance of PLSS based on an existing plan.

* For full statement see

WWW.SCO.WISC.EDU/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2016/09/POSITIONSTATEMENTVERSION8.PDF

CONTACT US

We are interested in your thoughts and ideas. Please contact us or any member of the PLSS Work Group with questions or comments,

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WWW.SCO.WISC.EDU/COMMUNITY/PLSS-WORK-GROUP



Photo by Corey Coyle :: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vermont_Township_Farm_-_panoramio.jpg

PLSS WORK GROUP



WISCONSIN
LAND INFORMATION
ASSOCIATION



LION
The Wisconsin Land Information Officers Network



www.sco.wisc.edu/community/PLSS-Work-Group



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