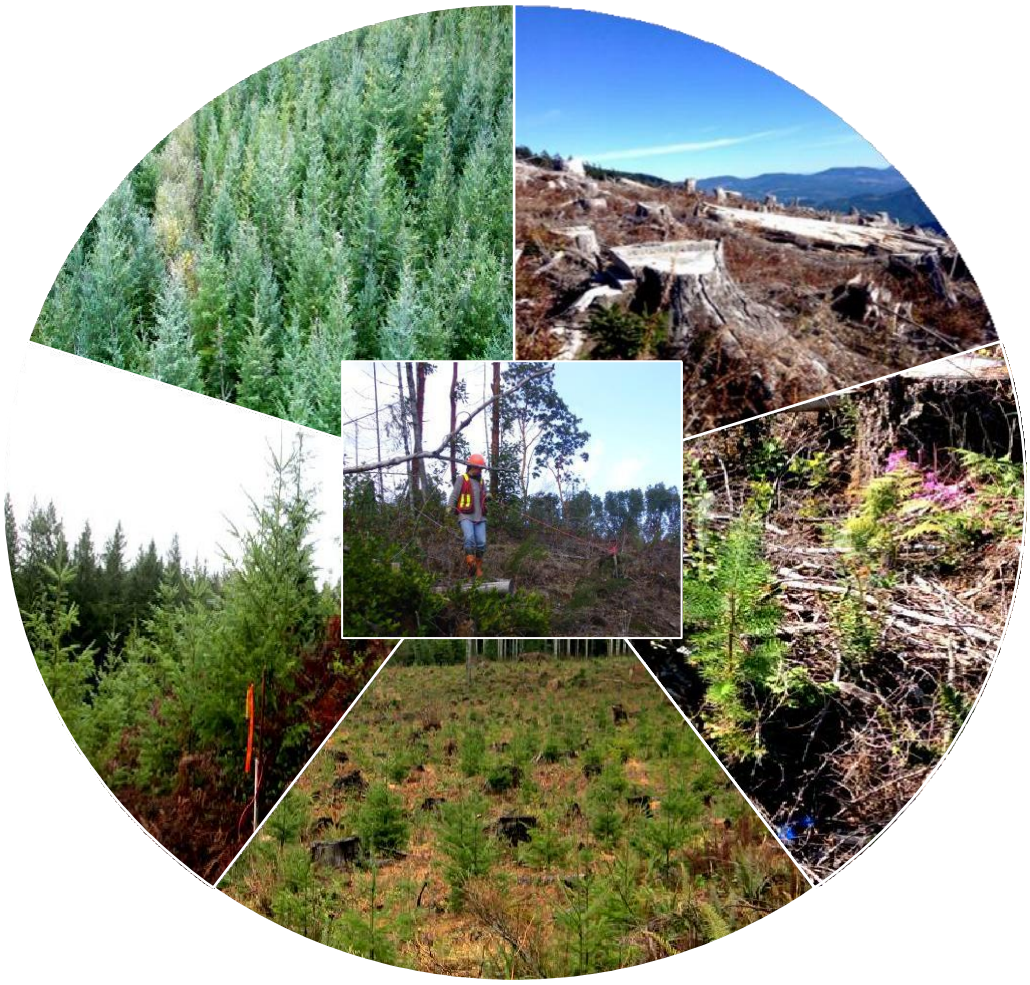
https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/forestry/managing-our-forest-resources/silviculture/silviculture-surveys

The Silviculture Surveyor Accreditation Process

2026



Forest Science, Planning and Practices Branch

Ministry of Forests

Background

In the 1980s, the silviculture surveyor certification and training process was developed for the British Columbia Ministry of Forests with the goal of ensuring quality silviculture surveys. In 1995, the certification process changed to an accreditation process, separating the training component from the examination.

The silviculture surveyor accreditation process:

- defines the role of a silviculture surveyor,
- eliminates prerequisites for the accreditation exam in favour of a self-screening process,
- separates the accreditation exam from training so that individuals can design their training to suit their specific needs
- clearly defines performance expectations of silviculture surveyors.

The Role of an Accredited Silviculture Surveyor

Accredited Silviculture Surveyors (ASS) are experienced field practitioners. They often have a complex role in the collection, compilation, and analysis of silviculture survey data. They make use of silviculture plans and gather information to carry out the following tasks:

- conduct or confirm the stratification of a survey unit,
- ensure the accuracy and thoroughness of data collection, reporting, and mapping,
- confirm and identify additional critical site factors that may influence the attainment of management objectives set out in plans,
- make preliminary recommendations that aid in forest management decisions, including those that prove legislated reforestation obligations have been achieved.

Why Become Accredited?

An Accredited Silviculture Surveyor (ASS) designation:

- demonstrates to future employers that you are capable, well trained and understand the performance expectations to ensure a high standard of competency when conducting silviculture surveys,
- increases your qualifications and makes you a more desirable candidate for many silviculture related jobs,
- can be a requirement in a survey contract that specifies an ASS be on site for all silviculture surveys,
- makes you potentially eligible for registration as an Associate Member (Silviculture Accredited Surveyor-SAS) with the Forest Professionals of BC (FPBC). For more information, visit the FPBC website: https://www.fpbc.ca/siviculture-accredited-surveyor/

Accreditation Exam Prerequisites

While there are no formal prerequisites for writing the accreditation exam, it is highly recommended that surveyors have a minimum of one field season performing regeneration delay, stocking, and free growing surveys, including alternative survey methods.

Candidates are responsible for assessing their own knowledge and skill level before registering for the accreditation exam.

To assist with this assessment, the video "Silviculture Survey Accreditation Exam: Are you Ready?" is available on the BC Silviculture Surveys YouTube channel.

Prospective examinees are also encouraged to complete the available practice quizzes:

- Stocking Status, Stratification, and Statistics
- Alternative Survey Methods
- Forest Health
- Field Procedures & Data Compilation

Silviculture Surveyor Training

To prepare for the exam and stay current in silviculture surveying, the Ministry of Forests (FOR) encourages regular training.

Surveyors can access training through various sources:

- Formal education (e.g., college, university)
- On-the-job training and work experience
- Online materials (e.g., training videos, guidance documents, online courses)
- Government workshops (e.g., forest health, ecology)
- Courses from training providers.

Training providers offer a range of courses, from one-day 'What's New' sessions for experienced surveyors to comprehensive, ten-day training programs.

Courses are available in all regions based on demand, with higher availability in the spring. Dates and locations are advertised on the BC Silviculture Surveys webpage under "Course and Accreditation Exam Schedule."

Early registration is recommended to reduce the risk of course cancellation due to low enrollment. Minimum attendance is required for courses and exams to proceed.

Accreditation Exam

The accreditation process includes a two-day exam.

- Day 1 – A written exam covering general, procedural, technical, and practical case study questions.
- Day 2 – A field exam focused on silviculture survey data collection and compilation.

The accreditation exam is typically offered in the spring and fall in all regions, depending on demand.

Candidates are encouraged to choose an exam location that aligns with their field experience, as the exam requires knowledge of regionally important tree species, forest health agents, non-crop vegetation, and ecology.

For more information, please refer to the "Silviculture Survey Exam: What to Expect" video.

Performance Objectives and Marking

To pass the accreditation exam, candidates must successfully meet the requirements for various performance objectives (POs). Each PO represents a specific subject or skill. The requirements vary by PO, and the marking criteria are outlined on pages 5 and 6.

POs are ranked as medium or high. High ranked POs are tested more times through the multi-part examination process (Part 1 Written, Part 2- Case Study, Part 3- Field) than medium ranked POs, although all POs are tested multiple times.

Each question or task's point value reflects its relative importance. For example, field-based forest health identification carries more weight than theoretical forest health questions.

Questions and tasks related to a specific PO are grouped and evaluated collectively to ensure no single question determines success. Candidates must achieve a cumulative passing score across all questions or tasks related to that PO.

If a pooled PO score does not meet the success criteria, it counts as a deficiency. The number of allowable deficiencies depends on the PO rating.

Performance Objective Rating	Maximum Deficiencies
HIGH Failure to meet any high rated PO results in a no-pass situation.	0
MEDIUM Candidates can fail up to 2 medium ranked POs and still pass.	2

Re-Write Policy

A candidate may be eligible to re-write a portion of the exam if they fail three or fewer performance objectives and clearly demonstrate their ability to achieve the balance of the performance objectives.

Candidates eligible for a re-write must re-write all performance objectives that were not successfully achieved, regardless of whether they are ranked as medium or high.

Eligible candidates will have up to two years from the original exam date to re-write the identified portion(s) of the exam. The re-write fee will be 50% of the full two-day exam cost, and only one re-write opportunity will be permitted.

Performance Objective # and Ranking	Description	Marking
1 **M**	Understand current legal requirements for silviculture surveys, stratification, and reporting. Survey to the applicable legal stocking standards. Provide recommendations for amendments, where appropriate.	**Written/Case Study:** To an accuracy of 75%.
2 **H**	Describe why good stratification is important for a silviculture survey. Identify situations requiring stratification. Understand the difference in stratification at regeneration delay and free growing, and how to stratify to achieve non-timber objectives. Complete preliminary stratification of a sample unit using file data and imagery. Understand the purpose of a walk-through. Complete a walk-through and stratify a sample unit. Construct a map identifying strata boundaries.	**Written/Field:** To an accuracy of 75%. **Field:** Areas exceeding the minimum stratum size and stratification criteria must be identified. Strata boundaries must reasonably agree with the examiner's strata boundaries.
3 **M**	Choose the survey type, timing, objective, and data to collect. Choose an appropriate sampling method and intensity.	**Written/Field:** To an accuracy of 75%. **Field:** Acceptable in the judgement of the examiner.
4 **M**	Choose a suitable survey method. Apply alternative survey methods (e.g., CEDRSS, DFP, Layered, Multi-entry, etc.).	**Written:** To an accuracy of 75%.
5 **H**	Collect and record data on the FS 657 Silviculture Survey General Site Info Card.	**Written/Field:** To an accuracy of 75%.
6 **M**	Choose an appropriate method to determine site index for the stand. Determine site index.	**Written/Field:** To an accuracy of 75%.
7 **M**	Identify the texture and % coarse fragments of a mineral soil sample. Collect site data and complete ecological classification.	**Field:** To an accuracy of 75%. Note: Greater weighting is applied to ecological classification, soil texture, and percent coarse fragments.

Performance Objective # and Ranking	Description	Marking
8 **H**	Collect and record data on the FS 658 Silviculture Survey Plot Card.	**Field:** Appropriately and accurately complete 75% of the key elements of the form. The collected data must allow for the correct stocking status determination, compliance with the RISS precision standards for the stratum, and reasonable treatment recommendations.
9 **H**	Correctly identify the tree species for mature and immature trees.	**Field:** To an accuracy of 100%.
10 **H**	Summarize data on the FS659 Silviculture Survey Plot Summary Card and the FS 1138A Confidence Limits Card. Construct silviculture and inventory labels for single layer and multi-layer stands.	**Written/Field:** To an accuracy of 75%. For the field, the FS1138A and FS659 will be marked using the candidate's data.
11 **H**	Compare survey results to stocking standards to determine stocking status.	**Written/Field:** To an accuracy of 90%. For the field, the stocking status determination will be marked using the candidate's data.
12 **H**	Identify critical factors (e.g., shallow soils, frost, elk, non-timber objectives) and explain how they will affect the establishment, growth and development of the future stand, and the achievement of stand objectives.	**Case Study and Field:** To an accuracy of 75%. Must identify factors that are critical to the development of a complete and acceptable recommendation.
13 **H**	Identify regional forest health agents (biotic and abiotic). Understand forest health data collection requirements by survey type and region. Understand the potential impacts of forest health factors.	**Written/Case Study/Field:** To an accuracy of 75%.
14 **M**	Identify regional non-crop vegetation species. Evaluate competing vegetation. Understand growth characteristics of non-crop vegetation that could pose a potential threat to crop-tree survival and/or performance.	**Written/Case Study/Field:** To an accuracy of 75%.
15 **M**	Prepare primary and secondary recommendations. Rationalize treatment options.	**Case Study/Field:** To an accuracy of 75%. Recommendations must be reasonable and effective in addressing site limiting factors and meeting the objective.