

# A 'Map' To Better Writing

By Bob McNitt

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As outdoor writers, we've all been there—creating a story that revolves around destinations that either we're not totally familiar with or are only familiar with small portions of. Although we may rely somewhat on the expertise of the residents and officials we interview, it's still difficult to sufficiently grasp the total picture needed for an informative, accurate descriptive-oriented piece for our readers. This is where using Maptech's Terrain Navigator (TN) and Terrain Navigator Pro (TNP) programs become so valuable.

These revolutionary topographical and aerial programs will literally allow you to "visit and scout" areas via your PC so thoroughly it's almost as though you're physically there. Plus, they show you every marked trail and trail head, back road, public lands, campsite, elevation, stream, lake, wetland and much more - and can do it in 3-D effect (true 3-D with the Pro series).

Whether prior to a trip or afterwards, you can use the programs to quickly find locations, plan or retrace your steps while gaining additional and accurate information you may have overlooked or not had time to seek. Combined with GPS, they are the ultimate tools for outdoor orienteering and great tools and timesavers for outdoor writers. Plus, the technical assistance and support available from Maptech is first rate.

I began using Terrain Navigator many years ago to plan and scout new areas prior to my actual story-gathering trips. Combined with information I'd gathered from various sources—such as fish and game officials, hiking clubs, forestry management, etc.—I'd pour over TN's maps to pinpoint various

accesses, points of interest and promising areas that would aid me in making a successful trip. I could plan my targeted areas, best routes, enter access and destination coordinates into my GPS as waypoints and, once there, effectively reach my various destinations with ease.

The program proves exceptionally useful for almost any theme that involves travel. For hiking, it not only allows charting routes but also gives elevation grading so you have the option of choosing the shortest,

easiest or most scenic. It also reveals the best potential area sites for wilderness camping. For hunting purposes, it allows charting the best routes into the most promising game areas and back out again. Hunters can use it to pinpoint and record such hotspot areas as the location of game trails, feeding and bedding areas. It's a great tool for marking and returning to game hotspots the hunter encounters on his or her initial trip into a new area.

I've used it to record buck scrape and rub lines, turkey roosting areas and beaver ponds that harbored waterfowl, to mention a few.

The 3-D effect functions of the program allow me to read the lay of the land and choose, plot and store the easiest and shortest routes to my targeted areas and waypoints before ever setting foot there. I can also print out topo maps containing the chosen routes, complete with distances, elevation changes, and exact destination point(s) marked on the map. And once a trip is completed, the information I've gathered via TN helps jog my memory as I write the actual story manuscript and also gives me exact distances and terrain characteristics and points

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of interest to pass along to the readers. I can also determine the area of land tracts, wetlands, ponds and lakes, in both square feet as well as acres. Plus, the excellent graphics are wonderful aids when art work or other graphic support is needed.

The Terrain Navigator Pro includes all the features of the TN plus several additional functions. The TNP offers aerial photos, hard drive map storage, advanced annotation and flexible measurement tools, georeferenced map exporting and other useful functions such as locating street addresses.

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Bob McNitt has been the outdoor editor of the Norwich (NY) Evening Sun for 28 years, had hundreds of magazine stories published, and also served as editor with Northwoods Publications, Petersen Publishing, eMap-usa, Primedia and, since 2001, Jordan Outdoor Enterprises Ltd (Realtree). An active member of OWAA, NYSOWA and NEOWA, he served as NYSOWA president in 1991-93. Bob and his wife Elizabeth reside in Norwich NY.