

Recreational Metal Detecting is becoming a very popular pastime as more people enter retirement. Due to some great finds in England the hobby is getting greater publicity through the news media, internet forums, individual websites and of course YouTube videos. Many recreational metal detectorists developed their skills and ethics as the hobby developed and matured, however, over the past few years many new retirees have or are about to enter the hobby. These new hobbyists have no prior experience or knowledge as to how to legally or actually practice metal detecting in the field. This article will focus on just one aspect of the hobby - metal detecting etiquette.

So what might be the definition of metal detecting etiquette?

Etiquette for metal detecting can be defined as a form of ethical behavior regarding *metal detectorist responsibility*, the *actions of detectorist in their dealings with each other*, *the use of land*, *abiding by the law*, *practicing correct and acceptable social behavior in the field* and *by adhering to the Metal Detecting Code of Ethics*.

Metal Detectorist Responsibility.

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. Here is a link to a short article that will provide some definition. [MDHTALK Link to Responsible Metal Detecting](#) article.

The article highlights are:

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

Detectorist actions and dealings with each other.

Recreational Metal Detecting is a hobby that can either be practiced alone, with a partner or with a group of fellow hobbyists. While metal detecting alone and especially on beaches there can be occasions where another detectorist may be detecting in the same area as yourself. In these situations there are some etiquette standards that should be considered:

Take time out by walking over to the other detectorist, greet (be polite) the other detectorist. Make sure that you turn off your detector before approaching so as to not cause interference in the other detectorist's headphones. Introduce yourself, strike up a short conversation and after a short period of time discuss how each of you can detect the same general area without infringing on the others' detecting space. Most detectorists will respect this approach. If an agreement is not reached and if the other detectorist was on the scene first it is up to you to go off in another direction or leave and go elsewhere.

If a detecting partner shares a special detecting site with you, this site should never be considered a site that you can return to and treat as a detecting site of your own. Being invited to someone's personal site is something special and should not be abused by you or should you communicate the site's location to other detectorists.

Detectorist use of lands. (Public and Private)

Metal detecting requires that the detectorist disturbs the soil or beach sand to retrieve an identified target. This

is where the detectorist must have excellent knowledge on how to pin point and retrieve a target or great damage can be caused to the grass. There should be no evidence left behind that the grass was disturbed once the target has been retrieve. After the target has been recovered, replacing the hole contents in reverse order will certainly contribute to a successful conclusion with little or no evidence that someone had made a divot in the grass. The target recovery process must be well studied and practiced before a detectorist strikes out into the field.

Recovering targets from the beach is not as critical but filling the recovery hole is a must so as not to create a situation where beach goers injure themselves by stepping into an unfilled hole.

Remember never unnecessarily disturb land and shrubbery other than for target retrieval.

If water detecting, always try to fill any hole that you create during target recovery.

Detectorist being law abiding.

This is one of the most difficult parts of metal detecting to stay abreast off. Laws, regulations and rules will be different from state to state and locality to locality so if you plan to practice the hobby in many different parts of your state or across the country you will need to be well versed on the law. There are many indirect laws as well that impact the ability to detect i.e.; disturbance of the plant growth, rock displacement, historical and archaeology sites, etc. So just knowing is it ok is not necessarily enough, you will also need to know about the indirect laws that could impact your outing.

Please keep in mind, if artifacts or historical sites are located the local historical authorities should be contacted. Keep a record of your finds, by noting: date, detector used, location found and description of the find for future reference.

Detectorist social behavior.

Many people are intrigued by someone metal detecting and will approach to ask questions. Take time out and always treat the public with respect, be courteous and truthful in your responses.

While detecting you will also encounter people who are not supporters of the hobby. This is probably due to a very bad past experience with a detectorist or a group of detectorist. While most detectorist are polite, considerate and practice the hobby in a non-destructive manner there are others (small minority) that follow no laws, rules or metal detecting practices and can be very destructive. This type of detectorist can cause non-reversible harm to the hobby. As a detectorist we must continually put forward our best behavior, respect property, other people enjoying the outdoors and always act responsible.

Always give high priority to returning recovered lost items to the original owner. This can be accomplished by doing research using social media tools, craigslist, newspapers, and even TV media. Never avoid helping people who have lost items that ask for help. Do not request a reward for your service in any of these situations.

Do not publicly broadcast your finds while metal detecting in the field. This can cause you, the detectorist some very uncomfortable situations if the public becomes aware of a find. People can be aggressive and will at times demand the item found be given to them because they state they just lost it.

There will be times you come upon an individual who will be very aggressive and argumentative who will certainly try your patience. It is best that you move on and try to go detecting in another area close by or in some cases pack up and move. Trying to deal with such an individual is a no win situation.

Beach metal detecting can be a great experience but there are some very necessary etiquette standards that should be followed while detecting at the beach.

1st. It is recommended that beach detecting take place in off hours or in more remote portions of the beach during peak beach hours.

2nd. If you must detect during the busiest part of the day when the beach is heavily populated with beach goers:

- a. Stay well away from those enjoying and laying on the beach. (rule of thumb is 20-25ft.)
- b. While recovering targets with a sand scoop near beach goers, always shake the scoop just above the beach sand so that the wind does not blow the scoop's sand on the nearby beach goers.
- c. Always fill your holes, so that someone will not sprain an ankle or break a bone since beach goers are enjoying the beach and may not see a hole in the sand and step into it.

All detectorist should consider joining a club. This is a great place to learn about the hobby though the friendship of other detectorist . Being a member of a club can also provide you a opportunity for using a skill or expertise that may benefit the club's membership. Always consider volunteering your services to the hobby.

Carry out all trash that is recovered while retrieving targets in the field. Never discard recovered trash on the ground while metal detecting the turf, the beach or in the water.

Detectorist Adhere to Code of Ethics.

Ethics for Responsible Metal Detecting

- I will check Federal, State, County and Local Laws before searching. It is my responsibility to KNOW and UNDERSTAND THE LAW.
- I will report to the proper authorities, individual who enter and / or remove artifacts from Federal or State Park / Preserves / Historical Sites.
- I will never remove or destroy priceless historical archeological treasures.
- I will not enter Sacred Church or Parish Grounds Cemeteries for the purpose of metal detecting.
- I will protect our Natural Resource and Wildlife Heritage.
- I will not enter private property without the owner's permission and when possible, such permission will be in writing.
- I will take care to refill all holes and try not to leave any damage.
- I will remove and dispose of any and all trash and litter that I find.
- I will not destroy or tamper with any structures on public or private property or what is left of Ghost Towns.
- I will not contaminate wells, creeks, or other water supplies.
- I will not tamper with signs, maintenance facilities or equipment and leave all gates as found.
- I will approach and educate those who do not follow good metal detecting practices.
- I will not metal detect in competitive hunts if I am the Hunt Master or plant hunt targets.
- I will make every effort to return found property to its rightful owner.
- I will be an ambassador for the hobby, be thoughtful, considerate and courteous at all times to others and their property.

In Summary: As a detectorist you must set the highest ethical standard possible and be a model to new detectorists who are learning how to practice the hobby. Without excellent metal detecting etiquette being practiced by all, a few detectorist can make the hobby very miserable for the majority. If detectorists are destructive on public lands; states and localities will pass regulations against the recreational metal detecting and it is very difficult to get regulations changed.