

**Fig. One** U.S. Metal Detecting Structure

**Introduction.** This article is a follow up to **Is Recreational Metal Detecting on the Endangered List? YES**

Each year there are more direct or indirect barriers to recreational metal detecting. The result is that these barriers make detecting more unlawful in the U.S. There probably are no silver bullets or break through solutions to change this environment; just hard work by those dedicated to preserving the hobby.

This article (Next Step) will be centered on Figure #1 which highlights the **Recreational Metal Detecting Community** and the **Metal Detecting Supply Chain**. Try to keep Figure #1 in your thoughts and refer to it from time to time as you read this article.

A very important negative aspect of the hobby is that the Recreational Metal Detecting Community is very fragmented.

There are no cohesive alliances between the four major sections of the metal detecting community (Figure #1). Another important missing attribute is the lack of any outreach program to bring detectorist, clubs and associations together.

There are a couple of cohesive detecting state associations but they are the exception. Developing a state association in any state should be a very high priority since they fill a communication vacuum and offer the best avenue to a cohesive strong and supportive state metal detecting community.

Fragmentation is very apparent between area clubs and the individual detectorist. Clubs generally have no contact with other clubs except through an occasional metal detecting event. Most clubs have no outreach program to get individual detectorist to join their club.

Individual detectorist feel that they do not need to be associated with any organization since they may prefer to metal detect alone. Belonging to a club or organization will not inhibit an individual detectorist desire to metal detect alone but club participation does offers many advantages and opens new opportunities for the detectorist.

Something to consider: the recreational metal detecting community may need to take a more activist approach for preserving the hobby by holding planned protest demonstrations to get their message across to public officials.

As this article progresses there will be an effort to address fragmentation, the importance of using an outreach program and other ideas for the Recreational Metal Detecting Community.

**National Association.** An aggressive national association could play a major role in the metal detecting community by providing some very important matter. One important item would be to develop a national self-teaching metal detecting course for all detectorists to take. The course should be comprehensive, provide a completion examination and upon passing the examination, a certificate of accomplishment. The course must be web based, downloaded by clubs and 100% supported by the national association.

A national metal detecting association should represent all individuals, clubs and state associations not just a few registered clubs or individuals. A national association's membership registration and entry fee process should not be a barrier to providing support to any detectorist, club or state association that needs help.

The national association must have a strong working relationship or partnership with the U.S. based metal detector manufacturers and work with them on providing a uniform comprehensive beginners detecting handbook. When a detector is sold by any retailer this handbook would be part of the detector package. The handbook should provide an insight into the hobbies relationship to U.S. federal laws, the archaeology community, U.S. history, the current metal detecting environment, target recovery and the responsibilities of detectorist to the hobby.

Next, an aggressive national organization should take up one important federal initiative for the detecting community. A suggestion for such an issue was presented to me at a lunch meeting four years ago by a member of the Mount Diablo Metal Detectors Club in Concord, California. His suggestion was to develop an action plan and hold protest demonstrations to get national seashore beaches, national lake beaches and adjacent waters open to metal detecting. In most situations these beaches are used daily, are disturbed lands and with few exceptions have no archaeology value. This initiative would require work but may be very achievable in time.

A national association could provide an annual three day forum or symposium where workshops would be held on the key subject matter of the time. Clubs would be encouraged to provide reports on their community projects, saving history projects and what impact their club may be having on laws in their community. Specific clubs could sponsor a workshop discussion topic and all workshops would be open to the forum participants. Workshop leaders would provide a summary of the workshop results to the national association participates as the symposium wraps up. An annual symposium would be a great tool to help bridge the fragmentation gap and strengthen the metal detecting community.

The symposium should be well represented by detector manufactures, distributors and retailers. The supply chain should provide discussion and presentations on their view for the future of recreational metal detecting and on their detector product. The supply chain members should be actively involved in the symposium not just by-standers trying to sell product.

An aggressive national association should have one staff member who is responsible for providing press releases on metal detecting issues and events that can shape the public's view of the hobby. A national association needs to communicate frequently and regularly with the metal detecting community as to what is happening in the hobby. Tools for this communication effort should be a very active website, monthly news flashes, and the use of social tools like Face book, etc.

The national association should sponsor a column in each of the major hobby magazines. This column should be for press releases and to conduct a national outreach program that highlights the benefits of belonging to metal detecting clubs, state associations and a national association.

**State Detecting Association.** States that have at least five metal detecting clubs should consider establishing a state association. The state organization can offer a centralized voice across the state with legislators, retailers, clubs and the individual detectorist. The state association is an important link between clubs and any national association. A key component of a state association is overseeing the health of the state's metal detecting environment and to be a watch dog on legislation.

There is a severe lack of state metal detecting associations; these associations could provide a sufficient advantage in making metal detecting lawful. State association can be the cohesive glue that brings together metal detecting clubs, detector retailers and the individual detectorist into a well informed and active state metal detecting community. A well informed metal detecting community can standup for their right to practice the

hobby vs. a fragmented community that in most cases will not even know what is taking place in their state or in adjacent communities.

An organizational model for a state association should include:

- mission statement
- officers elected by the state's club membership
- a statewide quarterly update meeting
- officers educated on state laws that directly and indirectly impact the hobby
- officers to work with state representatives for obtaining friendly metal detecting laws
- a well maintained email list and website with details on state, local laws and detecting programs
- an outreach program to encourage state metal detector retailers to be part of the association
- an outreach program to encourage metal detecting clubs to develop community and saving history projects
- an outreach program and process to have retailers encourage individual detectorist to join a club or the state association if no club exist in their area
- a method to provide public press releases concerning lost item returns, community & saving history projects and other situations that provide a positive hobby image

Another important attribute of a state metal detecting association is that state legislators prefer to work with state constituents and not with a national association or people from outside the state. State legislators prefer to be working for their citizens' needs rather than be influenced by outsiders.

**Clubs.** Metal detecting clubs are the front line of the U.S. metal detecting community. These clubs are the pathway for individual detectorist to gain hobby education, strengthen their detecting skill, develop personnel relationships, participate in metal detecting activities and to learn more about what their role can be to support the hobby.

There are many clubs across the U.S. with some states having more than ten clubs. To locate a club for your area just search the web. There are a number of websites that provide clubs listings with contact information. A simple web search will yield the desired information.

Clubs need to have an active outreach program that communicates the clubs existence and encourages individual detectorist to join. A higher number of club members are the catalyst to providing more membership activities and greater hobby involvement and support. An active outreach program should include semi-monthly (twice a month) ads in the local news media, an updated website, a handout for distribution at hobby retailers, club business card, involvement in community recreational events and hobby discussions at senior centers, schools, etc.

Clubs should have a mentor program for new members. A mentor can provide the necessary education for a new member concerning what is required to correctly and lawfully practice the hobby.

Clubs should be members of state associations or if no state association exists the club should be a member of a national association. It is imperative that the clubs require their members to be a member of any association that receives club support.

If no state association exists in the state, clubs should take a serious look at establishing such an association. This type of initiative will require numerous discussions with other state clubs to encourage their participation

in the project. This investigation should also include state retailers since their opinion and participation is very important toward making the final decision. A state association can provide a great deal of hobby structure and can be a valuable tool in achieving friendly detecting regulations.

It is recommended that clubs set aside 5 - 10% of their annual income to provide financial support for associations and to support various community involvement and saving history projects.

Metal detecting clubs may need to consider holding protest demonstrations to get their point across to public officials. To hold a demonstration requires some pre-planning, determine what your message should be, selecting the locations, time table of the demonstration and getting the word out. The metal detecting community has been far too passive in standing up for their right to detect in the U.S.

**Individual Detectorist.** The individual detectorist is the heart beat of Recreational Metal Detecting in the U.S. If detectorist are not educated on all aspects of the hobby they can cause great harm to the hobby by alienating public officials, private citizens and by practicing destructive detecting recovery techniques and detecting unlawfully.

If you were to apply the 80/20 rule to detectorist you would probably find that 20% of the detector owners are aware of a national organization and belong to a local metal detecting club. A good 80% of the detector owners probably have little knowledge or desire to have any active part of the Recreational Metal Detecting infrastructure.

Why the 80/20 rule? The MDHTALK website has been on the internet for 14 months and each month during that period the viewer rate falls under the 80/20 rule. 80% of the site viewers spend less than five minutes on their site visit; however, 20% of the viewers spend much more time with many viewer visits greater than an hour. This data probably represents the in-depth interest of the individual detectorist. Therefore clubs must be very proactive in getting the individual detectorist's attention. This is a major reason a club outreach program can be a very valuable tool.

To recap; individual detectorists are the foundation of the hobby, the hobby consumers, the hobby supporters and must continue to be there for the long term. It is imperative that every effort be made to bring the individual detectorist into the Recreational Metal Detecting Community.

**The Metal Detector Supply Chain** consists of the manufacturers, distributors and retailers. Keep in mind that each level in the supply chain must make a profit or the supply chain will cease to exist. Generally the metal detector supply chains existence depends on the following criteria.

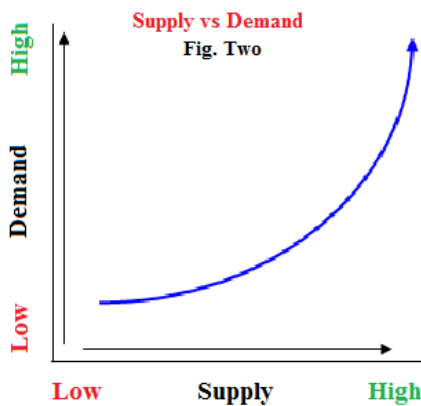
- First, there must be consumers interested in purchasing the manufacture's metal detecting products.
- Second, the manufacture's metal detecting equipment must be competitive to other manufacturers in technology, selectable features, ease of use, ergonomics and price.
- Third, there must be a large pool of individual detectorist that can be attracted to the manufacture's product.
- Fourth, once an individual detectorist purchases a detector there must be lands (public and private) available for using the detector equipment.
- Fifth, the supply chain can be negatively affected as laws and regulations for metal detecting become more defined, gain greater acceptances by public officials and achieve greater enforcement recognition.

A national metal detecting association can be of benefit to the various manufactures by providing material for an exceptional beginner's handbook to educate the purchaser. This handbook should cover all aspects of the hobby so that a new detectorist can become a responsible detectorist and detect in a lawful manner. This material should be consistently applied by all manufactures so that all individual detectorists get the same background and support material about the hobby. A good detectorist handbook will help solve some of the misinformation about the hobby and be a great outreach starting point.

Detector distributors and retailers are very depended on the individual detectorist or there business model will fail. Just to stay in business distributors and retailers require a certain volume of detector sales to cover their overhead. Anything that has a negative impact on their business model is something to fear. The distributors and retailers have a vested interest in seeing that recreational metal detecting remains lawful since their livelihood depends upon volume detector sales.

Retailers are in a great position to provide hobby support since they make first contact with all metal detectorists. Retailers could provide a great deal of local information to new detectorist concerning clubs, regulations and what the detectorist's responsibilities should be to the Recreational Metal Detecting Community.

**Law and Regulations.** The laws and regulations are the barriers to practicing recreational metal detecting in the



U.S. and in the future regulations will probably have an even greater hobby impact. Greater enforcement of existing laws and the implementation of new regional regulations will directly impact the number of individual detectorist entering the hobby. As metal detecting becomes unlawful in more communities the result will be the elimination of available detecting land and less people interested in the hobby.

If there are fewer individuals metal detecting the demand for new detectors will decrease accordingly. This will directly impact the detector supply chain from the manufacture to the retailer. By viewing Figure #1 at the beginning of the article you can see that laws and

regulations can greatly affect the hobby. Less laws or more friendly laws will increase the number of detectorists and in turn will place a greater demand for new detectors. Likewise an increase in regulations or greater enforcement of existing regulations will decrease the number of detectorist, and the demand for new detectors. Therefore the law of supply and demand in Figure #2 comes into play where the individual detectorist becomes the DEMAND and detector equipment the SUPPLY. View Figure #2 to see the relationship.

**Conclusion.** Let's face it Recreational Metal Detecting is a hobby not a profession like archaeology. Since metal detecting is a hobby the individuals involved in the hobby must become more responsible, volunteer and dedicate their time and skills for hobby support. In order for the hobby to gain greater acceptance there must be groups of individuals who will provide leadership, volunteer and develop a cohesive program so that the hobby can survive beyond the next twenty-five years.

The following list of actions should be considered. There probably are other actions that can be taken but this short list can be a starting point. The actions are listed in order of priority and importance.

- 1) A state metal detecting association is the best approach to bring the metal detecting community together in any state.
- 2) Outreach programs to bring individual detectorist into the metal detecting community should be in place at all detecting clubs and associations.
- 3) Metal detecting clubs need to consider holding protest demonstrations to get their point across with public officials.
- 4) A national association should develop metal detecting standardization material for a handbook and for an online metal detecting course.
- 5) The detector supply chain should play a greater role in helping to preserve, educate and support metal detecting associations and clubs.
- 6) An initiative at the national association level could be the catalyst needed to get detectorist behind a common cause and to reduce the metal detecting community fragmentation. (i.e.: to develop an action plan to get national seashore beaches, national lake beaches and adjacent waters open to metal detecting in the U.S.)

This is one person's opinion. A group of individuals with strong desires to strengthen the metal detecting community will might with better ideas. However taking these six steps would do much in bring the metal detecting community together and make the detecting community a strong positive force for the hobby. (see Figure #1)