

Impact of US Survey Foot to International Foot

By Michael Dennis on behalf of NGS.

Mr. Dennis is collecting input regarding the impact of change when Montana, and select other states, legislatively adopted use of the international foot. Would you please forward this to the general membership for input? Corryn Greenawalt is willing to compile responses and pass the information along to NGS for their consideration. She is also look forward to learning about the experiences (both good and bad) of Montana surveyors that were practicing at the time of the change!

Please respond to: cgreenawalt@fvcc.edu

Hello international foot State Geodetic Coordinators and Advisors!

You all represent states that switched from U.S. survey feet to international feet in the late 1980s or early 1990s, as part of the change from State Plane 1927 to 1983. I am writing to seek your input on the impact of that change, especially as it pertains to boundary surveys.

I have three questions that I hope you can answer within the next week or two:

- 1. Are you aware of any costs, mistakes, or other burdens on performing property surveys or on the conveyance and enjoyment of real property? Do you have any examples of such problems?*
- 2. Do you know whether your state had an implementation plan for the change? This can include things not related to boundary surveys.*
- 3. Were there any lessons learned about the change that you can share? This, too, can include things not related to boundary surveys.*

Please feel free to ask within your surveying community to see if others can provide input. That would especially be helpful from those who were practicing land surveying when the change occurred.

I've also copied Curt Sumner and Tim Burch of NSPS, in case they have anything they can share.

Some background:

A small but vocal minority of surveyors claim that deprecating the U.S. survey foot will cause massive disruption in boundary surveys and property conveyance. They claim the cost of the change will be large, because so many existing land records are in U.S. survey feet.

It so happens that I am a registered land surveyor in one of the states that made this change, Arizona. For all the boundary work that I performed, I never once had a problem due to the different types of feet. I started surveying in 1997, several years after the foot change. However, many (perhaps most) plats, results of surveys, deeds, and other records that I used predated the change in foot definition. And a vast majority of records of any vintage did not specify the type of foot. The problems that I did encounter with the foot type involved coordinates (usually State Plane), but that never affected my boundary surveys.

NIST and NGS are working on a "final determination" Federal Register Notice. It would be helpful to know whether change in the foot definition actually caused problems, especially for boundary surveys. Any information you can provide would be greatly appreciated!

Thanks in advance!

Michael Dennis