



User guide for official plan

User guide for official plans | Forestry and Parks

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User guide for official plans database

Official plans

The administrative responsibilities along with the original plans for official surveys in Alberta were transferred to the Alberta Government from Ottawa in 1931. Alberta Forestry and Parks is responsible for distribution of official plans. For a plan to be considered official, the plan must be confirmed by the Director of Surveys or, before 1931, by the Surveyor General.

Please note that the original documents are the property of the Provincial Archives of Alberta. For information on accessing the original documents contact the [Provincial Archives of Alberta](#).

The Director of Surveys Official Plans Database includes township plans, east outlines, baselines, meridians, settlements, Hudson Bay Reserves, provincial boundary plans and other plans surveyed under Part 2 of the *Surveys Act* or under the *Boundary Surveys Act*.

Hardcopy current and historical official plans are available from Alberta Registries, Alberta Government Services at:

| Edmonton | Calgary |
|---|---|
| 10365 – 97 Street NW Edmonton, AB, T5J 3W7 Tel: 780-427-4542 Fax: 780-429-4885 | 620 – 7 Avenue SW Calgary, AB, T2P 0Y8 Tel: 403-297-5099 Fax: 403-297-6580 |

The Director of Surveys database does not contain official plans that are registered at Land Title Office. These plans are available from Alberta Government Services [Spatial Information System](#) (SPIN).

The Federal Government of Canada is considered the official source for Canada Lands (National Parks and Indian Reserves) plans, including plans defining Canada Lands boundaries. The international boundary between Alberta and Montana is also responsibility of the Federal Government. Survey plans of Canada Lands, including plans of surrendered Indian Reserves, are available from the [Federal Government's Legal Survey Division](#).

Field notes

The Director of Surveys Office completed the scanning and indexing of the field books in December 2000 and these are now available in digital format through Alberta Registries [Spatial Information System](#) (SPIN).

Database structure

The database links a digital image of an official plan to the Alberta Township System identifier. Relevant metadata describing the image is attached to each image. This allows users to search for any plans using the township, range, and meridian identifiers. For a more detailed explanation of the Alberta Township System (ATS) please see the section How to Determine the ATS Value. The following fields make up the database:

Document

This is the link to the scanned image and is identified by the file name of the image. Please note that the file name is a sequentially numbered value. For those images that cover a single township plan, the first six characters refer to the ATS identifier in the format MRRTTT (meridian, range, township). For example, an image file identified 401006-1 would be a plan of Township 6, Range 1, West of the Fourth Meridian. The -1 is a unique identifier differentiating among the various editions and/or versions of the same township plan, is not necessarily consecutive and has no other meaning. Other plans are named according to their type.

Edition

This is the name of the edition of the plan, starting with the First Edition in chronological order based on the date of confirmation. Various editions of the same township plan are normally consecutive and have different dates of confirmation with highest edition being the most recent plan. Exceptions to this rule are noted in the comment field. Over the years, various edition names such as First Edition Corrected, Second Edition, Second Edition Corrected, etc. were utilized.

Version

This value identifies the progression of plans that have the same edition number. A value of 1 indicates the earliest version of the plan, usually referred to as the surveyor's field returns. The latest plan produced has the highest version number assigned. No version number was assigned where only single version of the plan exists. The most significant difference between edition and version of the plan is the confirmation date being different for editions and the same for versions. Exceptions to this rule are noted in the comment field.

It was normal procedure for a surveyor to produce a "subdivision" plan depicting his survey work using a standard township template. The plan was signed by the surveyor and approved and confirmed by the Surveyor General. This plan normally became the First Edition, Version 1. The Surveyor General's Office would then produce a "compiled plan" using previous outline surveys, the "subdivision" survey and any other survey done prior to the "subdivision" survey. If the confirmation date remained the same as Version 1 and the plan is on record in the Director of Surveys Office, this plan became the First Edition, Version 2. Even if there was no previous work to add to the plan, a new plan had to be prepared to remove the surveyor's signature and affidavit. This plan was printed, and the printed version was distributed. Other versions were created for reasons such as, plates being damaged or if the previous plates were "out of style" and required updating. The date of confirmation remained the same as well as the edition number.

Therefore, it is possible to have 2, 3 or more versions of an edition all having the same date of confirmation. It should be noted that Version 1 is always the first plan produced for an individual edition **on record** in the Director of Surveys Office regardless if the plan is field returns or a compiled plan. It is acknowledged that some versions of township plans originally produced by Ottawa are missing from the Director of Surveys set.

Confirmed

The date the plan was approved and confirmed by either the Surveyor General of Canada or the Director of Surveys of Alberta. Please note that not all plans contain the statement (text) "approved and confirmed" but are signed and dated by the Surveyor General. This matter is under review by the Director of Surveys and at this time, the plans are considered official plans.

Status

Indicates if the Director of Surveys considers the plan **current** or **historical**. The most recent (highest) edition is considered current. The **current edition** normally has the most recent confirmation date and supersedes all

previous editions. If the current edition of the plan has more than one version, then all versions are considered current as all have the same date of confirmation. Superseded editions are considered historical.

However, there are exceptions to this rule. For example:

- The fieldwork for baselines and township outlines was always completed before the township subdivision survey. However, due to demand for township subdivision plans by land agents, the township subdivision plan was often confirmed before the baseline and/or township outline plan. In these cases, baseline and/or township outline plans are deemed historical even when their confirmation dates are subsequent to the confirmation date of the current plan.
- Correction surveys such as the removal of river lots posts and mounds confirmed after the confirmation of the subdivision plan were often integrated into the new version of the subdivision plan without re-confirmation. These correction plans are deemed historical even when the confirmation date is subsequent to the confirmation date of the current plan.

Whenever possible these ambiguities are noted in a comment field.

Type

This field describes the following types of plans.

- Township - Township plans are plans of survey, each covering subdivision of entire or part of a single township.
- Sectional - A more detailed plan(s) of one or more of the sections in the township.
- Correction Line - An east-west line in between baselines compensating for convergence of range lines.
- Baseline - A baseline is a surveyed line running east-west between adjacent principal meridians along the boundary between every fourth township. Each individual baseline plan includes a portion of one baseline running across one or more ranges.
- East Outline - An east outline plan is a surveyed line running north-south between two adjacent townships along a meridional line delineating the east-west boundary between the townships.
- Settlement - A survey of a settlement.
- Hudson Bay Reserve - A survey of a Hudson Bay Reserve.
- Boundary - An official plan for a boundary between Alberta and another province or territory. For International boundary between Canada and United States, see Federal Government.
- Other - Any official plan not covered by the above. This includes Correction, North Outline, Township Line, Inspection and other surveys.

Comments

This field contains additional information regarding the plan. Included are the names of the Settlement, Hudson Bay Reserve, Boundary and other plans.

Important information

Director of Surveys Township Record Revision Program (TRRP)

Under the TRRP, the intent of the Director of Surveys is to update and revise all townships with a clerical discrepancy between township field notes and a current township plan.

For information regarding Township Record Revision Program including Alleged Township Plan Deficiencies List, visit the Director of Surveys website at: [Township Records Revision Project](#)

Searching for information

Users who are searching for information on the boundary of a township plan **must** also search for plans adjacent to the township. When linking the plan to the township system only the Alberta Township System (ATS) value on the west and south was normally used. For example, an East Outline plan which shows surveyed north south lines would be linked using the ATS value of the township to the west while a Baseline plan with survey lines running east west would be linked to the ATS value of the township to the south.

An example is township 76-09-6. Searching for township 76-09-6 will return no data. However:

- East boundary of this township is surveyed and shown on township 79-08-6.
- South boundary of this township is surveyed and shown on township 75-09-6.
- West boundary of this township is surveyed and shown on east outline plan in 76-10-6.
- For information regarding the incorrectly posted baseline along north boundary of this township, see Alleged Township Plan Deficiencies List posted on the [Director of Surveys](#) website.

Even when the current township is available on the database, the adjacent township might supersede its common boundary. Therefore, it is important to review all adjacent plans when dealing with common boundary to ensure that the user has the most up-to-date information. An example is the west boundary of the current township 72-22-5 superseded by the east boundary of the current township 72-23-5.

At this time, it is not possible to search for settlement, Hudson Bay Reserve, boundary plans and other plans by its geographical or given name as, for example, Chipewyan Settlement. Legal description (location) of the plan has to be entered first. For example, Township 112, Range 7, West of the Fourth Meridian for Chipewyan Settlement. The name of the plan will be shown in the metadata comment field. Similarly, when searching for Correction Record number 262, its location (Township 20, Range 1, West of the Fourth Meridian) must be entered.

Users are encouraged to access the database to obtain the most up-to-date data rather than to rely on the plans downloaded in the past. When new surveys or corrections of clerical errors under TRRP are completed, the current official plans are superseded by new editions. In addition, additional missing versions of the official plans are added to the database as these are located by the Director of Surveys Office.

Fourth meridian

Some Alberta Township plans in Range 1, West of the Fourth Meridian are superseded by later editions of fractional townships West of the Third Meridian in Saskatchewan. Plans physically located in Saskatchewan are not part of the Alberta Director of Surveys database.

For digital copies of current or historical township plans in Saskatchewan, visit [Information Services Corporation](#).

Incorrectly posted baselines and meridians

Parts of some baselines and meridians were not originally posted in their correct position due to errors in survey.

Baselines west of the fourth meridian

Official plans were never published for the following incorrectly posted baselines west of the fourth meridian. Field notes and other valuable information are available from the Director of Surveys Office. Users are encouraged to contact The Director of Surveys Office for details.

- 19th Baseline, Township 72, Ranges 1 to 5, West of the Fourth Meridian
- 20th Baseline, Township 76, Ranges 1 to 6, West of the Fourth Meridian
- 23rd Baseline, Township 88, Ranges 1 to 5 and 13 to 26, West of the Fourth Meridian
- 24th Baseline, Township 92, Ranges 1 to 4, West of the Fourth Meridian

Note: When searching any of the above townships, metadata will be returned with an explanation in the comment field and no image will be available.

Baseline west of sixth meridian

An official plan was never published for the incorrectly posted 20th Baseline, Township 76, Ranges 8 to 12, West of the Sixth Meridian. Field notes and other valuable information are available from the Director of Surveys Office. Users are encouraged to contact the Director of Surveys Office for details.

Fifth meridian

The Fifth Meridian in townships 89 to 108 was incorrectly posted due to error in survey. Only township corners at the NE corner of Section 36 of townships 92, 96, 100 and 104 were subsequently moved to its correct position. The Director of Surveys has decided to accept the incorrect monuments as representing the actual corners as long as existing boundaries are not adversely affected. New 5th Meridian plans from township 89 to 104 are now available through SPIN. Surveyors working in this area are encouraged to review the 5th Meridian Townships 89 to 108 Policy Document.

Township 127

It has been a policy of the Director of Surveys Office since the early 1960's to define the north boundary of township 126 as a line 1.5 chains south of and parallel to the posted Alberta - NWT boundary, and that any surplus would be left in the row of quarter sections abutting the north boundary of township 126.

Some older plans might refer to township 127. If clarification is required, please contact the Director of Surveys Office.

Indian reserves

Some township plans do not reflect the current position of common boundaries of Indian Reserves. The updating of official township plans to show the current boundary position of Indian Reserves is under consideration by the Director of Surveys through its TRRP program. When doing research involving Indian Reserves users must not rely solely on the information shown on township plans.

Problems with database

If you find any problems with this database such as:

- image would not open
- image is not legible
- image is linked to wrong metadata

- conflict between image and metadata
- image or information is in error or missing

Contact:

Director of Surveys
Alberta Forestry and Parks
15th Floor Oxbridge Place
9820-106 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, T5K 2J6
Email: DirectorOfSurveys@gov.ab.ca

The Director of Surveys Office will review the problem and will take steps to correct the situation, if possible.

Future development

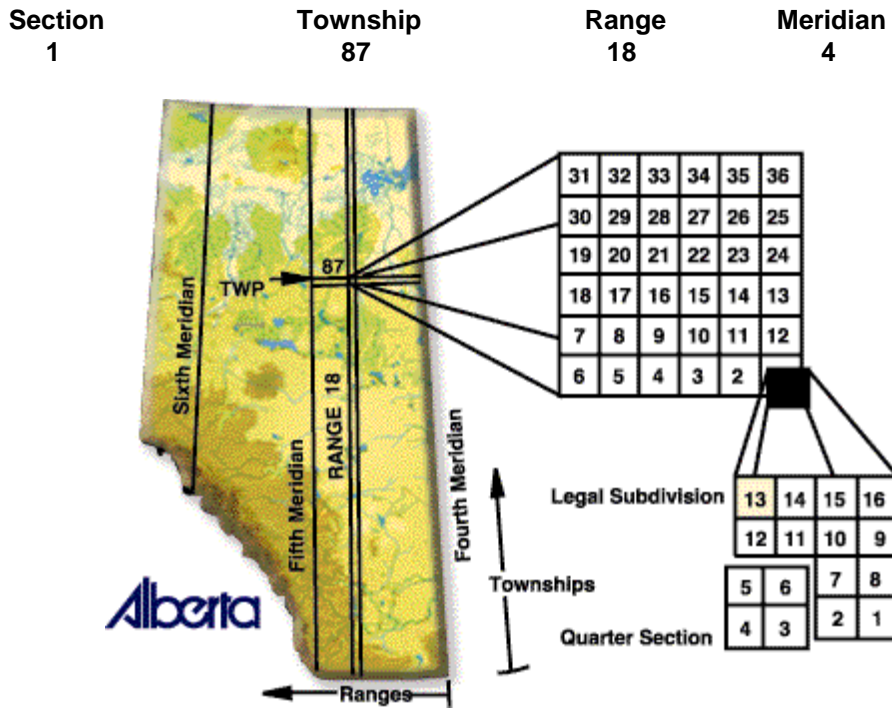
The Director of Surveys database contains at least one version of all current and historical township plans. However, it is acknowledged that some versions of township plans originally produced by Ottawa are missing from the Director of Surveys set. In order to present the most complete set of official plans as possible, the Director of Surveys Office is planning to retrieve missing plans from other depositories such as Land Titles Offices, Provincial Archives etc. Minor changes to metadata and image files are also to be expected in the near future.

How to determine the ATS value

Any parcel of land in Alberta can be pinpointed by its legal land description. Legal land descriptions are usually based on the Alberta Township Survey (ATS) system. The ATS is a grid network dividing the province into near equal-sized parcels of land.

Under the ATS, land is designated as being west of the 4th, 5th, or 6th Meridians (110°, 114° and 118° west longitude, respectively). Between meridians are six-mile-wide columns called "ranges." Ranges are numbered consecutively from east to west starting at Range 1 west of each meridian. "Townships" are six-mile-wide rows that intersect ranges and are numbered consecutively from Township 1 at the Montana border to Township 126 at the Northwest Territories border. The term township also describes the six by six-mile square formed by the intersection of ranges and townships. Townships are divided into 36 sections, each section measuring one mile by one mile. Sections can then be divided into quarters (NE, NW, SE, and SW), or into 16 legal subdivisions (LSDs), as indicated.

The legal description of the section high-lighted in the diagram would be written correctly as: 1 – 87 – 18 – 4



Contact

For information regarding deficiencies or to comment on specific items within the database please contact:

Director of Surveys

15th Floor Oxbridge Place

9820-106 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, T5K 2J6

Email: DirectorOfSurveys@gov.ab.ca