



surveyor says!

THE NSPS BULLETIN

DECEMBER 2025

WHAT'S INSIDE

01.

WELCOME MESSAGE

02.

RECENT NEWS

03.

ADVOCACY

04.

EVENTS

05.

CONTACT & SUPPORT

06.

APPENDICES



NSPS

WELCOME

WELCOME

Hi there, Surveyor!

December is here, and while the year is winding down, the surveying profession continues to move forward with new developments, opportunities, and initiatives shaping the months ahead. From updates in education and workforce support to national advocacy efforts and emerging technology, NSPS remains committed to keeping surveyors informed, connected, and equipped for what's next.

This month's bulletin brings together the latest news, resources, and programs across the profession, so take a moment to catch up and close out the year feeling prepared for what 2026 will bring.

Let's dive in...



Partner with NSPS to support the future of Surveying.

Sponsoring NSPS is more than visibility, it's an investment in the advancement of the surveying profession.

By becoming a sponsor, your organization helps us:

- Advocate for surveyors nationwide
- Support education and workforce development
- Advance technology and innovation in the field

We have some awesome sponsors on board, who have generously supported the work of NSPS within the last year. With their help, we have been able to take strides towards our goals, shout louder as the advocate of the profession, host our events, competitions and awards, provide scholarships and development opportunities and maximize the impact of NSPS nationally.

If you think you'd like to help us push forward with our core mission, or with a specific project or event, [read on](#), or [get in touch](#)!

RECENT NEWS

New 2026 ALTA/NSPS standards released

NSPS and the American Land Title Association have officially released the updated 2026 Minimum Standard Detail Requirements for ALTA/NSPS Land Title Surveys, which take effect February 23, 2026.

These updates help ensure surveys prepared for title insurance remain accurate, consistent, and aligned with evolving legal and industry expectations. The 2026 standards include refined requirements for fieldwork, boundary determinations, measurement standards, deliverables, and certification language.

A redline comparison is available to help surveyors quickly identify changes from the 2021 standards, and additional educational resources will be released to support a smooth transition. Find the updated 2026 Standards (and redline version, too!) along with the existing 2021 Standards [here](#).

Stay tuned for webinars, guidance materials, and further updates from NSPS.

Get featured in OUR news!

Surveying happens in the real world, from construction sites to coastlines, and we want to showcase the authentic environments surveyors work in every day.

NSPS is collecting field photos that highlight real crews, real projects, and real conditions across the profession. These images help us represent the industry accurately and show the public what surveyors truly do – and it's your time to shine! Send photos or clips to: media@nspssurveyors.com

Got a great career story to share? We'd love to feature you! Fill out this [quick 5-minute form](#) and be part of our "Meet the Surveyor" series where we'll shout about your career journey and what you do to the full NSPS community.



Thank you to Ivan Tanaka Arifeto for sharing these great photos that highlight surveying in a wide range of environments.

ADVOCACY

NSPS is conducting two national surveys to support ongoing work toward strengthening surveying education and defining the knowledge and skills needed in today's profession. Your input is essential to ensuring that this effort reflects real experiences—from the classroom to the field.

✓ If you are a current student or recent graduate (within the last five years) - please complete the **YSN Education Survey**, focused on academic preparation and career readiness.

✓ If you are a practicing professional or educator with five or more years in the field - please complete the **NSPS Body of Knowledge (BOK) Industry Insight Survey**, which will help define the competencies required for the future of practice.

If your experience spans both perspectives, you are welcome to complete both surveys.

All responses are anonymous and analyzed in aggregate. Your feedback will directly contribute to shaping national education standards and supporting the next generation of surveyors.

Thank you for helping strengthen the future of our profession.

EVENTS

Certified Floodplain Surveyor Training

Southbury, CT. Jan 14–16, 2026

Get certified, get confident, and get ready to tackle FEMA regs, Risk Rating 2.0, Elevation Certificates, and floodplain management like a pro. The course ends with a certification exam, so yes, it's intense, but so is the pride when you pass. More information [here](#).

Certified Floodplain Surveyor Training

Saratoga Springs, NY. Jan 26-28, 2026

Get certified, get confident, and get ready to tackle FEMA regs, Risk Rating 2.0, Elevation Certificates, and floodplain management like a pro. The course ends with a certification exam, so yes, it's intense, but so is the pride when you pass. More information [here](#).

GeoWeek 2026

Denver, CO. Feb 16–18, 2026

We're thrilled to announce NSPS is now an Industry Partner for GeoWeek! Expect drones, AI and enough tech talk to make your total station blush. This is the future of surveying and NSPS will be there to help shape it.

NSPS Spring Business Meeting, Day on the Hill and NSPS/YSN Student Competition

Washington, DC. Apr 13-17, 2026

And in the meantime...



CONTACT & SUPPORT

Need help or have questions? Our friendly, helpful team are here to serve



www.nsps.us.com



info@nsps.us.com



240-439-4615



[/company/national-society-of-professional-surveyors/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/national-society-of-professional-surveyors/)

Holiday Hours

Christmas & New Year: Closed Wednesday 24, Thursday 25, Wednesday 31 & Thursday 1. Full staff will be back on Monday, January 5.

Useful links:

MEMBER BENEFITS

MEMBER PORTAL LOG IN

SPONSOR NSPS

ADVERTISE IN THIS SPACE



NEW EPISODES EACH WEEK
CLICK ON THE BANNER TO LISTEN!

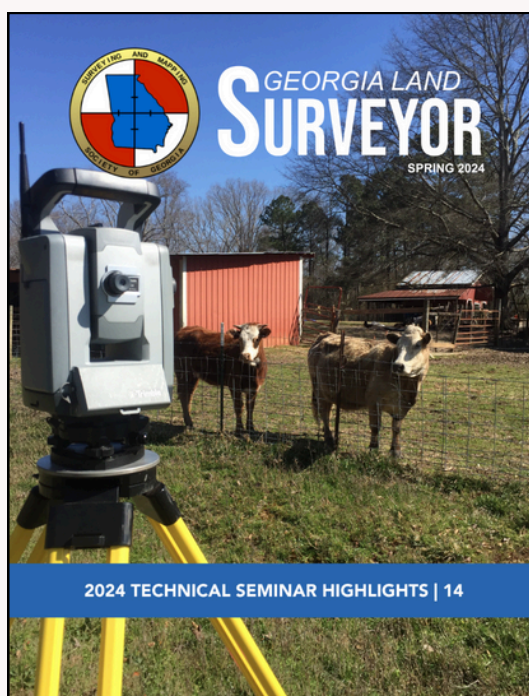
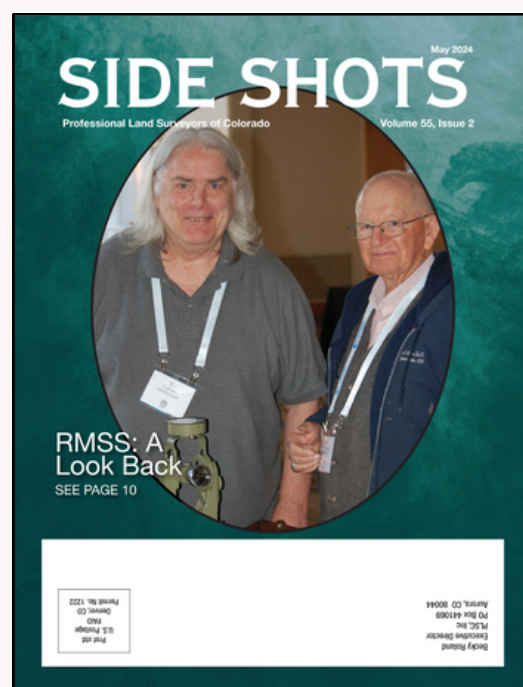


APPENDIX 1: NSPS JOURNALISM AWARDS

The purpose of this contest is to encourage high-quality publications and content by NSPS affiliates. The contest is judged by a committee established by the Chair of the NSPS Board of Directors, and it is open to newsletters, magazines, and content in either published between January and December of the previous year.

The affiliate's executive director, publication's editor, or their designee may submit entries for consideration. Due to limited participation, we are sharing all entries to this year's contest and thank them for their promotion of our great profession!

[View all entries](#)





OMG! What is It?

As many of you know, Nextdoor is a computer application that is used to network with neighbors. It is commonly used to solicit and post recommendations for service providers such as plumbers, landscaping, electricians, etc., to seek lost pets, post items for sale, or give away and share local news. This was recently posted on Nextdoor. The string of responses from the neighbors is a lot of fun. Enjoy!

Netta Q - I'm no expert but that green shape sure looks like a triangle.
Joanna F - It is a survey marker.
Cary P - That is a survey marker showing your property line. I hope it fits your fence line.
Jeffrey N - Contact the City office as to current project/planning.

Robert S - Beacon for aliens. You are advised to lock the door and leave immediately.

David O - It's illuminati. You have been chosen.

Steve E - Timing is all wrong for illuminati. You've been marked for a visit by the Easter Bunny.

Kevin T - It means the aliens are coming.

Sam L - Sorcery. Be afraid. Be very afraid.

James H - You've been tagged by Black Ops from the government. There's not much you can do now.

Tom D - Really?? It's a standard in-pavement survey marker. I've set hundreds of these over 40 years. Nothing for a non-surveyor to get excited over.

Bob M - It's a laser target for NASA's Perseverance rover. Each time Mars and Earth face each other with the correct orientation, Perseverance pulses a laser at the target, and the time of round-trip travel gives a distance update, as long as no one is bent over looking at the target, in which case, it seems there was some sort of hit as a body is slumped over the sidewalk. It's brutal, I know, but a small sacrifice for a self-driving vehicle to get a distance update. It's pretty much the same technology as Musk's self-driving vehicles: it's a pedestrian or another car, and the system knows to update its position.

Allen F - There is a body buried there.

Ed M - It's a marker. Green is the standard color for sewer line. A property survey typically has a more permanent pin, without tape under the pin, but maybe. Green makes me think sewer.

Yaro G - Pipes or wires or something to do with marking for upcoming projects. It's on the side walk which is states prop not yours. Seen them tons before some work started.

Geralyn M - Survey marker. Or alien landing zone. Definitely a survey marker. Don't mess with it or there will be some mad surveyors.

Veronica C - I don't trust anyone. I would erase it completely!

Ryan D - Alien landing strip.

Isyops - You've been targeted for medical experimentation. Keep an eye out for unmarked all black vans. Don't worry though. It's painless. My groin healed in less than a month.



Photo by: Michael Zheng
Caption: A green survey marker in a grassy area.

Robert Stockton Williamson

Surveying with the Army in War & Peace 1848 - 1882

By: Paul S. Pace, PLS

The morning of March 13, 1862 dawned rainy and cold along the North Carolina coast. At first light, a flotilla of troop transports, escorted by Union gunboats previously at anchor near the mouth of the Neuse River, started upstream.

Union General Ambrose Burnside had brought the war to the Outer Banks of North Carolina and to Roanoke Island, with a successful amphibious attack on the island in February. This led the way to attack New Bern, North Carolina (variously spelled New Bern or Newbern), North Carolina's second largest city, an important Confederate coastal port and transportation center on the Neuse River.

The flotilla steamed upstream until it met resistance from Confederate shore batteries. The gunboats braved "torpedoes", better known today as mines, and sunken ships to engage the Rebel batteries while the troop ships and landed three brigades of infantry. The brigades were under the command of Generals Foster, Parke and Reno, all under the overall command of General Burnside.



The advance of the gunboats up the Neuse River towards New Bern, North Carolina, March 1862. "Advance of the Gunboats," a watercolor from Herbert Eugene Valentine's Sketches of Civil War Scenes.

Nearly 12,000 men had waded ashore by around 2PM. They carried all their ammunition, food and medical supplies with them; the men marched forward until 9PM, when they halted, made camp and readied for the morning's attack on the well dug-in, but badly outnumbered and poorly trained Confederates.

General Burnside explained what happened next in his after-action report: "In the morning I, detailed Captain R. S. Williamson, Reconnaissance of Engineers, to move on in advance of the column for the purpose of reconnoitering the positions of the enemy. I then moved on to the head of the column and found it had reached the first anchorage at Otter Creek, which had been deserted by the enemy. Captain Williamson, having discovered this fact and previously ordered by me to go forward with his party to make a further reconnaissance." Williamson was brevetted from Captain to Major for "Gallant and Meritorious Services in actions of New Bern, NC." New Bern was a significant victory for the Union, despite suffering 90 killed, 380 wounded, and 1 missing. CSA losses were higher.



General James Hays in the marketplace of the city in western Nevada.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Robert Stockton Williamson - Part II

Surveying with the Army in War & Peace 1848 - 1882

By: Paul S. Pace, PLS



R.S. Williamson, Captain of Engineers, 1862. Library of Congress photo.

In 1867 Williamson was also charged with eliminating the underwater hazard known as Blossom Rock, in San Francisco Bay. The rock was discovered by Captain Frederick Beecher of the Royal Navy in 1826, and named after his 16-gun sloop, HMS Blossom. Located half way between Alcatraz and Yerkes Buena Islands and rising in line with them, it was hidden about five feet below the water's surface at low tide. A buoy was attached to the rock, but storms frequently tore it away, as the current over the rock could be quite strong.

The rock was surveyed and mapped by the U.S. Coast Survey from their sloop, Albatross, still a brevet Lieutenant Colonel in the peace-time army, used the mapping to estimate the cost of removal, but first wanted to experiment with various explosives to test vulnerability of the rock to blasting. Eight experimental blasts were attempted. The Coast Survey made an instrumental survey before and after each blast. Then Williamson sent out a request for proposals.

He estimated that it would cost about \$60,000 to do the job and requested that amount to be appropriated for the next year. In 1868, \$50,000 was appropriated, with an additional \$25,000 being made available in 1869. After examining the several plans submitted to him, Williamson approved the \$75,000 proposal of the surveyor and civil engineer Alexis W. von Schmidt. The work commenced in October of 1869.

Von Schmidt erected a coffer dam over the rock and miners began drilling a shaft into the rock. Over several months, the miners carved out galleries in the rock's interior and placed a charge of dynamite of various sizes in water-tight barrels and metal casks. The detonation, which was timed to go off during high tide, attracted great crowds of onlookers. The blast created a huge plume of water and blast debris, but most of the large chunks of rock that were lifted off the rock came straight down and the required clearance of twenty-four feet at low tide was not achieved.

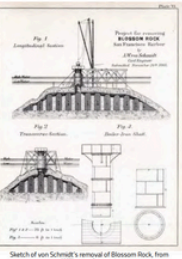
Surveys of the debris field were made, this time with a sounding line, with two theodolites triangulating the position of the line from shore. The Coast Survey turned these data, together with concurrent tidal information, over to Williamson and discussions followed. Williamson insisted that the debris be cleared off the rock to meet his specifications. Von Schmidt argued that the current would eventually remove it but Williamson was not convinced.

Von Schmidt then built a floating platform he called a scow, to which he attached an iron rail. Using a steam tug to pull the scow back and forth over the rubble, he was able to raise the debris off the rock and finally achieved the necessary clearance. The work was accepted and signed off in December of 1870. Williamson prepared a report, together with his assistant W.H. Heuer. Report upon the Removal of Blossom Rock in San Francisco Harbor, California. This work remains in print.

Williamson was also assigned to the Army's Light-house Service and later served as the Light-house Engineer for the 12" and 13" light-house Districts. He remained with the Service until 1872. At that time, he was made Superintendent Engineer of all surveys of rivers, harbors and fortifications. Assisted by Lieutenant Heuer, Williamson had surveying and engineering responsibility for the entire Pacific Coast region, from Canada to Mexico, and the Hawaiian Islands.

Williamson was designated "Officer-in-Charge" with authority for all river and harbor work on the Pacific Coast. Over 1869-70 Williamson determined the latitude and longitude of a number of lighthouses and light house sites.

1 Von Schmidt contracted with the General Land Office in 1872 to remove the entire California Nevada border.



Sketch of von Schmidt's removal of Blossom Rock, from Williamson's report.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Knud's Thoughts and Trent's Opinions: A Recap of My Opinions On the First 12 Articles

By: Trent J. Keenan, PLS



I took a deep dive into the Knud Hermansen professional practice and education article series. Included in this issue of the Traverse are installments 11 and 12.

These articles provide a profound and thought-provoking analysis of the profession's current state while envisioning its future potential. They question traditional practices, offer innovative solutions, and emphasize the pressing need for reflection, reform, and collaboration across the profession. These writings illustrate educators, practitioners, and institutions' challenges, opportunities, and obligations in fostering a strong and forward-thinking professional framework. Here are my thoughts and opinions on some of the key topics discussed in Knud's articles.

Faculty Licensing: A Call for Experience-Based Teaching

(Article 1, published in Traverse 49)

The case for faculty licensure as a foundation of quality surveying education is both compelling and problematic. Licensed faculty bring invaluable real-world experience to academic settings, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Licensure enhances faculty credibility, serves as an aspirational model for students, and strengthens the connection between academic programs and professional societies. However, the ongoing divide between academic qualifications, such as Ph.D. requirements, and practical licensure highlights a larger debate: should academic institutions prioritize academic credentials or hands-on expertise? Mr. Hermansen's argument is in favor of prioritizing practical experience, challenges conventional hiring norms, and calls for a significant shift in how academia recruits and values its educators.

At CSN, this issue is particularly evident as we face challenges in finding instructors who meet both the educational and licensure requirements. Within Nevada, the number of licensed professionals with a bachelor's degree is limited, resulting in a

very small pool of potential candidates. This highlights the need for a more comprehensive discussion about aligning academic and professional requirements to address the individual needs of our profession.

Professional Exams: A Benchmark for Readiness and Reform

(Article 2, published in Traverse 49)

Advocating for students to complete the Fundamentals of Surveying PSE exam before graduation is seen as a crucial step to connect their academic training with the demands of professional practice. This strategy caters to students' peak knowledge retention during or just after their studies, aligning with their current test-taking mindset. It also indicates their journey towards licensure, ensuring they have a thorough grasp of the various aspects of land surveying. Moreover, mandating the PSE exam can foster a culture of professional learning among graduates, which may help address the issues of an aging workforce and decreasing interest in the field.

Rethinking Experience Requirements

(Article 3, published in Traverse 49)

The experience path to licensure is just as important today in 2024 as it was back in 1974, providing a crucial balance to the growing emphasis on formal education. Surveying is a hands-on job where real-world experience often provides insights and skills that can't be taught in a classroom. While formal education gives aspiring surveyors the theoretical foundation they need, the experience path highlights the value of self-taught practitioners and skilled technicians who have gained expertise by working through real-life challenges.

In today's rapidly evolving world, where the surveying profession faces new demands and struggles to attract fresh talent, keeping the experience pathway open ensures that we don't exclude people with incredible hands-on skills who might not have a formal degree. Recognizing experience as a valid route to licensure brings diversity to the profession, welcoming different backgrounds and perspectives that make the profession stronger. This approach respects the profession's history and keeps it adaptable and inclusive, ensuring more opportunities for those who learn best by doing.

Business and Management in Surveying Education

(Article 4, published in Traverse 51)

The lack of business and management education classes in surveying programs is an apparent oversight that hampers the profession's potential for growth and success. Surveyors, while often technically skilled, frequently lack the foundational knowledge required to manage the business side of their work effectively. This deficiency leads to avoidable struggles with cash flow, contracts, marketing, and regulation compliance—issues

Famous Last Words- Episode V

Second Tour (1983-1997)
N47°50'01", W124°14'48"

By: Jon Purnell, PLS

Jon Purnell has lived and worked on Washington's Olympic Peninsula since 1974. At various times he's been a chairman, draftsman, crew chief, professional land surveyor and surveying instructor. He considers himself to be incredibly fortunate.

One of the best-kept secrets of the West End is the weather. While the western Olympic Peninsula is the home of a notable temperate rain forest, there are many days when the sun shines brightly on the coast, while further east the drier rain-shadow county is mired in mist. Still, there are days when the "Wet End" fully lives up to its reputation for precipitation.

On that day in July, it was just too wet and too dark and too stormy to traverse: Gary could not read the little recessed LED screen of the EDM because water kept collecting on its display, making it impossible to read and it was so dark in the woods it was difficult to make out the cross-hairs on the target prism. Besides, the wind was blowing hard enough to cause the ground to move under the tripod, making it hard to get good splits on our angles. We decided our time would be better spent brushing line and doing a bit of recon instead.

The four-section project straddled the Hoh River, just east of the oxbow and between the Hoh-Mainline on the south, and the Upper Hoh Road on the north, which ends at the Hoh Campground in Olympic National Park, some 18 miles upstream. Trees grow better and faster here than anywhere else in the state, but when conditions are right, Western hemlock will regenerate in a dense mass we call "dog hair" which grows as thickly as bamboo. Dog hair is highly resistant to travel. The trees grow so close together there is no room to swing your machete, and there are so many saplings, there is nowhere to put the ones you do manage to cut. I was out in front, leaning in to the wall of hemlocks trying to force my way forward when, much to my surprise, the forest spit me out, stumbling, onto the Upper Hoh Road.

I took a moment to assess my condition. Pink water poured in a steady stream off my red felt crusher rain hat, and thence onto my boots, which oozed water with every

movement I made. It was difficult to see much out of my glasses, and as I stood there, wiping them off, a car approached from the west. It was a white BMW convertible (top up), with California plates. I took a step back into the other lane, and the car stopped abruptly for me. The driver's window came down, a bit. He looked at me over the top edge of the glass asking, "is this the way to the Rain Forest?" I said nothing for a moment. The car's wipers were running as fast as they could. The rain poured in my ears and danced on car and on the pavement. Puddles were forming at my feet. Within my boots, my feet were submerged. As I took all of this in, the driver said, "Uh...beats go-do-in the woods, don't they?" With that, the window came up, and the Beemer hissed off, into the gloom.

NEW!

Washington State Common Law of Surveys & Property Boundaries
Second Edition

Introductory Pricing
Total retail November 2024
Hardcover: \$150
Non-Members: \$150
Ordering \$20 or more?
Volume discounts available.

Order Online
LSAW.org

APPENDIX 2: MAP/PLAT DESIGN COMPETITION

NSPS is pleased to announce the winners of the 2025 Map/Plat Design Competition and expresses its appreciation for all who participated.

The general guidelines for the competition are:

- Entrants need not be members of NSPS; however, entries must be sponsored by a state association affiliate of NSPS or a member of NSPS. NSPS members may self-sponsor.
- Recent freehand or computer drafted maps/plats are eligible for entry.
- Categories:
 - Subdivision Plats
 - Boundary/Cadastral Maps
 - Topographic Maps
 - ALTA/NSPS Survey Maps
 - Miscellaneous Maps

The winning entries can be found [here](#) and two examples below.

Congratulations to all entrants for your participation and look forward to next year's competition!

