Creating Maps Using Google Earth

If you don't already have Google Earth, go to http://www.google.com/earth/index.html and download the software.*

Open Google Earth.
Close Startup Tip box.
In the left-hand column in the Search panel, type in the street address of the property you want to map.
       Click "Search." The software will zoom in on a birds-eye view of the property and its surroundings. You can also "Get Directions" here in case you need to know the best way to get there for your assessment.
Left-click the address name that appears in the Search panel and hold down the left button to drag it to My Places in the Places panel just under the Search panel.
In the Layers panel, check the boxes next to "Borders and Labels" and "Roads."
Slide the mouse over the upper-right portion of the image to bring the zoom slider into view. (The other two buttons above the slider let you "fly" in any direction to reposition the image and/or descend closer to the ground to create a street-level view. The latter function is more precise in urban settings.)
Use the slider or the "+" and "-" buttons to zoom in and out of the image to include as much of the map in it as you need to include things like the whole property, fetch and the surrounding waterway(s). You can do this at any time, even after adding layers to your image.
Left-click the cursor (hand) and hold it down to center the image. Used together, the zoom and centering functions let you include as much as, but no more than, you need to convey the property's place on the waterfront.
To draw in the property line, left-click the "Add path" icon (the third one in from the left on the toolbar at the top of the image). If necessary, move the "New Path" dialogue box away from the part of the image you're drawing on by left-clicking the blue bar at the top of the box and dragging it. You may need to zoom out slightly to accommodate both the property and the box on your screen.
In the New Path box type in a name, such as "Property Line," click the Style/Color tab and click on the color, line width and opacity you want for the property line. (You can go back and change these later if you want: right-click the path icon in your property's folder in the Places panel, then click Properties and make your changes.) Do not click "OK" yet.
Move the cursor over to the image. It will look like a gun sight. Begin drawing the property line:
left-   click at a point and release, move the cursor to the next point, left click and release again, and so on around the property. If you mess up one segment, hit backspace on your keyboard. Alternatively, you can hold down the left button and free-form draw the property line, but that's harder to get right. Once you've finished drawing the line, click OK to add the boundary layer to the property's folder in My Places in the Places panel.
If you want to place labels on the image, such as "Smith property" or "Indian Creek," click on the Add Placemark icon (the first icon on the toolbar, a yellow tack). Move the placemark by left-clicking and dragging, then type your label in the Name portion of the New Placemark dialogue box. If you want a different image with your label, click the yellow tack and choose one. Click OK. You can add as many labels as you want in this way; each will appear as a separate layer in your property folder.

As you add layers they will appear under the property folder in the Places column. You can move them to the folder itself by left-clicking and moving them to the folder.

To measure and illustrate fetch, first zoom out to see the likeliest farthest point over the water from your property's waterfront. Click on the ruler icon in the toolbar (ninth one in), chose Miles in the dropdown menu in the Line tab. Left-click once at a point on the waterfront, then move the gun sight to the farthest uninterrupted landfall over the water, looking at the Map Length to find the maximum distance. Left-click again at that point. Click Save. In the dialogue box, name it "Fetch: .5 mile" or whatever and Save. Move the Fetch layer to your property folder.

You can also add another Placemark with the label "Fetch: .5 mile" near the line you drew for the fetch.

Remember that all the additions you've made to the image are separate layers. To change them, left-click on their entries in your property folder, Delete and do them again.

To save your new image, right-click on your property folder, "Save Place as," and save as a .kml file. It's bigger than a .kmz file, which is zipped, but I couldn't get access to the .kmz version on my computer for some reason.

To print the image, click on the Print icon, two to the right of the Ruler icon, select "Screenshot of the current 3D view, and click on Print.

*Here are the minimal system requirements for running Google Earth 6.2, the latest version, on a PC:

- Operating System: Windows XP, Windows Vista, or Windows 7
- CPU: Pentium 3, 500Mhz
- System Memory (RAM): 256MB
- Hard Disk: 400MB free space
- Network Speed: 128 Kbits/sec
- Graphics Card: DirectX9 and 3D capable with 64MB of VRAM
- Screen: 1024x768, "16-bit High Color" - DirectX 9 (to run in Direct X mode)
- Mail: Outlook 2007+ is required for email functionality

  On a Mac:
- Operating System: Mac OS X 10.5.0 or later
- CPU: Any Intel Mac
- System Memory (RAM): 256MB
- Hard Disk: 400MB free space
- Network Speed: 128 Kbits/sec
- Graphics Card: DirectX9 and 3D capable with 64MB of VRAM
- Screen: 1024x768, "Thousands of Colors"