

Thoughts on Responsible Metal Detecting

by Lee Wiese

The term Responsible Metal Detecting can be found in the **Code of Practice on Responsible Metal Detecting in England and Wales** a May 2006 publication. However, the term Responsible Metal Detecting in the U.S. is rarely used or defined. I have used the term in a number of articles but have never really thought about what this term encompasses. This short article will be an attempt to provide some definition for Responsible Metal Detecting.

Responsible Metal Detecting is to:

- ❑ **Know and Follow the Law.**
- ❑ **Gain Permission.**
- ❑ **Always Apply the Metal Detecting Code of Ethics.**
- ❑ **Join a Metal Detecting Club and National Metal Detecting Association.**
- ❑ **Understand the Potential Cultural Value of Your Find.**
- ❑ **Volunteer Your Services to the Hobby.**

Know and Follow the Law means that one should read and understand the *American Antiquities Act of 1906* and *Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979*. Archaeological resources are part of our Nation's heritage and these two acts cover archaeological resources and their recovery on public and Indian lands.

The two acts cover all national public / Indian lands and in many cases also have been adopted either wholly or in part by many states to cover state lands. There are also additional regulations that have been developed by the USDA Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the National Parks Service.

Most states also have laws that cover just state parks, beaches and recreation areas. States usually have a specific web-site where you can find out almost everything you need to know. Some states do not allow metal detecting under any situations, while most states require either verbal, written permission or a permit.

Then there are the county, city and school district laws. Each of these entities may also have laws regulation metal detecting on their specific lands. Contacting the authorities for these public entities should yield the information you need.

A good rule of thumb is if it is national, Indian land or is a historical site it is off limits to metal detecting and other lands require permission.

Gain Permission to search both public and private land. Permission should be acquired in writing when ever possible and cover the following: owner's name, property address (Street, City, State, Zip) with description of the area on the property to be searched, purpose of access to the land, liability waiver, ownership of items found, property conditions after the search, start / end date and time of the search with signatures of all parties.

Otherwise gain verbal permission by contacting a public authority in person or contacting a private property owner in

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person and obtaining verbal permission to enter the property. This form of obtaining permission should cover the same terms as outlined in the written permission section above.

Always Apply the Metal Detecting Code of Ethics.

The metal detecting code of ethics is meant to re-enforce the national, state, county and city laws. The code of ethics also covers gaining permission, property damage, tampering with structures, equipment, gates and being an ambassador for the hobby. These are important ethics statements and following them may be difficult but very important in meeting the public's perception of how the hobby must and should be practiced.

Join a Metal Detecting Club and National Metal Detecting Association, is a commitment to metal detecting excellences. By joining you are committing your time to learn more about the hobby or to contribute your expertise / knowledge to others who may be less senior in the hobby.

By joining a club and getting involved generates hobby centralism. This centralism can impact many laws that are drawn up in states and cities which in the past have had no voice from those in the metal detecting hobby. If there is no voice or involvement from people in the hobby laws are created - many times with a negative hobby impact.

So joining a club at the local level provides a local hobby voice and joining and getting involved with a national organizations starts to generate the necessary centralism for national support of the hobby.

Understand the Potential Cultural Value of Your Find is practiced in England but not practiced well in the U.S. at least not in an acceptable matter for most hobbyists. The reason to characterize your find for its culture value is to understand if it may be part of our American Heritage. If one is following the law and not detecting on historical, national lands or Indian lands there should not be a problem in getting advice on cultural value. However, having said that one must use caution by including others for their opinion / expertise since this could cause a litigation situation. But in the end it is everyone's responsibility who metal detects to ensure whether or not a find may be part of our American Heritage and should be treated as such.

Volunteer Your Services to the Hobby. This could be in the form of starting a metal detecting club in your area, volunteering to be a club officer or a specific club chairperson.

Today more than ever clubs need volunteers to handle officer duties / responsibilities, chairmanships for membership, hunt masters, club involvement projects, evident recovery teams, public relations, newsletters, etc. Many of these chairmanships are important and without them the club will not grow or become an involved part of the community.

As the local club needs volunteer support and expertise so does a national detecting organization. People who have been with the hobby for a while should look in the national leadership direction and move their experience to the next level.

There, now you have my thoughts on **Responsible Metal Detecting and how you must fit as a metal detector hobbyist. **Responsible Metal Detecting is for everyone who puts a detector in his / her hands and starts a search for treasure which may be under that next coil swing.****