Montana Cadastral Help

Last updated: November 3, 2022
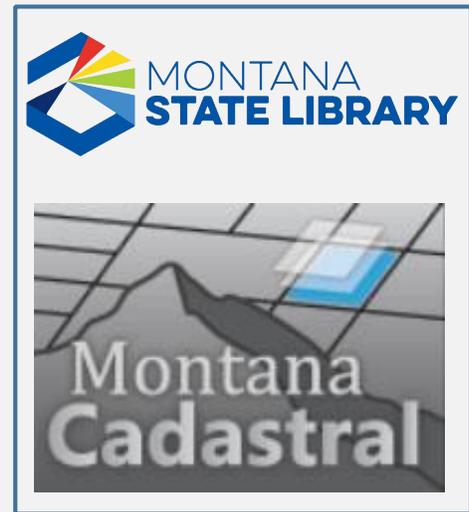
Contents

About the Montana Cadastral

Cadastral data is the information about rights and interest in land. Cadastral data may also be known as real estate data, parcel information, or tax parcel information. There are many legal and historical nuances surrounding the management of cadastral information. The Cadastral NSDI/MSDI simplifies these subtleties by providing cadastral information in different components, cadastral reference (GCDB PLSS in Montana), parcels, and related coincident geometry (trust lands, stipulations, subsurface rights, boundaries, etc.) which all should carry a core set of information to support identified business process needs.

This map application provides access to information on public and private property. With this application you can:

- Search for property information by geocode, owner, or subdivision (use the "parcel search" tool)
- Search for property information by zooming in to a specific part of the state and clicking on one parcel at a time to display the property record card
- Download the parcel GIS data and the Department of Revenue Computer Assisted Mass Appraisal (CAMA) database

Determining Air Photo Imagery Dates

The imagery in the background on the Cadastral application is from the ESRI World Imagery map service. The dates vary depending upon location. To determine the date of an image of interest, follow these steps:

1. Launch the ESRI *World Imagery with Metadata* map application:
   https://montana.maps.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=1ac1e02ec3754d718855df6a4d0228ee
2. Type an address or place name in the Search box at the upper right then click the search button (magnifying glass icon). The application zooms to the location and displays a Search result box pointing to the address/location searched. Optional: Close this Search results box.
3. Click on the image at a location of interest. An information window displays with imagery provider, date, resolution, accuracy, and data source for the image shown at that zoom level. **IMPORTANT**: The image shown may change to a different data source at different zoom levels.

Who to Call for Assistance

- **If you find errors on a property record card**, you must contact your local Department of Revenue (DOR) staff stationed at the county (Contact Information by County). Only DOR staff can address data errors. DOR staff members maintain the database displayed by the Property Record Card in the Cadastral application.

- **To understand the meaning of coding and terms** used in a Property Record Card. Some clarification may be found in this list of codes.

- **To request that your name be removed** from the Montana Cadastral web application please visit the Montana Department of Revenue page to download and complete the PDF form.

- **To report problems with the performance** of this map application, or to get help with **how to use the application**, contact Montana State Library staff (406-444-5354, geoinfo@mt.gov)

    IMPORTANT: State Library staff are unable to update or correct property ownership information shown in property record cards.

Tutorial
Cadastral Web Tutorial

Known Issues

Issue 1:	Map doesn't display
Cause:	The map application has changed, but your web browser is looking at a cached, old copy of the page
Fix:	Press Ctrl+F5 to force a browser refresh or press Ctrl+Shift+Delete to clear browsing history, cookies, and cached images and files

Issue 2:	Property search causes Chrome browser to crash
Cause:	The Chrome browser in use is not the most recent version
Fix:	Update the Chrome browser to the most recent version
Workaround:	Zoom in on the map a bit, then perform your search again

Search

Click on the Search button in the left menu of the application. A window "Choose Parcel Search Criteria" will expand to the left of the menu. Search by:

- Owner Search. If a parcel is listed as something other than real property, for example personal property on the property record card (Primary Information I Property Category I Subcategory) it cannot be mapped. The % symbol can be used as a wildcard in name searches.
- Geocode Search
- Assessment Code Search
- Certificate of Survey Search
- Address Search (Address is required: City and Zip are optional)
- Subdivision

After executing the search, choose the specific property from the list of search results. A property record card displays and the map zooms to the property. **NOTE**: You can hide and then show the property record card again using the blue arrow on the top left of the property record card.

Data

Montana Cadastral Data is downloadable for use in your own software programs (we assume GIS software but there might be other applications). The Data button takes you to an FTP site. The GIS data is available in ESRI File Geodatabase and Shapefile formats. The CAMA data are distributed in Microsoft SQL Server format. CAMA data is linked to parcel data via the parcel geocode.

Tools

- Montana Cadastral logo (upper left corner)—zooms map out to the original full-state view.

Tools button in left column

- Identify—lets you identify a particular piece of property. It opens a panel that shows the property/parcel details you picked.
- Quick Zoom—zooms in directly to a City, County, or Township, Range, Section based on user selections.
- Buffer/Area Select:
  - o Buffer—permits identifying or defining an area within a specified distance around a feature.
  - o Area (polygon)—allows users to draw a freehand selection area directly into the map viewer. Click once, then click as many times as needed to draw the shape, double click to complete the area selection. All land parcels within the polygon will be selected and owners will be displayed in a list available to click on and view details.
- Measure—lets you measure a map distance in miles.

Map control in upper right corner

- Zoom Out (minus sign)—zooms map out to see more of the map area, but less detail.

- Zoom In (plus sign)—zooms map in to see an area in more detail.

  NOTE: Zoom to a user defined rectangular area by holding the shift key while drawing a box over the area you want to see.

- Previous (left pointing arrow)—takes you back to the previous view before you did something like zoom in or out.

- Next (right pointing arrow)—takes you forward to the view before you clicked 'Previous Map."

- Print button – displays the map area in a print layout view. Click Print to send the print command.

Base map options

- Street View—displays a map of Montana with layers of roads, counties, Indian reservations, private and public land parcels.

- Aerial View—displays the landscape of Montana from satellite and aerial images. Also displays road, county, and parcel layers.

- Topo View – displays an image of the U.S. Geological Survey's topographic map. The USGS refers to these images as Digital Raster Graphics (DRGs) and depicts USGS Topographic Map Symbols.

Terms Defined

- Assessment Code—a unique number that identifies one or more properties for the county tax billing process.
- Certificate of Survey—a drawing that shows the lot lines and size, as well as the "improvements" or buildings, fences and other man-made objects. A survey is prepared by a licensed surveyor who will visit the property, take the measurements and guarantee their accuracy.
- Public Land Survey System (PLSS)—the way of subdividing and describing land in the United States. All lands in the public domain are subject to subdivision by this rectangular system of surveys, which is regulated by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM).
- Township—an approximately 6-mile square area of land, containing 36 sections. Also, a horizontal row of townships in the PLSS.
- Range—a vertical column of townships in the PLSS.
- Section—a one-square-mile block of land, containing 640 acres, or approximately one thirty-sixth of a township. Due to the curvature of the Earth, sections may occasionally be slightly smaller than one square mile.

- Geocode—A geocode in the Montana Department of Revenue's Orion appraisal system is a 17-digit property identifier that is the primary database key between the map and Orion database. In most cases it is unique to a tax parcel polygon although exceptions can be found. It is geo-referenced in the sense that a user could determine the county, township, section and quarter section of a property from the first 9 digits with the assistance of the four-digit township code lookup table (digits 3 through 6) for the townships in Montana.

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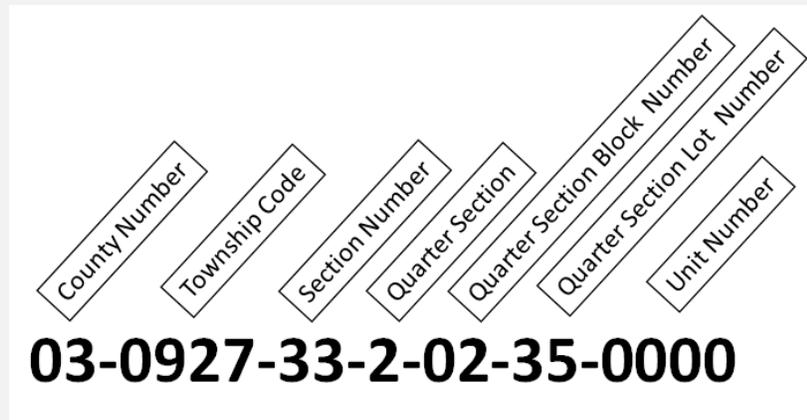
County Number	Each county in Montana has an assigned number. Yellowstone County is 03.
Township Code	Each township in Montana is assigned a code that covers both the township and range. In this example 0927 is the code for T1S R26E.
Section Number	The number of the section with the township.
Quarter Section Number	Each quarter section is assigned a number. NE¼ = 1 NW¼ = 2 SW¼=3 SE¼ = 4
Quarter Section Block Number	This designates a "block" of ownership parcels. This usually follows the boundary of a city block, a survey or a farm tract. Each quarter section has its own set of block numbers.
Quarter Section Lot Number	Each contiguous individual ownership is assigned a "lot" number within the ownership block.
Unit Number	Identifies the property rights associated with the parcel. This is commonly used for condominiums, railroad leased properties, mobile home courts, and other situations where there are several taxable improvements on one ownership lot.

- Conservation Easement—a legal agreement that protects private lands from development that would destroy or degrade a property's scenic, wildlife, agricultural or recreational values. In many ways, a conservation easement is a document that establishes the landowner's vision for the land. The land trust works with current and future landowners to steward the land as the easement donor envisioned and if necessary defend that vision now and into the future. Conservation easements are legal agreements that a landowner voluntarily negotiates with a qualified land trust. The conservation agreement establishes the landowner's commitment to limit development of their land to conserve the property's natural values. A conservation easement is negotiated between the landowner and a land trust based in part on the landowner's vision and priorities, so easements vary in intent and purpose. But practically and legally, easements typically restrict these land developments: Subdivision for residential or commercial activities, dumping of toxic waste, and surface mining. It is important to note that under the terms of a conservation easement the landowner continues to own, and manage, the property. The property still produces crops, hay, livestock, timber and other commodities. The landowner still makes all the farm/ranch decisions, still pays property taxes, and because the goal of the easement is to conserve open lands, the goal of the easement is to preserve the elements of a working farm or ranch.
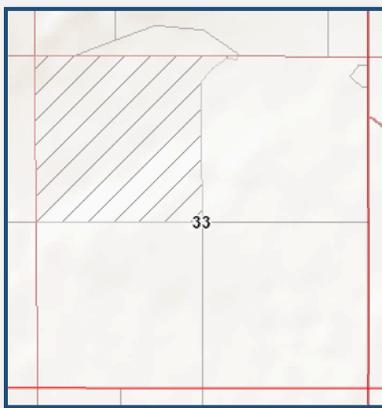
Conservation Easements are depicted on the map with gray diagonal hatching

- Hydrography/Surface Water—a comprehensive set of digital spatial data that contains information about surface water features such as lakes, ponds, streams, rivers, springs and wells.
- $0 Value—a parcel with a final land value, final building value, full reappraisal value, or a taxable market value of $0.00. This value typically indicates a change in value in the current tax year due to a change in property status (i.e. new construction, demolition, land use changes, dividing of parcels, etc.). The cadastral web site will display $0.00 value information for these parcels until an Assessment Notice has been mailed to the property owner during the following tax year formally notifying the property owner of the new value. For specific valuation information on a parcel, contact the local Department of Revenue office.