

Dowsing, Science or Witchcraft

By Douglas R. Smoro
Circuit Rider II, NYRWA



I carry them with pride in the back of my truck, two brass brazing rods 32 inches long, bent at 90 degree angles, about 8 inches down. I use them when I have run out of all options. I cannot explain why or how they work, only that for some reason I believe they do. I have been laughed at, ridiculed, and scoffed

at. But when all else fails, I go for my trusty dowsing rods. When locating or searching for plastic and AC water lines, you do not have a lot of options. It has only been in recent years that installers have begun to tape tracer wires to PVC, HDPE, and AC pipe with any regularity. That leaves most of us out in the cold when confronted with the task of locating these types of pipe material. I do not know when I started dowsing, but it has been at least twenty or twenty-five years now. I saw someone else doing it and they let me give it a try. I was quite surprised to find that I had been blessed with the POWER. Over the years I have come across other dowsers, none of whom could explain with any scientific evidence why or how it seems to work. And I might add, that it is not foolproof or without error, as recently as March of this year, I watched as three experienced dowsers proclaimed the existence of a water service to a home located on a PVC water main. As the backhoe proceeded to dig an eight-foot by eight-foot by eight-foot deep hole in search of the imaginary waterline, we all watched in disbelief that no line had been found. It was at this point that I decided to research the rods and find the scientific explanation to their existence. Given the magic that is the internet, I typed the word dowser into the Google search box and was pleasantly surprised to find a wealth of information on the subject. I also quickly found out that the scientific community is split on the subject.

Homo vult decipi; decipiatur.

[Man wishes to be deceived; deceive him.]

Dowsing, witching, rhabdomancy, doodlebugging, all different words with the same meaning. I would direct you to the following websites:

<http://www.lysator.liu.se/~rasmus/skepticism/dowsing.html>

<http://www.phact.org/e/z/kassel.htm>

<http://www.phact.org/phact/dowsing.htm>

<http://newhampshire.com/dowsers.org/>

http://207.77.90.67/wguide/wire/wire_94046282_90457_3_1.html

<http://www.connect.ab.ca/~tylosky/>

Whether you are a believer, or not, it all makes for some interesting reading. I will continue to use my rods when need be. Whether or not I will be able to tell an equipment operator to break the surface of the earth with his bucket, is another story. I use the rods to back up the best known information about any particular site and I have found curb-stops and line valves using this technology. I am not a fan of PVC or AC for pipe material, but there is a lot of it in the ground. Until such time as they come up with a dependable locator for these types of materials, I will be bound to using my brass dowsing rods and hope for the best. ♠

"[Dowsing rods] be mere toys to mock Apes, and have no commendable device [purpose]."

- Reginald Scot, The Discouerie of Witchcraft (1584)