

Property Boundaries and Boundary Markers in Finland

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Key words: Cadastre; History; Land management; Legislation

SUMMARY

There are more than two million properties and approximately 12 million boundary markers in Finland. The boundary markers include boundary stones, posts and signs, but new boundary signs are no longer made. Posts are also used on the boundaries of road and railway areas. The oldest boundary markers were made of stones or wooden posts. While these can still be used, most boundary markers used today are metal pipes or plastic posts.

The boundaries between properties may be straight, curved or natural boundaries. For historical reasons, there are also previously undetermined boundaries in Finnish water areas and former road areas. Matters relating to boundaries and boundary markers can be discovered in detail in land survey maps and documents and, today, increasingly also in the Land Information System of Finland.

New boundary markers are constructed during land survey operations. In areas covered by a town plan, the use of boundary markers is not necessary, since it is sufficient to determine the coordinates of the boundary points. A boundary marker may also be located on the side of the actual boundary point, or a pair of boundary markers can be used.

It is estimated that about 20% of boundary markers have vanished. When this happens, the boundary can be determined and the lost boundary markers replaced with new ones in a property determination procedure called demarcation. In order to preserve boundary markers, they should be marked in land use projects. Boundary markers are at particular risk in construction, road and ditch projects. If a boundary marker is known to be at risk of being lost during a land use project, it makes sense to have it moved to the side in advance in a transfer procedure, which will be cheaper than arranging demarcation after boundary markers have been lost. Boundary markers will also

deteriorate over time: stone will disintegrate, wood will rot and metal will be eaten by corrosion, so demarcation will also be necessary in the future. The National Land Survey of Finland is planning to switch to a coordinate-based cadastre over the next few years, which means that boundary markers may gradually become history.

In forests, the boundary lines have traditionally been cleared when determining new boundaries. Today, land surveyors are cautious about clearing boundary lines, even though this is required by law. According to the Adjoining Properties Act, landowners are entitled to reopen grown-in boundaries later, if necessary.

Many land survey students have summer jobs in earthwork projects or mines, where they do not learn about boundary markers. A boundary marker park has been built in the yard of Lapland University of Applied Sciences, allowing students to familiarise themselves with all boundary markers in accordance with the current instructions. The boundary marker park is open to everyone, and brochures are also available.