

Drones make it easy to map property

Mapping with drones provides high-resolution aerial imagery and data that can be used to create accurate maps and models of the terrain.

BY ALABAMA EXTENSION SERVICE



Photo John O'Dell/Call News

Drones are proving beneficial in land and forest management to easily and promptly provide high-resolution images of woodlands over a wide area.

"Drones can be flown by natural resource managers to capture aerial imagery or scout tracts for a wide variety of management issues," said Beau Brodbeck, an Alabama Extension community forestry specialist. "These include monitoring harvesting progress, identifying insect outbreaks, evaluating storm damage and updating stand or harvest maps."

Online aerial images, while helpful, only receive updates every couple of years. Drones can assist land managers in achieving crucial up-to-date images. The drones can be programmed to autopilot transects across a given area.

Computer software can piece these images together to form updated maps. Additionally, the resulting images will have a resolution seven times greater than online aerial imagery. In some cases, the images are so clear, people can see individual leaves on trees.

Up-to-date high-resolution images are also beneficial to hunters interested in map hunting locations, planning access routes, delineating wildlife openings or needing to quantify the acreages of timber harvested, thinned or damaged by insects or storms.



Accessibility

A common misconception is that all drones can be extremely costly. This, however, is not always true.

"Drone technology has evolved to a point where it is both accessible and relatively low-cost," Brodbeck said.

Many drone systems make use of mass production. As a result, many are readily available today. This has allowed a decrease in cost of production, creating some drones ready for purchase starting at \$1,200.

According to Brodbeck, the technology

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