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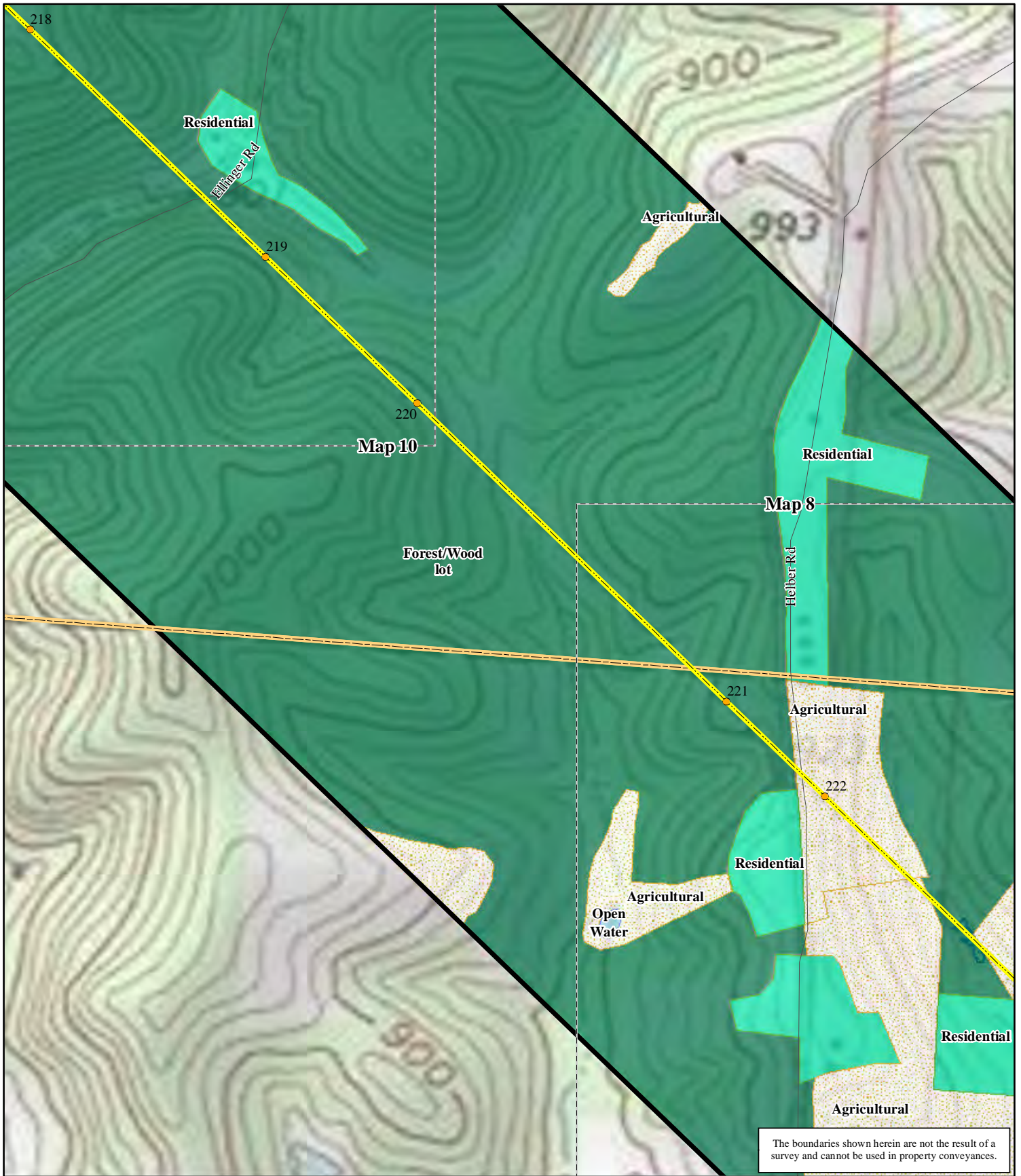
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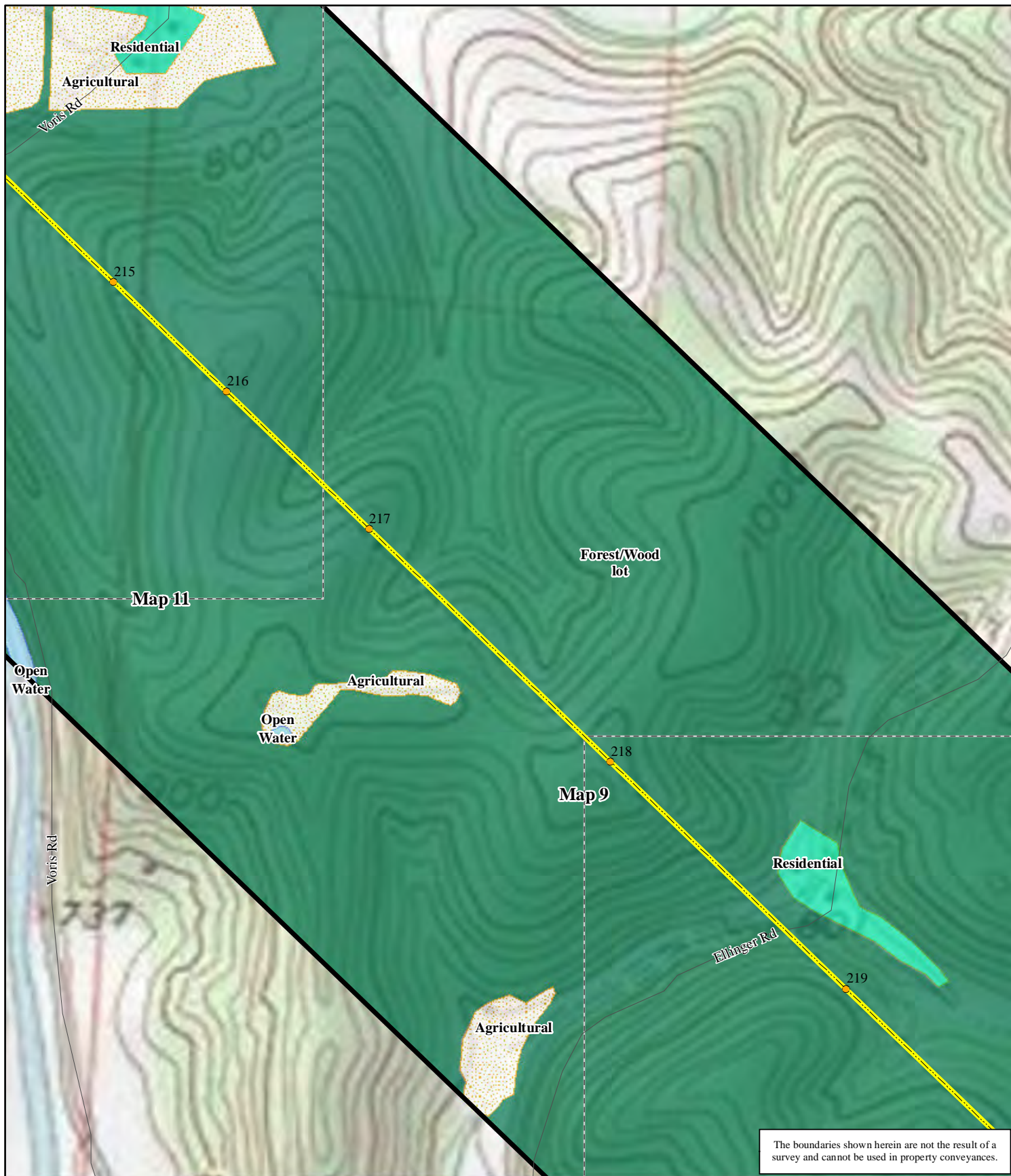
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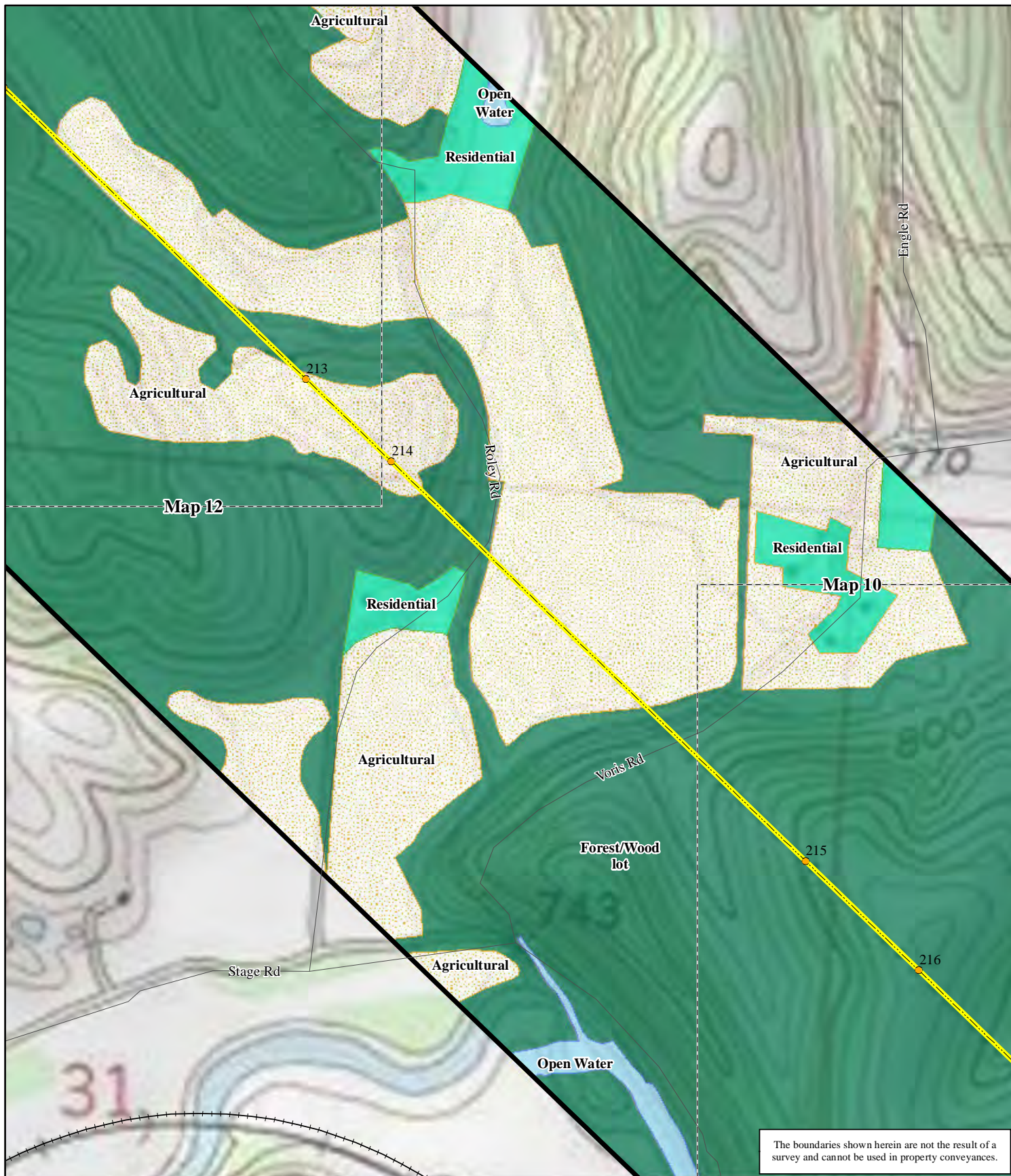
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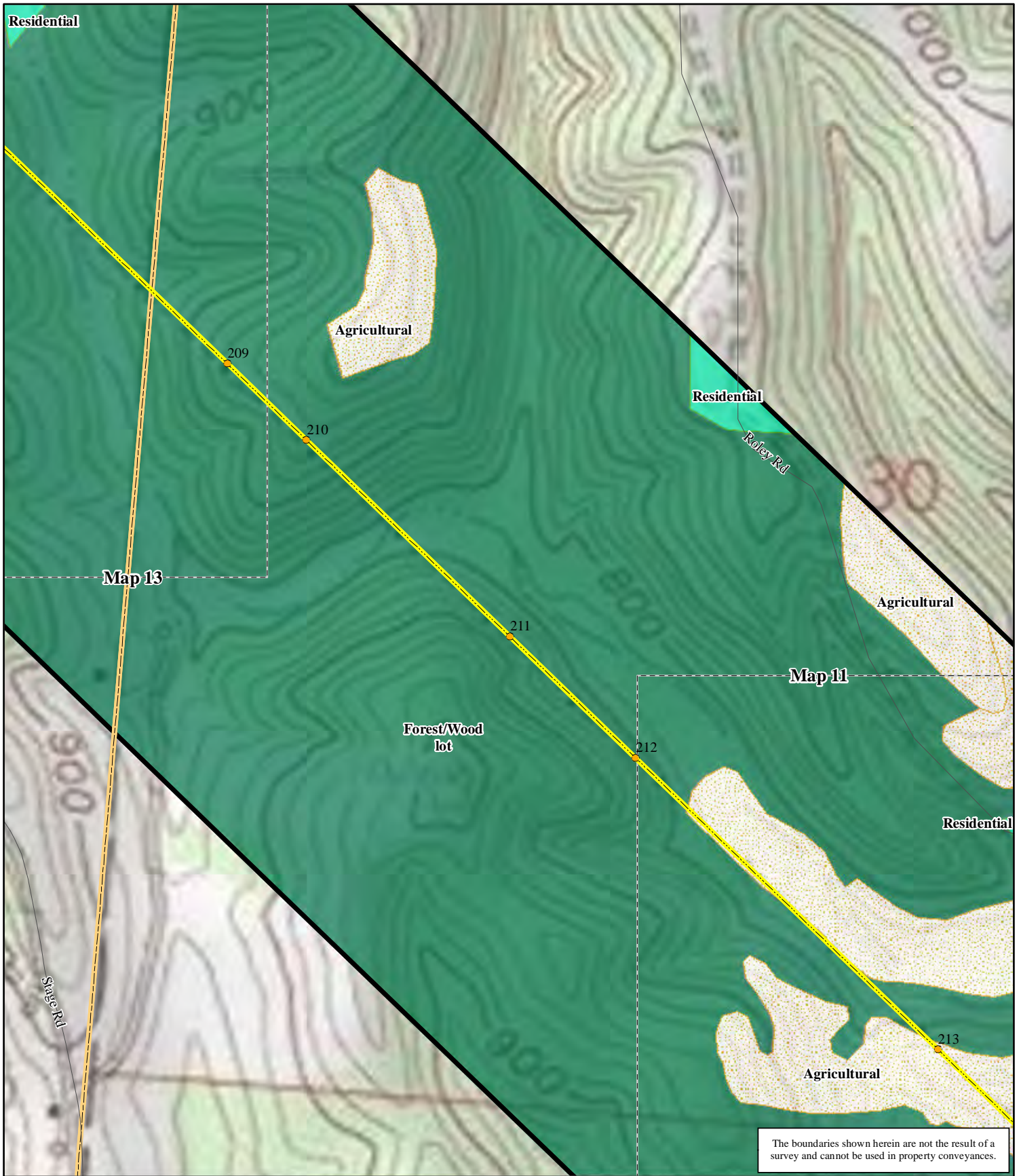
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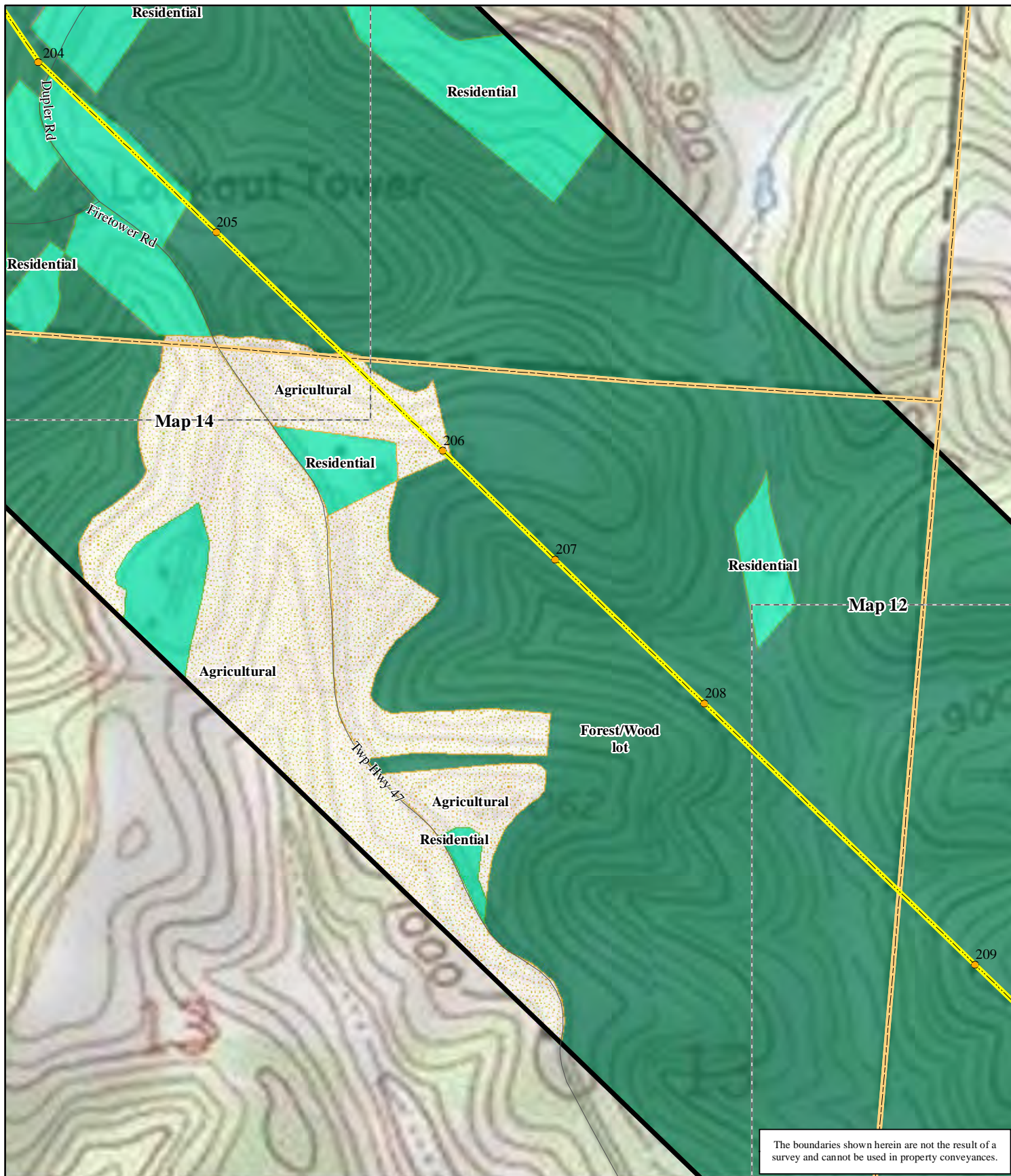
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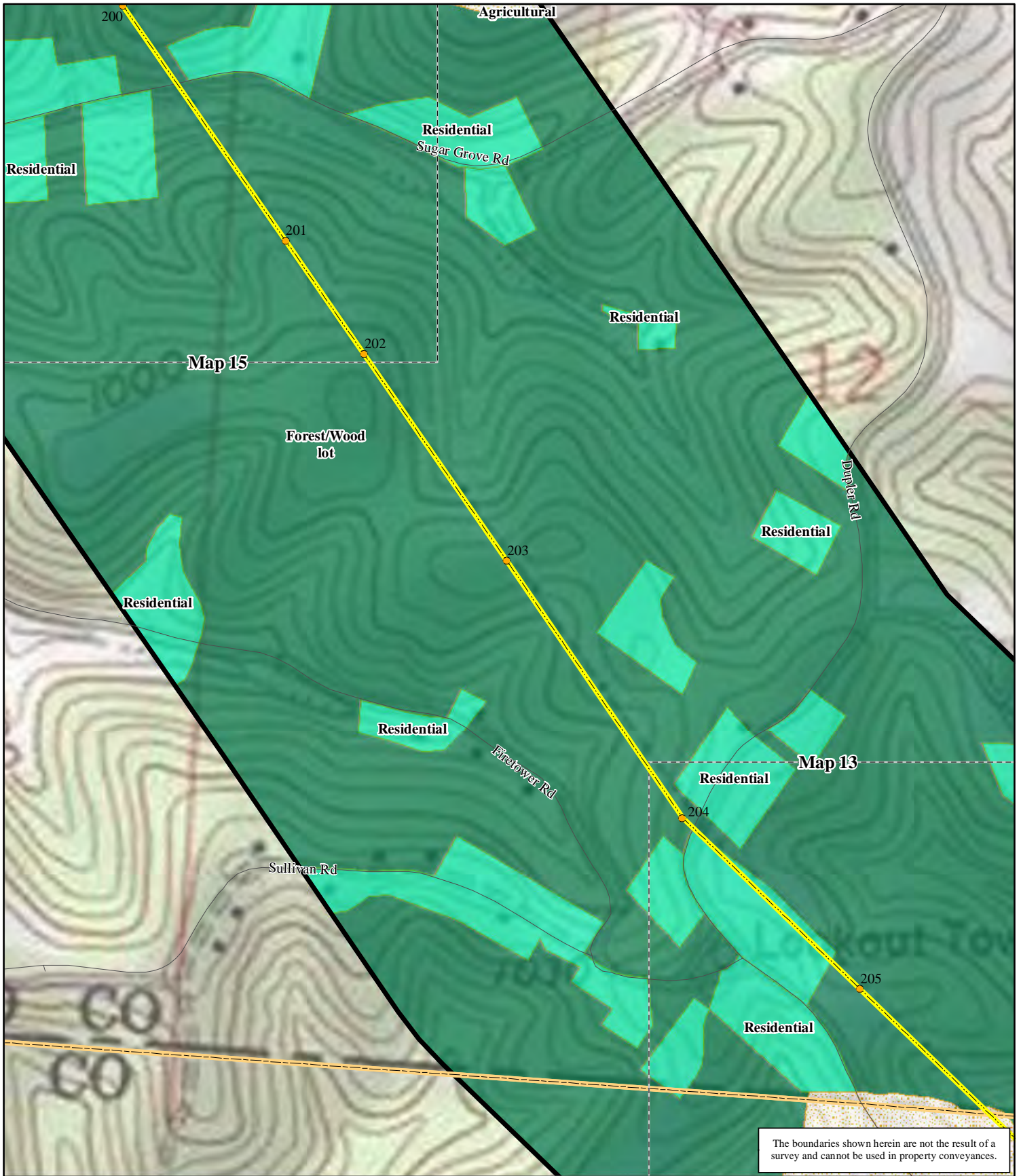
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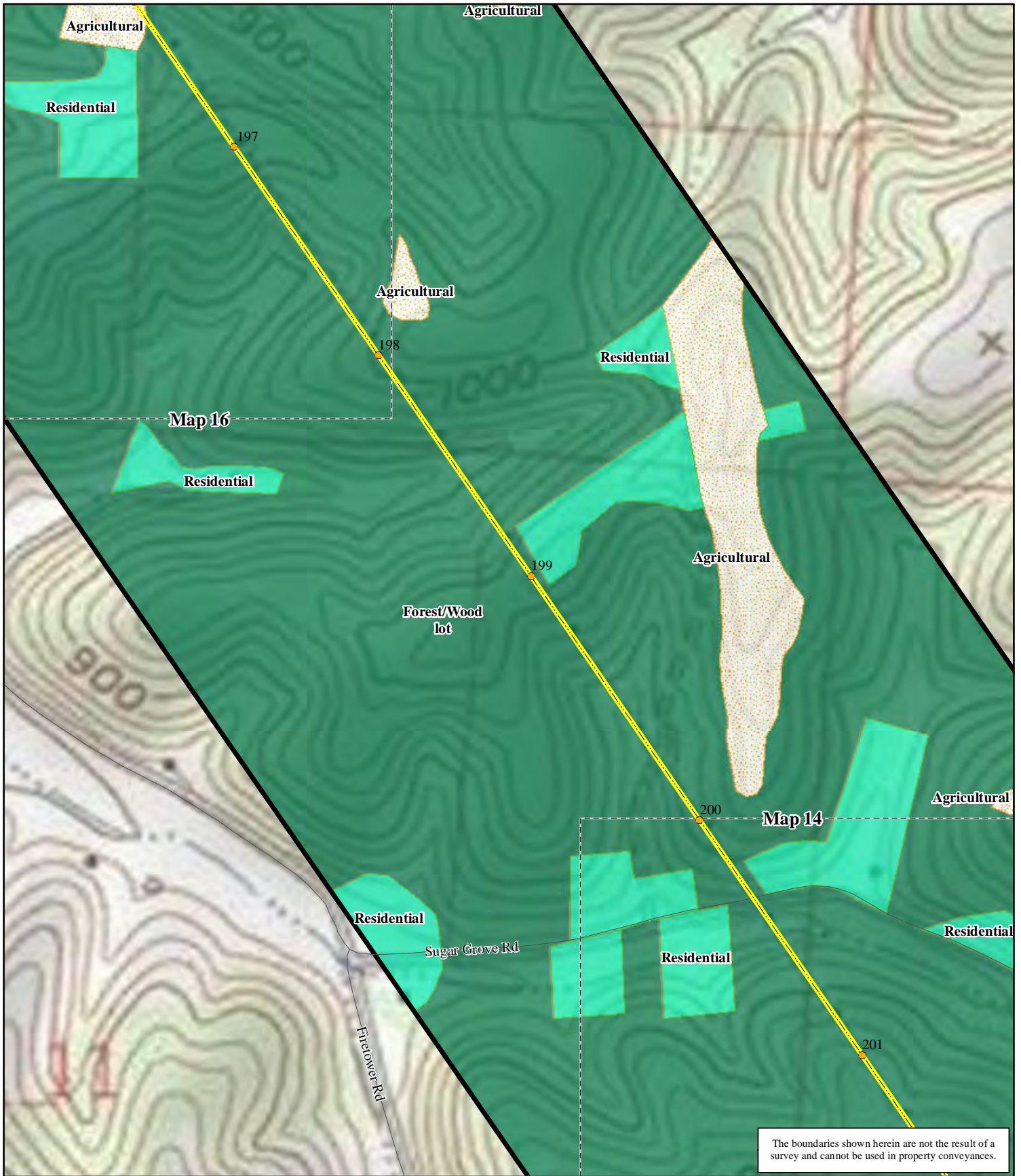
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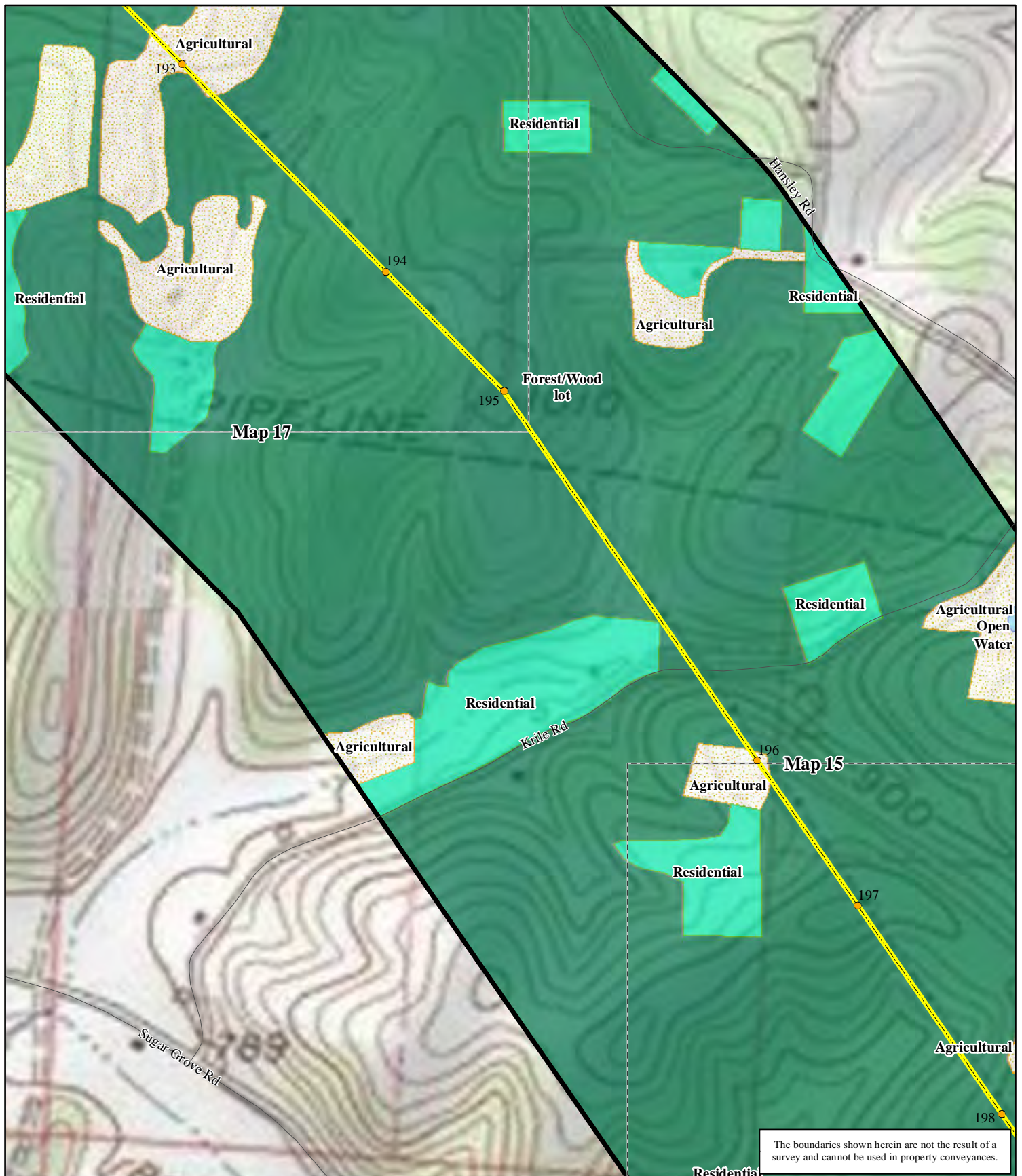
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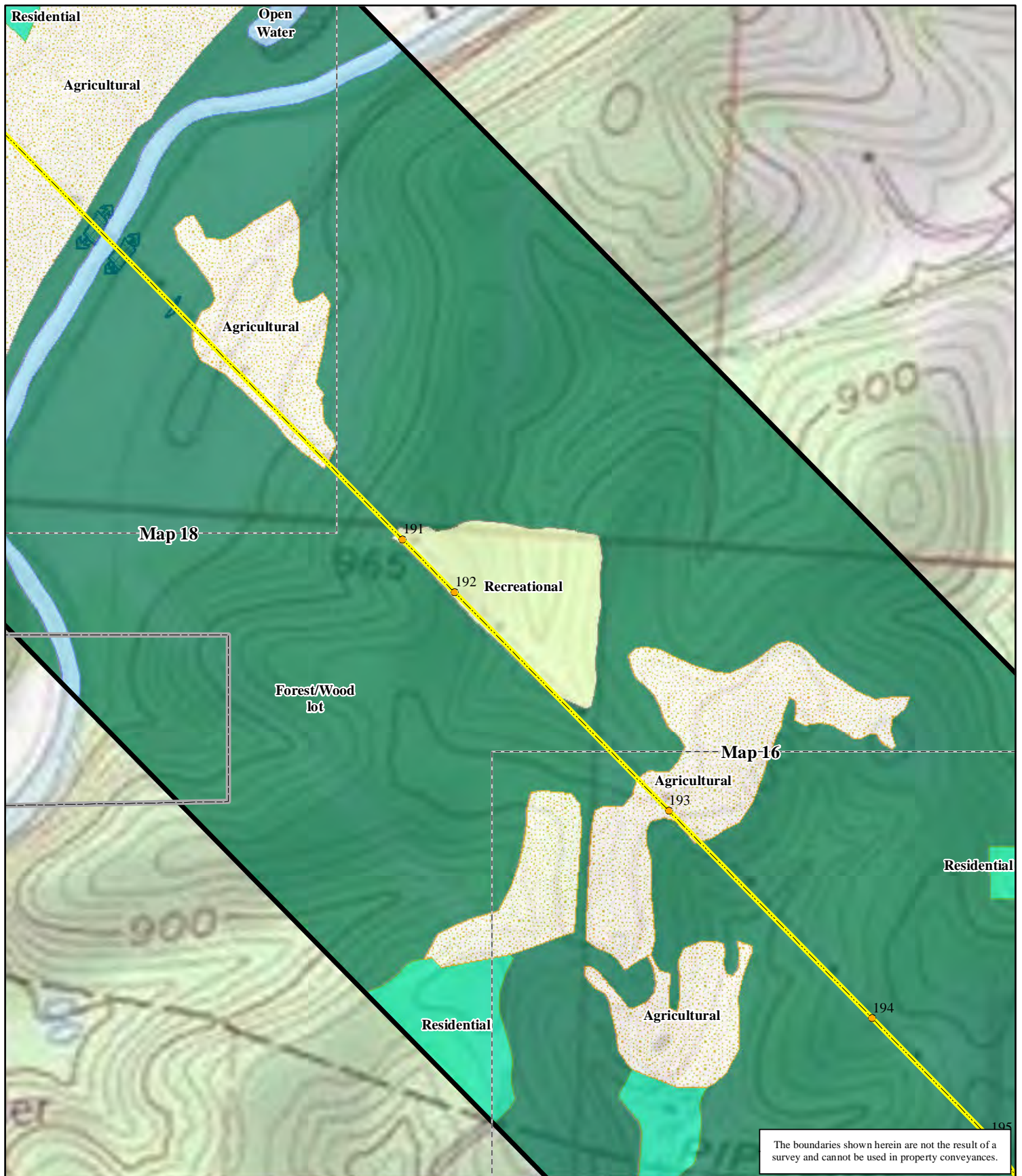
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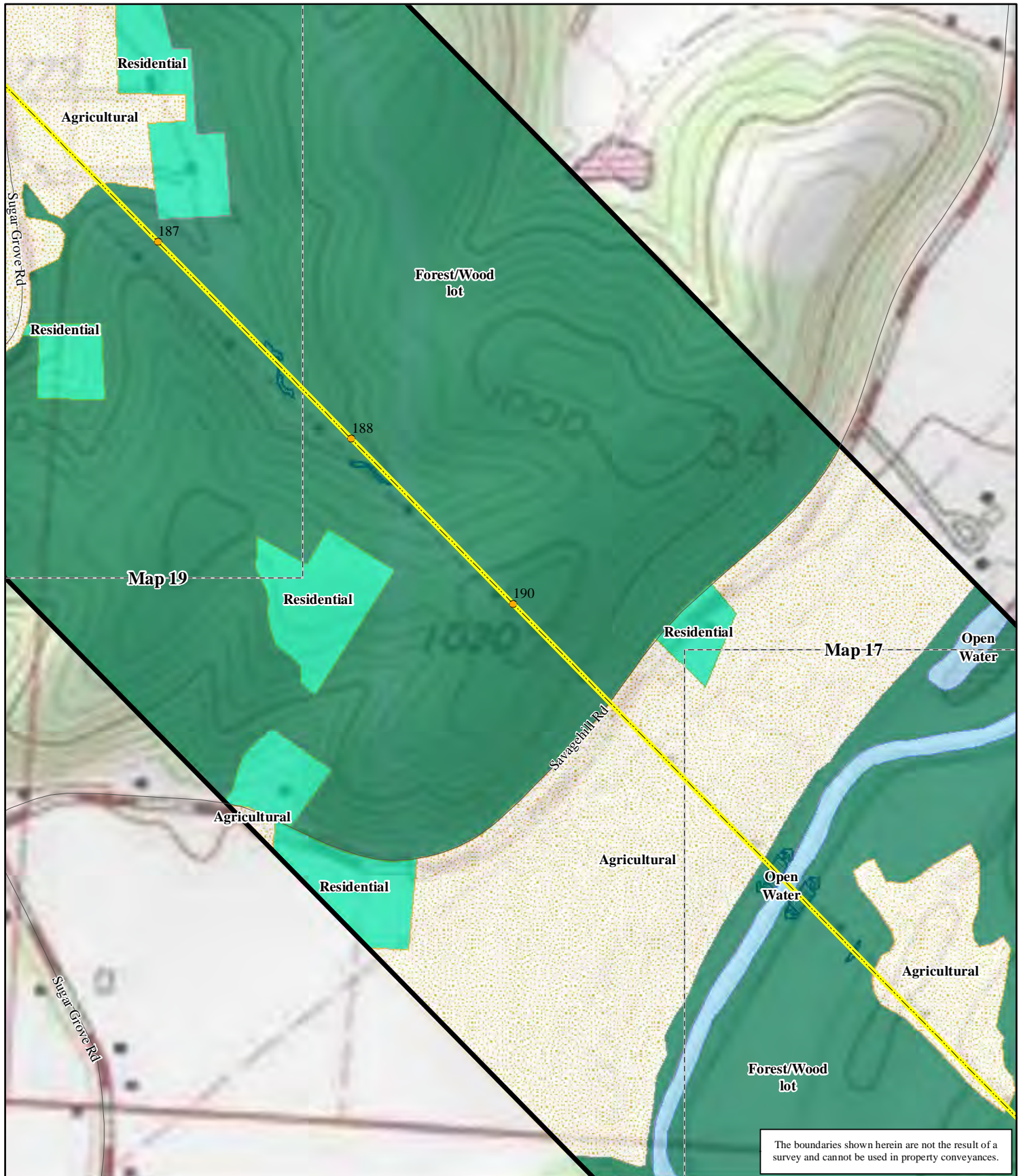
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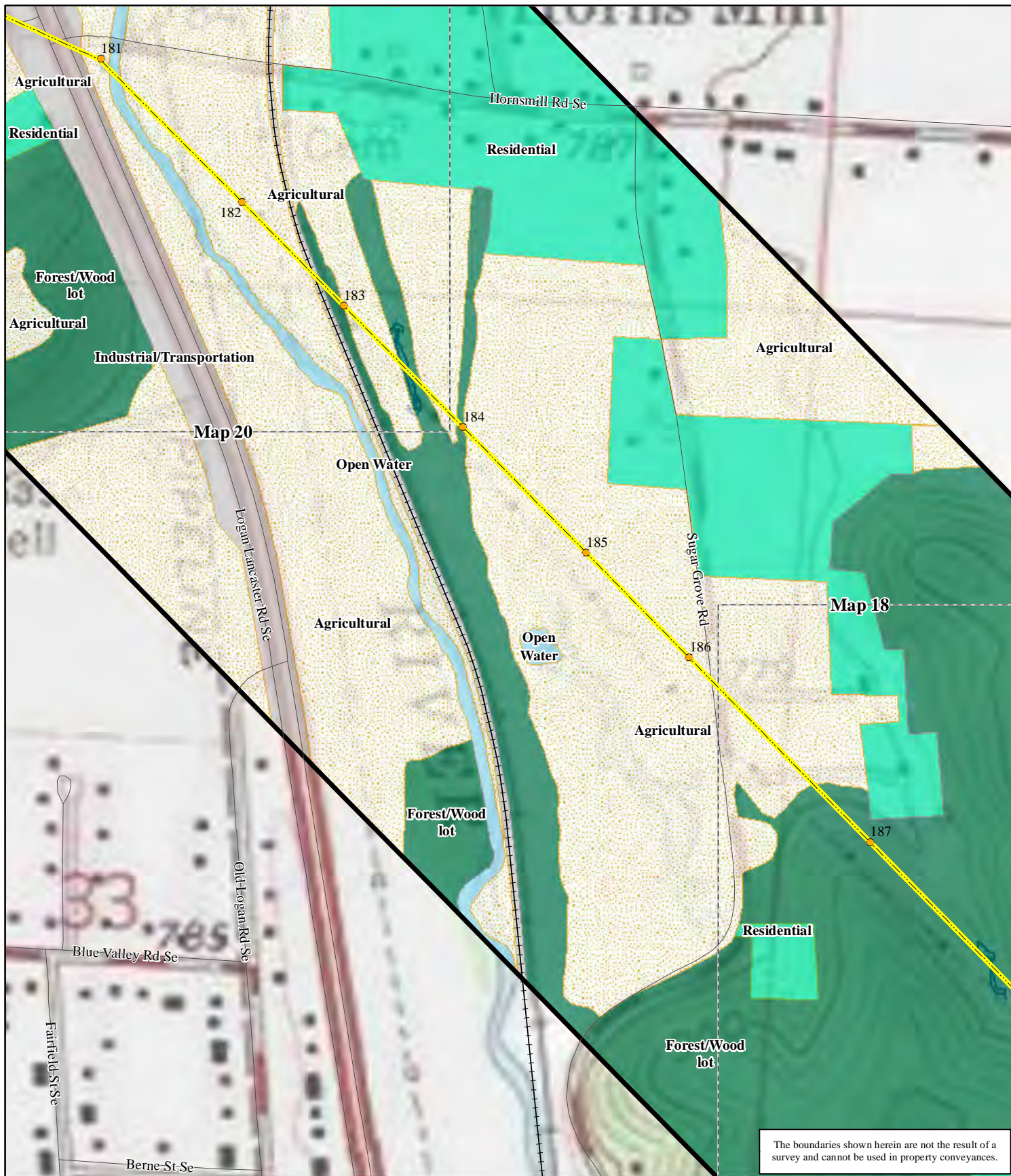
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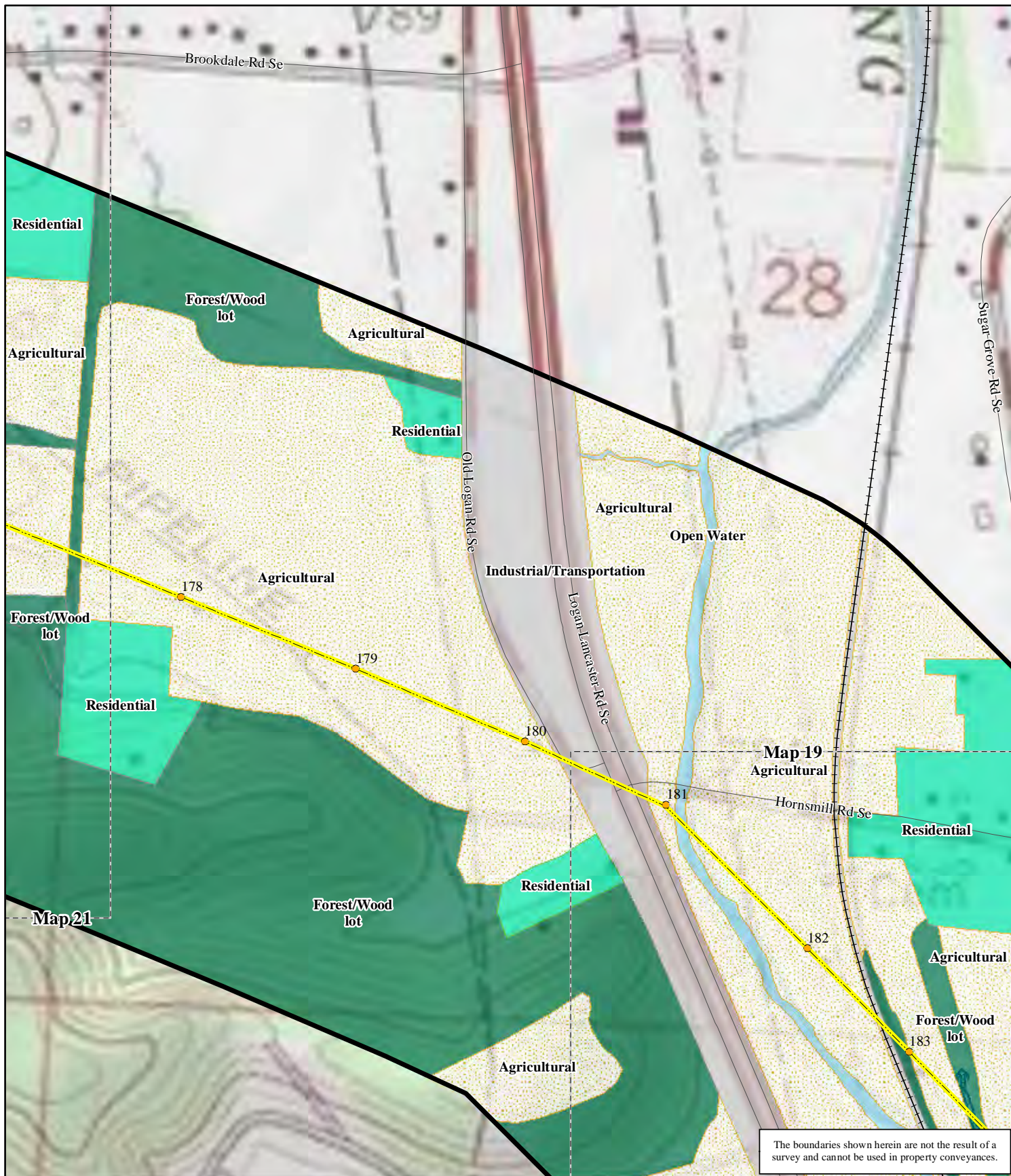
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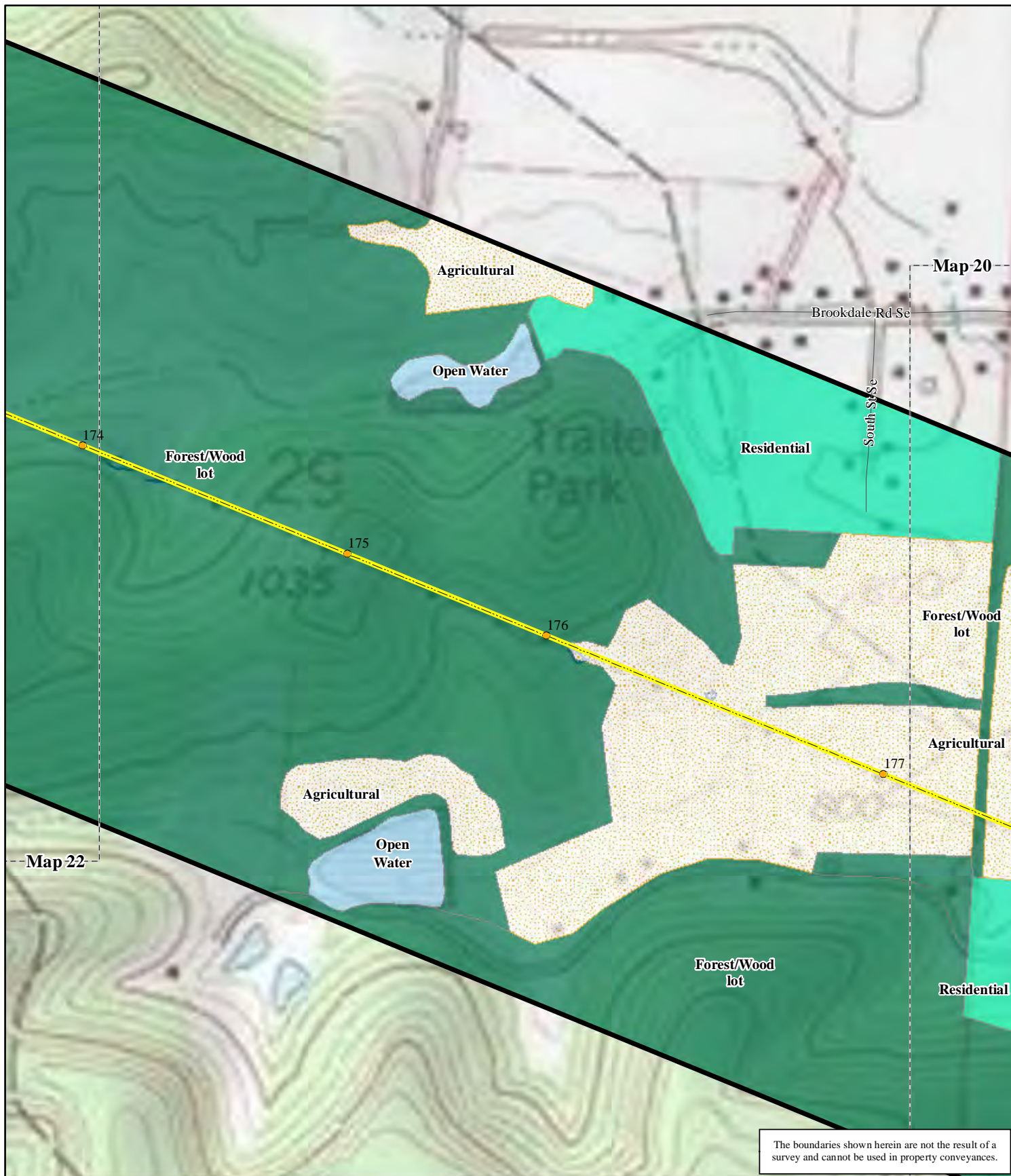
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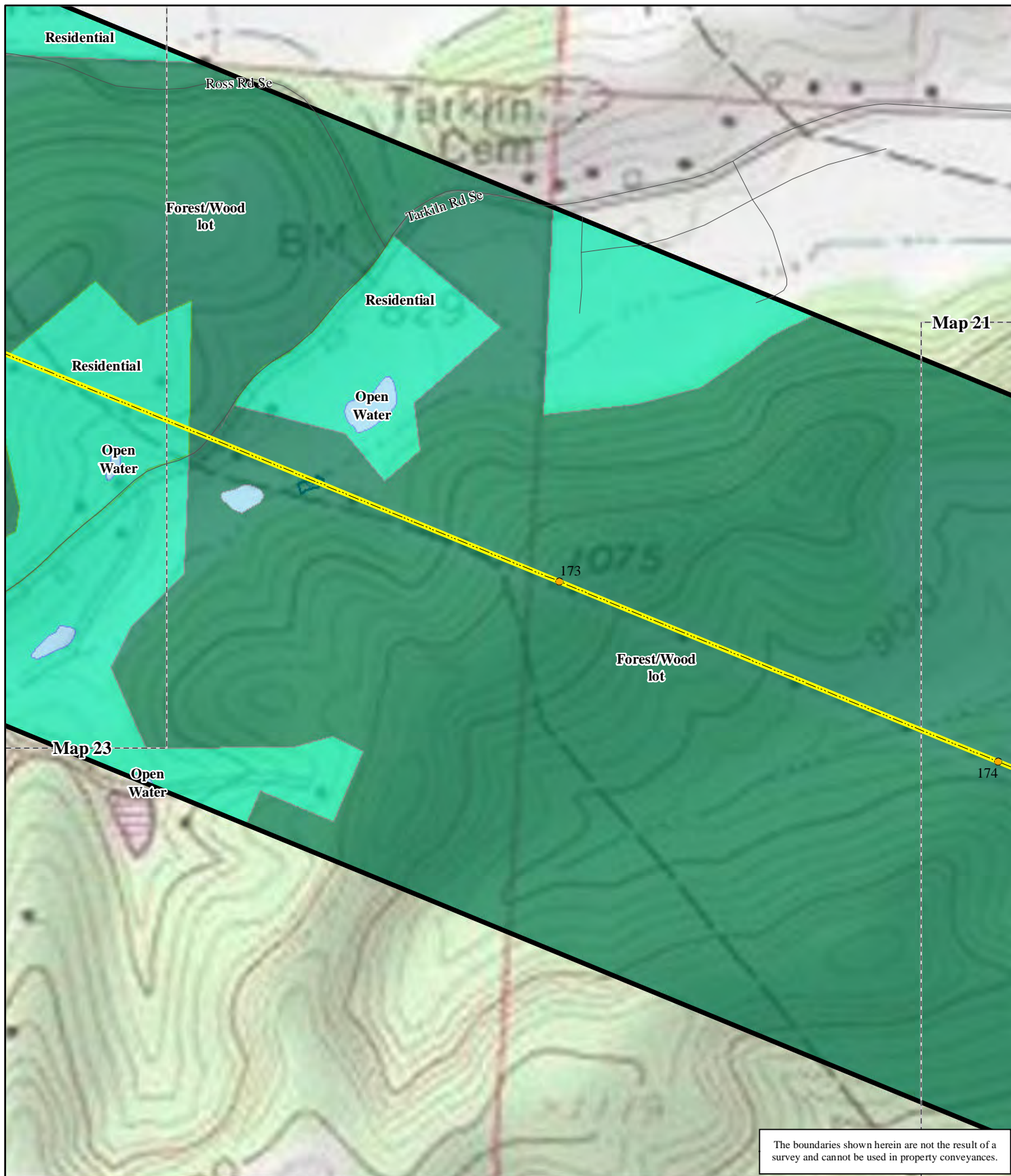
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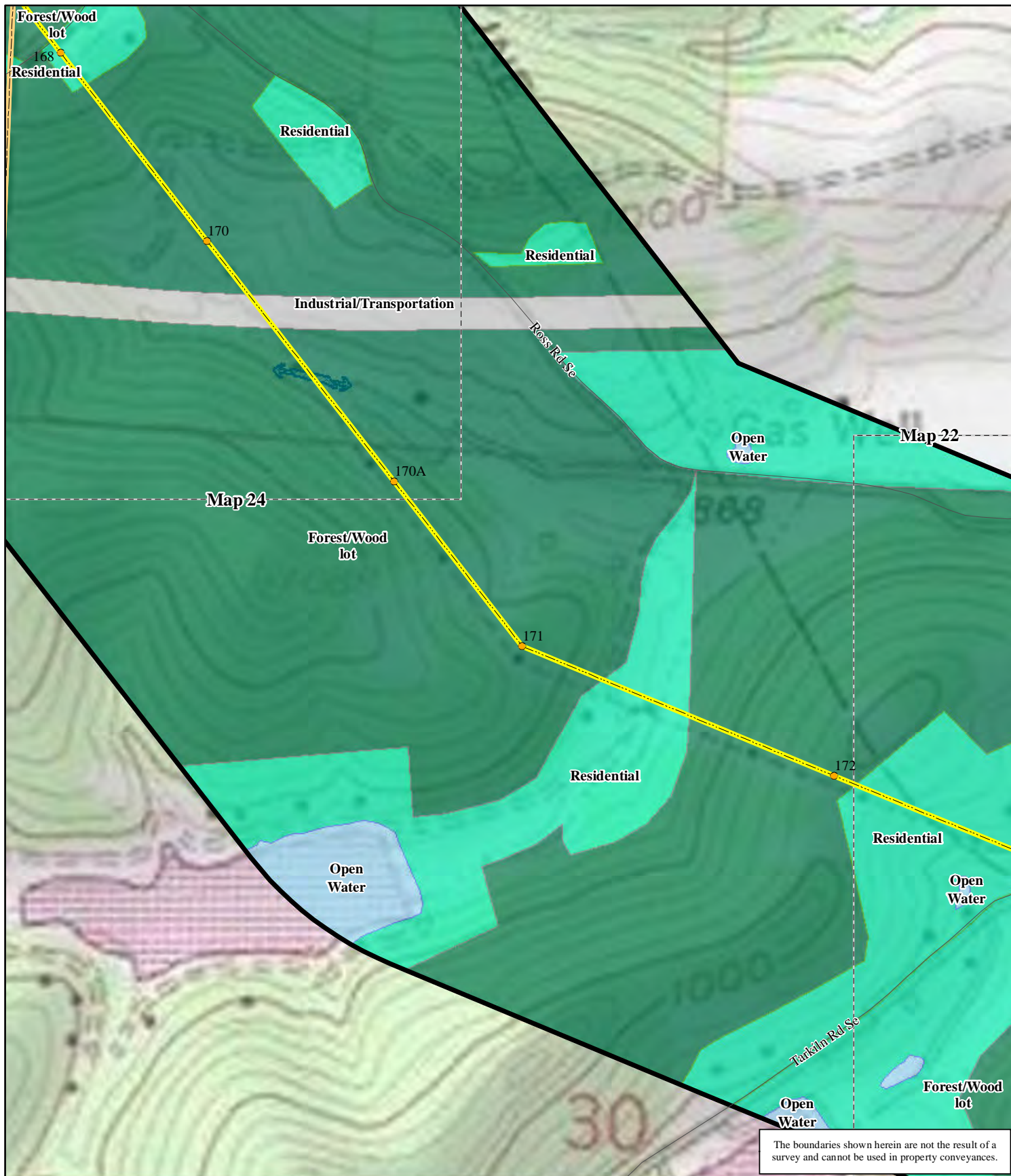
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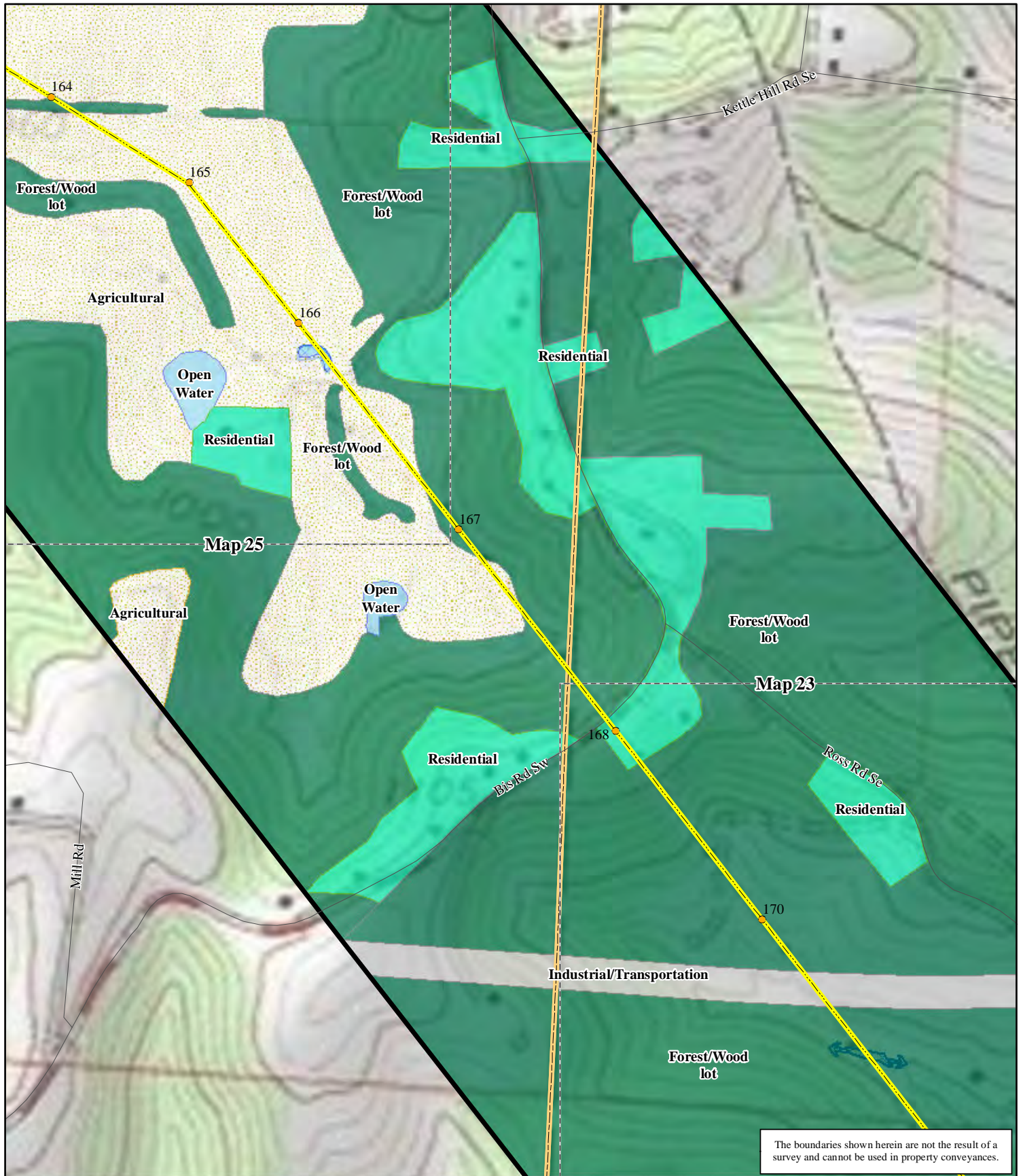
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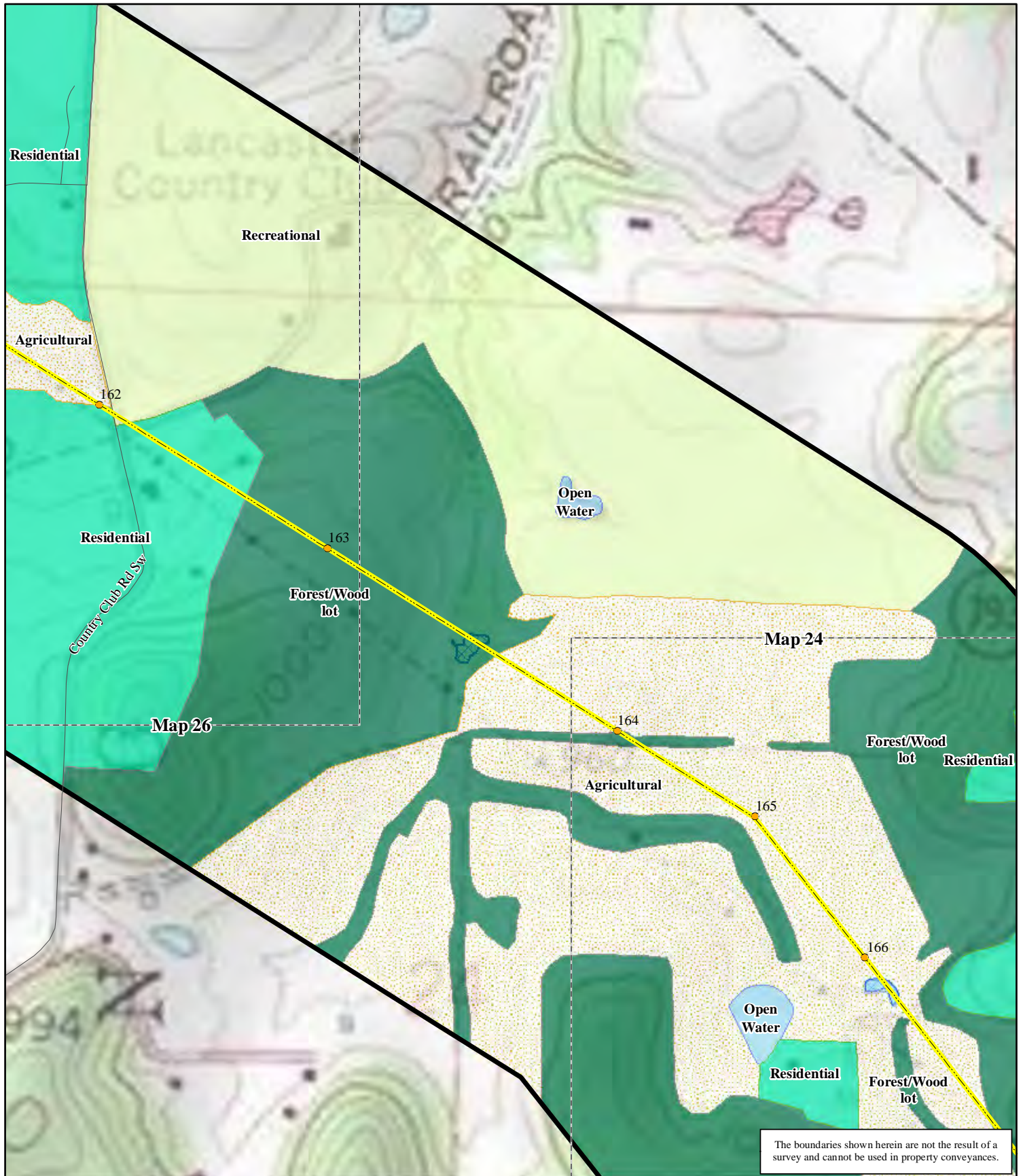
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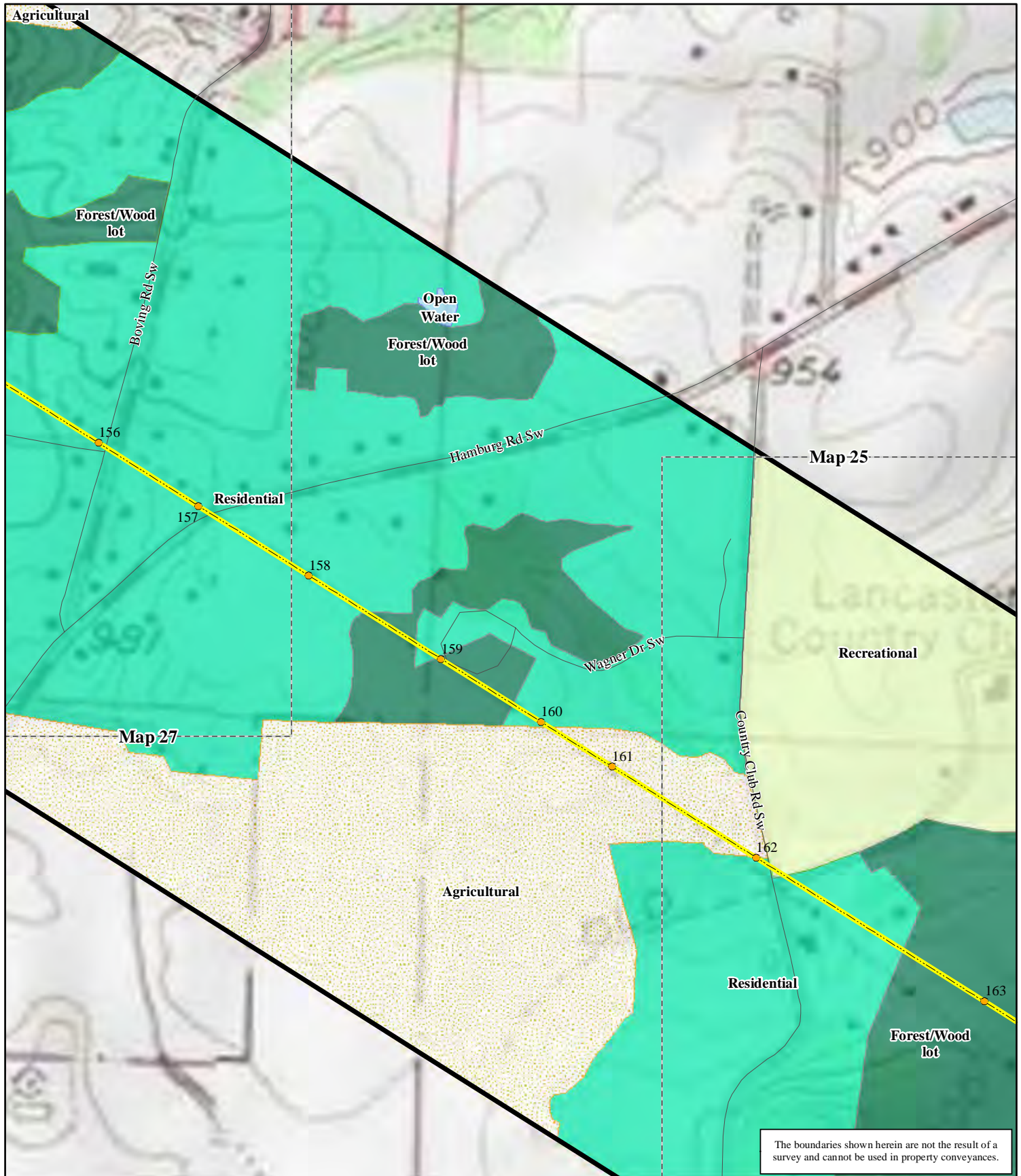
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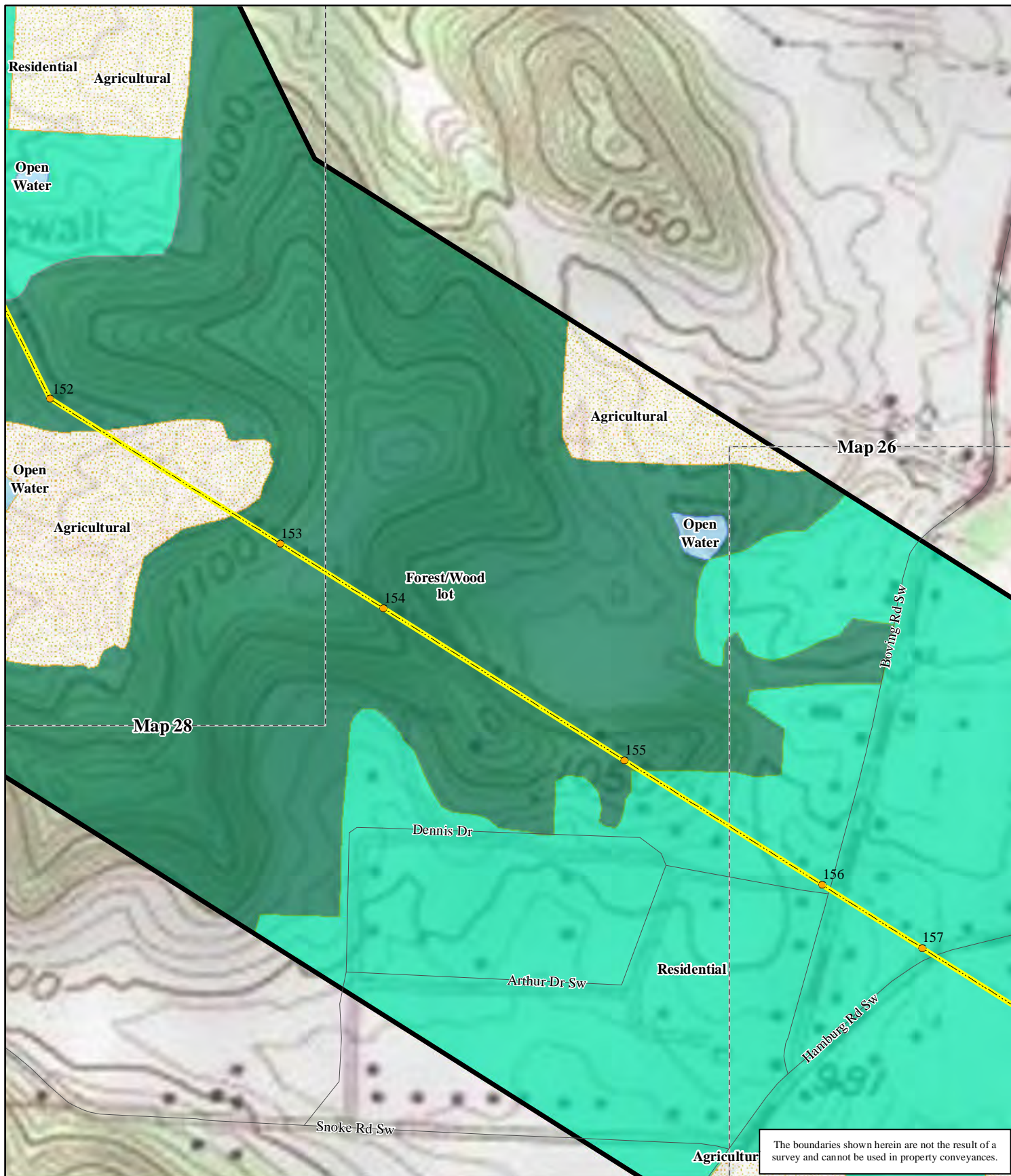
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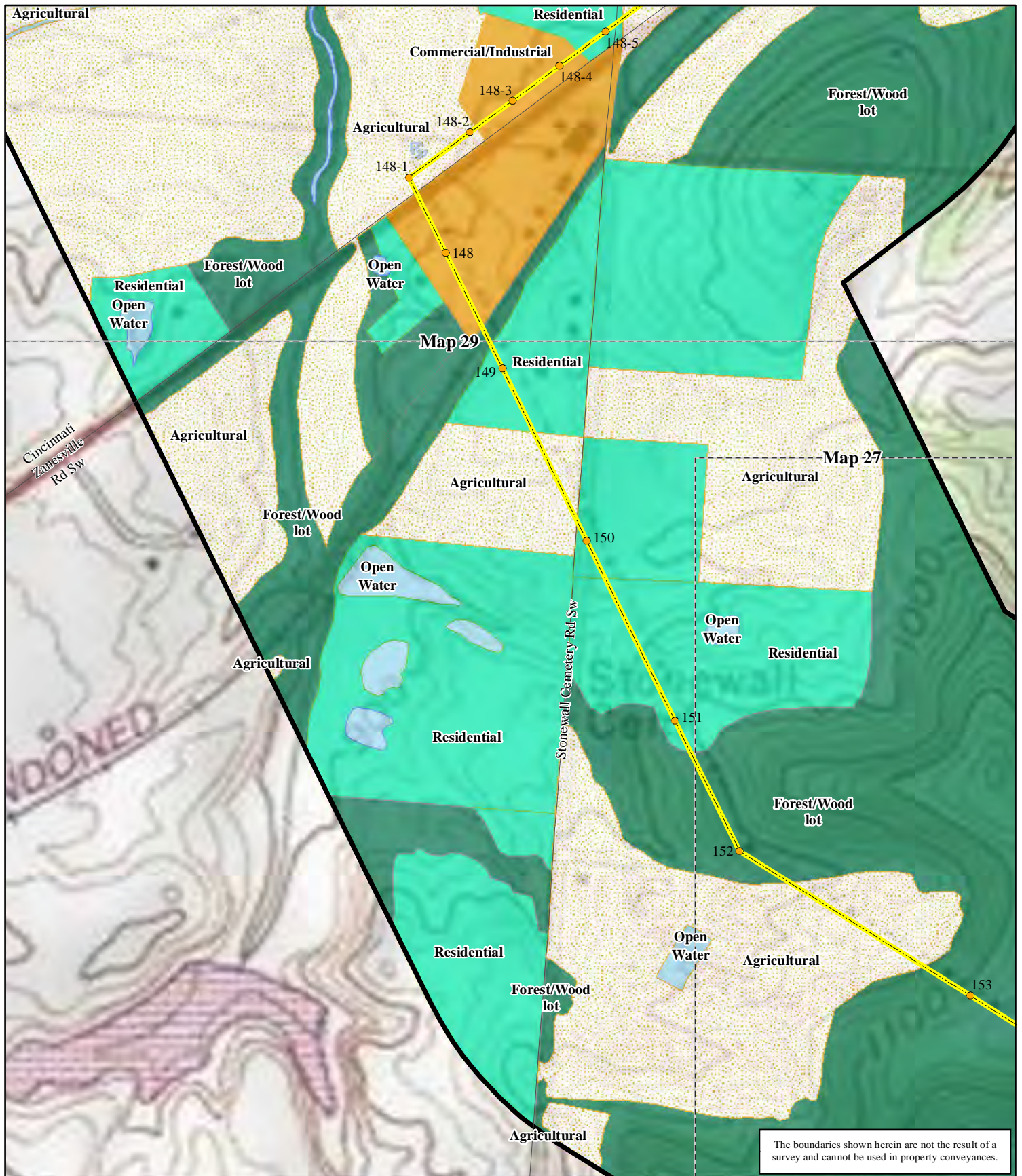
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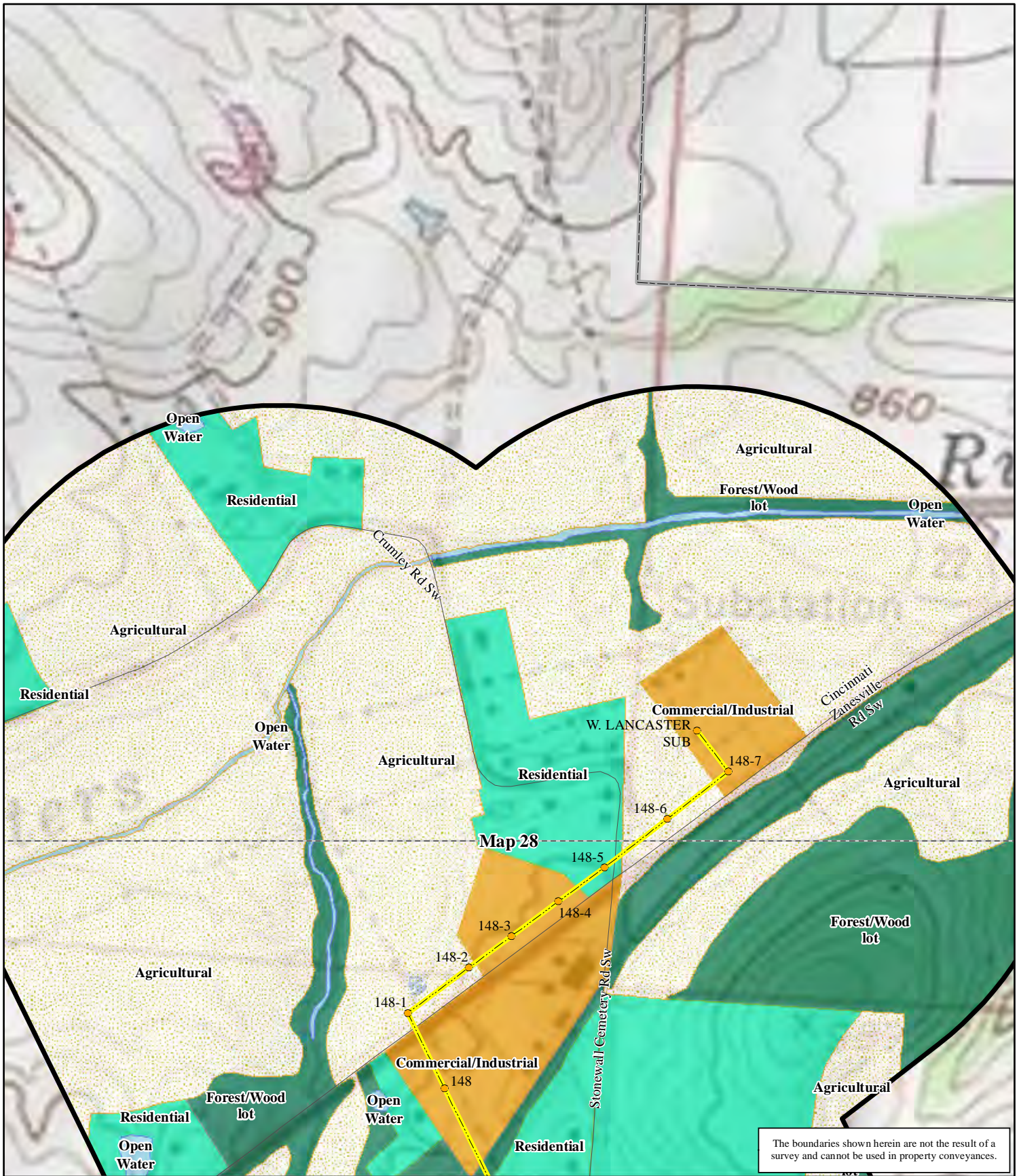
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January 30, 2014

AMERICAN ELECTRIC POWER COMPANY

Hocking – West Lancaster 138 kV Line Rebuild Project *Threatened and Endangered Species Survey Report*



PROJECT NUMBER:
127705.00.04

PROJECT CONTACT:
Jaime Newell

EMAIL:
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PHONE:
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Hocking – West Lancaster 138 kV Line Rebuild Project
Threatened and Endangered Species Survey Report

PREPARED FOR: AMERICAN ELECTRIC POWER COMPANY
PREPARED BY: MIKE BANAITIS
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INTERNAL TRACKING SHEET

Project Name		138 kV Line Rebuild	
Project Number (include subtask numbers)		127705.00.04	
Project Manager		Jamie Newell	
Project Coordinator		Mike Banaitis	
Project SA		Candy Dennison	
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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AAP	Avian Protection Plan
AEP	American Electric Power Company
GIS	geographic information system
kV	kilovolt
OAC	Ohio Administrative Code
ODNR	Ohio Department of Natural Resources
OPSB	Ohio Power Siting Board
POWER	POWER Engineers, Inc.
ROW	right-of-way
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service

1.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

American Electric Power Company (AEP) is proposing to improve an existing transmission line in Hocking and Fairfield counties, Ohio. The single-circuit 138 kilovolt (kV) wood H-frame line runs between AEP's Hocking and West Lancaster substations. The existing 19.3 mile transmission line consists mostly of wood, two-pole H-frame structures and will be rebuilt utilizing steel pole, H-frame and 3-pole guyed structures. The proposed rebuild will be located entirely within existing right-of-way (ROW).

The Ohio Power Siting Board (OPSB) Letter of Notification guidelines require that prior to construction, AEP describe surveys for areas of ecological concern. Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) Rule 4906-15-11-01(E) (1) describes the requirement as such:

(E) Environmental Data. Describe the environmental impacts of the proposed project. This description shall include the following information:

(1) A description of the applicant's investigation concerning the presence or absence of federal and state designated species (including endangered species, threatened species, rare species, species proposed for listing, species under review for listing, and species of special interest) that may be located within the area likely to be disturbed by the project, a statement of the findings of the investigation, and a copy of any document produced as a result of the investigation.

AEP retained POWER Engineers, Inc. (POWER) to review the proposed project for threatened and endangered species described in OAC Rule 4906-15-11-01(E) (1). To that end, a review of existing documents and a field assessment of general habitat suitability within a 100-foot survey corridor centered on the existing 138 kV Hocking – West Lancaster transmission line were conducted.

Topography in the survey area ranges from flat floodplains near the Hocking River to very steep hills. Waters within the survey area ultimately drain to the Hocking River.

The southern terminus of the survey area is located approximately 1.0 mile south of Logan, Ohio, while the northern terminus of the survey area is located approximately 1.75 miles southwest of Lancaster, Ohio (Figures 1 and 2). Land use within and adjacent to the project area is largely undeveloped, and consists of a mix of woodland, agricultural, residential, and some commercial/industrial parcels near Logan.

2.0 METHODS

The survey was initiated by POWER with a review of existing online documents from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Additionally, POWER submitted a request to the ODNR Natural Heritage database for records of species of concern located near the project. The geographic information system (GIS) shapefiles received from ODNR were then loaded into the project GIS maps as an overlay to show proximity of each known species record to the project area.

Agency coordination letters requesting comments on the proposed project were submitted to the ODNR and USFWS on January 21st, 2014. Copies of these letters are included in Appendix A.

A review of information on each species was utilized to determine habitat types that each species are known to utilize. This information was used to perform a desktop aerial photo review of the project. Additionally, the available habitat information for each species was used as a guide in conducting an in-field general habitat suitability assessment for the potential of each species to inhabit the project area.

3.0 RESULTS

POWER wildlife biologists David Bell, Drew Carson, Charlotte Stallone, and Amada Fabis conducted general habitat suitability assessments in conjunction with the wetland/stream field investigations from October 7th to October 11th, 2013.

3.1 State Listed Species

The ODNR Natural Heritage Database search listed several species occurrences as well as a number of management areas within one mile of the project centerline (Figure 3). Of the identified species and management areas, there are five species (two mollusks and three flowering plants) listed as either state threatened or endangered in addition to the bald eagle (Table 1).

TABLE 1 STATE LISTED SPECIES IDENTIFIED BY ODNR'S NATURAL HERITAGE DATABASE

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	CATEGORY	STATUS
<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Bald Eagle	Bird	N/A
<i>Rhododendron calendulaceum</i>	Flame Azalea	Flowering Plant	Endangered
<i>Rhododendron maximum</i>	Great Rhododendron	Flowering Plant	Threatened
<i>Pycnanthemum verticillatum</i> var. <i>pilosum</i>	Hairy Mountain Mint	Flowering Plant	Threatened
<i>Pleurobema clava</i>	Clubshell	Mollusk	Endangered
<i>Quadrula cylindrical cylindrical</i>	Rabbitsfoot	Mollusk	Threatened

Source: ODNR 2014.

According to the ODNR Natural Heritage Database information, the only state listed plant species that is known to be located immediately adjacent to the project ROW is the Great Rhododendron (near Structures 175 and 180), with the remaining species located greater than 1,000 feet away. Due to the on-going vegetation maintenance program within the transmission line ROW and habitat the Great Rhododendron prefers (i.e., moderate shade in damp, deep woods, as opposed to an open, periodically cleared transmission corridor), it is not expected that the Great Rhododendron would be present within the project corridor (ODNR 2014).

The ODNR Natural Heritage Database also listed a bald eagle nesting site approximately a quarter mile (1,300 feet) from the project corridor. Due to the nature of the project and the implementation of AEP's Avian Protection Plan (APP), which aims to reduce the incidence of bird interactions as well as prevent a bird take, it is anticipated that there will be no impacts on the bald eagles in the project vicinity (AEP 2012).

To date, no response has been received from ODNR regarding the request for comment letter sent out on January 21, 2014.

3.2 Federal Listed Species

Review of the current list of federally listed species identified eight protected species (Table 2) as potentially occurring in Franklin County (USFWS 2014a).

TABLE 2 FEDERAL LISTED SPECIES FOR FAIRFIELD AND HOCKING COUNTIES

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	CATEGORY	STATUS
<i>Myotis sodalis</i>	Indiana Bat	Mammal	Endangered
<i>Myotis septentrionalis</i>	Northern Long-Eared Bat	Mammal	Proposed Endangered
<i>Aconitum noveboracense</i>	Northern Wild Monkshood	Flowering Plant	Threatened
<i>Trifolium stoloniferum</i>	Running Buffalo Clover	Flowering Plant	Endangered
<i>Isotria medeoloides</i>	Small Whorled Pogonia	Flowering Plant	Threatened
<i>Nicrophorus americanus</i>	American Burying Beetle	Beetle	Endangered
<i>Sistrurus catenatus</i>	Eastern Massasauga	Reptile	Candidate

Source: USFWS 2014a.

There is no in-water work or permanent impacts to streams or wetlands proposed for the project. It is expected that aerial stream crossings will be installed by accessing structure locations on either side of the stream, with no need to physically enter the stream, or cause any disturbance to stream banks. Due to the lack of permanent stream or wetland impacts required for project construction, and the eastern Massasauga's preference for wet prairies and sedge meadows, there are no anticipated impacts on this protected reptile species as a result of the project (USFWS 2014b).

Both the Indiana bat and the northern long-eared bat utilize dead or dying trees with exfoliating bark for roosts, cover, and breeding activities during the summer months (USFWS 2014c, 2014d). During the colder portion of the year, the bats hibernate in caves and mines (USFWS 2014c, 2014d). The general habitat suitability assessment effort surveyed the project area for potential Indiana bat/northern long-eared bat habitat. No caves or mines were identified within the ROW corridor. Therefore, it is not anticipated that the proposed project will impact winter bat habitat.

Potential summer roosting trees were located by POWER biologists in wooded areas adjacent to the cleared ROW corridor. Due to previous maintenance activities conducted on the existing corridor, no trees currently exist within the cleared ROW. Thus, any minor clearing activities potentially required for project construction would be limited to areas located outside of the ROW, for instance on access roads. Any and all clearing of potential roosting trees that may be required for this project would only be performed during the winter months between October 1st and March 31st, while bats are hibernating and not active within the immediate project area. For the reasons provided above, the project is unlikely to negatively impact either the Indiana bat or northern long-eared bat.

Due to the habitat preferences of the three federally listed plant species, such as old growth forests, talus slopes, shaded cliffs, and frequent ground disturbance, it is not anticipated that these species would be located within the cleared ROW corridor (USFWS 2014e, USFWS 2014f, USFWS 2014g).

The American Burying Beetle is considered a habitat generalist with a slight preference for grasslands and open understory oak hickory forests that preys primarily on carrion (USFWS 2014h). There were

no observations of either carrion or the types of habitat preferred by the American Burying Beetle within or immediately adjacent to the proposed project area during the general habitat suitability assessment.

To date, no response has been received from USFWS regarding the request for comment letter sent out on January 21, 2014.

4.0 SUMMARY

AEP retained POWER to conduct a general habitat suitability assessment for threatened and endangered species within a 100-foot corridor centered on the existing Hocking-West Lancaster 138 kV transmission line. The habitat suitability assessment will be used to assist AEP's efforts to avoid impacts to threatened and endangered species potentially present in the study area during construction activities. The field survey was conducted by POWER field biologists from October 7th to October 11th, 2013.

No state listed species, and no unique habitats were observed within the ROW corridor during the general habitat suitability assessment. The ODNr Biodiversity Database revealed five state-listed threatened or endangered species, as well as numerous management areas, within the vicinity of the project area. However, it is not anticipated that the proposed project will have a negative impact on any of these species, due to the characteristics of their preferred habitats.

The ODNr Natural Heritage Database also identified one bald eagle nesting site approximately 1,300 feet from the proposed project corridor. However, due to the limited scope and duration of the proposed project in concert with AEP's Avian Protection Plan, no impacts to the bald eagle are anticipated.

There are seven federally listed species in Fairfield and Hocking counties (USFWS 2014a). Two species on the federal list are the Indiana bat and the northern long-eared bat. Any removal of potential roosting trees that may be required for project construction will take place during the winter months (October 1st to March 31st), so there are no anticipated impacts to the two protected bat species potentially present in the project area. There will be no permanent impacts to wetlands or streams required for this project, so it is anticipated that there will be no adverse impact to the eastern Massasauga. Due to the habitat preferences of the three federally listed plant species, it is not anticipated that these species would be located within the cleared ROW corridor; therefore, impacts to these species are not likely. As there were no observations of carrion or the American Burying Beetle during the general habitat suitability assessment, it is anticipated that impacts to this species is also unlikely. Due to inherent scope and location of the proposed project, as well as timing of construction activities such as tree clearing, it is anticipated that the project will not have an impact on federally endangered, threatened, or candidate species, or their habitats.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Based upon the nature and scope of the proposed project, review of federal and state records of listed species, and the field survey conducted from October 7th to October 11th, 2013, it is not expected that federal or state listed species will be impacted by the project as currently planned.

6.0 REFERENCES

American Electric Power (AEP). 2012. Avian Protection Plan.

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FIGURE 1 PROJECT OVERVIEW: TOPOGRAPHIC MAP

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Summary: Letter of Notification Hocking W Lancaster 138 kV Line Rebuild Project (Part 3 of 9)
electronically filed by Mr. Yazen Alami on behalf of AEP Ohio Transmission Company