

## No more 'hunt and hope' to find tile lines

By TOM J. BECHMAN

**T**HE backhoe took another bite out of the soil. The man on the ground with a tile probe looked perplexed.

Looking for a 4-inch-diameter tile in 40 acres was like looking for a needle in a haystack until now. GPS technology and computer software that makes and stores images has changed that. For new installations, "hunt and probe" days are over.

### Power of GPS

"When we're done installing tile here in this field, I'll run the entire pattern with GPS mounted on my ATV," says Roger Wenning, Greensburg. "We'll have an exact record of what we did. We're doing it in all the fields where we're putting in tile today."

Hopefully, no one will need to dig up the tile, at least not for a long time, he notes. "But if they do, they'll be able to get within a couple feet of where every line is. We started doing it on our own land, and we're doing it now for customers."

Using FarmWorks software, they download the images once they run the tile lines that have just been installed. The software program creates an accurate map that shows exactly where the tile was installed.

One possible use for the map might be if the landowner decided to add on to the system and drain adjoining land, or split the middles of existing lines. The maps would help locate exactly where lines are.

If there's ever a problem with the

### Key Points

- The days of hunting and probing for tile lines installed today should be over.
- GPS map lays out exactly where the lines were installed.
- Keep the installation map in a file to simplify future maintenance or expansion.

system, the map would come in handy. However, Wenning doesn't anticipate problems. "We've checked some plastic tile we installed 35 years ago on our own farm while we were doing new work, and the tile was still in good shape and working well," he says.

For mains, the Wennings typically install single-wall tile unless it's under a road,

drive or very shallow. Then they install dual-wall tile.

Mains are usually larger in diameter and carry more water since they pick up the water from laterals. Then the main within a field drains into a major outlet. That may be a stream, or it may be a much larger underground tile installed earlier. Sometimes it's a large county drain.



**HUNT AND POKE:** Neither a backhoe nor a tile probe could find the 4-inch-diameter tile running through this field.



**GPS PAYS OFF:** Roger Wenning and his son, Nick, run the installation with an ATV and GPS before leaving the field. They use software to produce maps of tile installations.



**MAP:** Example of tile installation record.

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