What's New in Silviculture Surveying- 2026

This document highlights key updates and new resources for silviculture surveying in British Columbia for 2026. It is intended to help surveyors and silviculture practitioners quickly identify what has changed, what new tools are available, and where to find the most current guidance.

The most significant update for 2026 is the release of the new *Silviculture Survey Procedures Manual*. The manual has undergone a major rewrite and restructuring to improve clarity, consistency, and usability. It includes new checklists, step-by-step guidance, and instructions on field techniques that were previously undocumented. Core survey procedures have changed only in minor ways.

In addition to the 2026 *Silviculture Survey Procedures Manual*, this year's updates include:

- an updated root disease netdown process
- new and updated training videos
- an aerial assessment suitability matrix and best management practices
- a CEDRSS Implementation Guide
- practice quizzes

This document first provides an overview of these major releases. A detailed summary of changes to the *Silviculture Survey Procedures Manual*, including new content, clarifications, procedural changes, and removals, is provided at the end of the document.

Feedback and Continuous Improvement

If you have questions about silviculture surveying, have suggestions for improvements, identify errors, or would like to request a training topic, please reach out to **silvsurveys@gov.bc.ca**.

2026 FS 660

A major update has been made to the root disease netdown process, applicable to all free growing damage criteria tables. Surveyors should review the updated process and the corresponding training video before conducting free growing surveys.

Surveyor Accreditation

The Accreditation Brochure and Performance Objectives have been updated with a new marking policy, links to practice quizzes and exam preparation videos, and revised performance objectives.

Aerial Assessments

Helicopter- and UAV-based assessments may be appropriate in some situations but require careful consideration of risk, suitability, and defensibility. The following resources support due diligence when considering aerial sampling methods for free growing surveys:

- Aerial Assessments Suitability Matrix training video
- Using Aerial Assessments for Free Growing Declarations powerpoint (PDF)
- Aerial Assessment Suitability Matrix

2026 CEDRSS Implementation Guide

The 2026 CEDRSS Implementation Guide introduces a fully updated framework for applying coastal ecosystem dispersed retention stocking standards (CEDRSS), previously referred to as single-entry dispersed retention stocking standards. The guide includes updated survey procedures aligned with current reporting requirements and supports the use of a new, automated data collection and compilation spreadsheet. It also provides clear instructions for submitting forest cover updates and variations to RESULTS.

Supporting materials include:

- 2026 CEDRSS Implementation Guide
- CEDR Data Collection and Compilation spreadsheet
- CEDR Data Collection training video
- CEDR Data Compilation and Reporting training video

Recent Training Videos

Recent additions include:

- Root Disease: Reporting and NEW Netdown Process
- CEDR Data Collection
- CEDR Data Compilation and Reporting
- Silviculture Survey Accreditation Exam: Are you Ready?
- Silviculture Survey Accreditation Exam: What to Expect on Exam Day
- Identification of BC's Major Root Diseases
- Aerial Assessment Suitability Matrix
- FS 1138A: Statistics for Silviculture Surveying
- Site Tools & Growth Intercept Tables
- Silviculture 101
- Limitations of Current FG Framework

Practice Quizzes

Practices quizzes are available for:

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

2026 Silviculture Survey Procedures Manual

This summary highlights new content, substantive changes, and items requiring particular emphasis in the 2026 *Silviculture Survey Procedures Manual*.

Note: Some sections have been streamlined to reduce redundancy and modernize the content, with greater focus on survey procedures and less emphasis on background materials. Surveyors who require a copy of the archived *2023 Silviculture Survey Procedures Manual* for reference may contact silvsurveys@gov.bc.ca.

Chapter 1: Introduction to Surveys

- Clarified that silviculture surveys fall under the practice of professional forestry as defined in the Forest Professionals Regulation under the *Professional Governance Act*.
- Clarified use of ASS or BCASS and SAS designations.

Chapter 2: Preparing for the Survey

- Added a reminder that general standards or variances from general standards do not automatically transfer to electronic data collection apps. Surveyors must review the site plan and forest stewardship plan to confirm applicability.

Chapter 3: Conducting the Walk-through

- Clarified that the minimum stratum size for reserves is 0.25 ha. However, where the exact locations of reserves 0.1 ha or greater are known, it is recommended that they be stratified and reported to RESULTS.

Chapter 4: Designing the Survey

- Clarified that 40 plots per stratum is generally considered a reasonable upper limit.
- Expanded guidance on when to use alternative plot sizes.
- Released an ocular assessment suitability matrix to support method selection.
- Added best management practices for aerial assessments.
- Added a hybrid ocular assessment method using LiDAR or UAV-based photogrammetry.

Chapter 5: Documenting the Survey Setup (FS 657)

- Noted that field cards will be available through Supply BC in the near future.

Chapter 6: Establishing Plots

- Added a step-by-step procedure to help new surveyors understand the plot completion process. Surveyors are not required to follow this sequence in the field.
- Clarified selection of the silviculture sample tree for height and age measurements.

Chapter 7: Compiling the Data

- Added recommended precision standards for crop and total basal area (+/-20%).

Chapter 8: Creating the Survey Report

⚠️ Significant new content added – review recommended

Added:

- a checklist of questions to support survey comment writing
- guidance on developing survey recommendations
- summaries outlining the purpose, timing, and recommended documentation for different silviculture treatments
- guidance on non-treatment recommendations and appropriate documentation
- a report review (quality assurance) checklist
- RESULTS reporting guidance, including a forest cover submission example

Chapter 9: Additional Concepts and Field Techniques

⚠️ Significant new content included – review recommended

This chapter has been created to consolidate independent field techniques that were previously undocumented or dispersed throughout the manual into a single, dedicated section.

- Added guidance on estimating site class and applying site class conversion to determine site index.
- Clarified that only Layer 1 residual/mature broadleaf trees are considered non-competitive when their collective basal area is less than 8 m^2/ha at the plot-level.
- Added Swiss needle cast field procedures and clarified collection triggers.
- Provided instructions for measuring basal area using prisms and angle gauges.
- Added an estimation method for tallying plots with high tree densities.
- Clarified how to count trees with forking and trees originating from stumps.
- Documented procedures for measuring tree height, including trees with sweeps.
- Identified free mobile apps that function as clinometers for height measurements.
- Documented methods for determining tree age using stock age and planting dates, whorl counts, destructive sampling, and increment coring.
- Outlined multiple methods for estimating crown closure.
- Provided instructions for measuring infection distance when assessing free growing damage criteria.
- Added a ranking process for multiple forest health factors affecting a single tree.

Chapter 10: Alternative Survey Methods for Complex Vertical Stands

⚠️ Significant new content included – review recommended

- Defined complex vertical stands.
- Clarified when alternative survey methods are required.
- Added a Shared Practices section applicable to all alternative survey methods.
- Expanded guidance on forest cover reporting for multi-layer stands.
- Removed the boreal mixedwood procedure due to unresolved errors and lack of supporting documentation.
- Clarified that site index curve method is not appropriate where the largest trees have been harvested.

Multi-entry Survey Method

- Renamed the multi-storey survey method to multi-entry.
- Emphasized that uneven-aged stocking standards should not apply to stands managed under even-aged systems. These standards are only intended for stands with multiple planned harvest entries over time.
- Revised the suitability criteria so that Layer 1 and Layer 2 crown closure $\geq$ 6% no longer triggers use of this method.
- Added detail on the nesting process and counting trees in excess of the M-value.

CEDRSS Survey Method

- Renamed the single-entry dispersed retention (SEDR) survey method to coastal ecosystem dispersed retention (CEDR).
- Released a new automated data collection and compilation spreadsheet.
- Revised the survey procedure to align with the automated spreadsheet.

DFP:

- Established a new requirement for FSPs, FOPs, and WLPs approved in 2027 or later to specify obligation criteria (e.g., Table 19) associated with the DFP procedure within the plan.
- Clarified that Layer 1 and 2 trees are excluded from both the median height calculation and the countable conifer count when assessing maximum density.

Layered:

- Simplified MITD rules by removing shade-tolerance considerations.

- Clarified that Layer 1 and 2 trees are excluded from both the median height calculation and the countable conifer count when assessing maximum density.

Chapter 11: Alternative Survey Methods for Non-Standard Objectives and Structures

- Added a step-by-step survey procedure for commercial thinning, aligned with the 2025 *Commercial Thinning Guidance for British Columbia*.
- Explained how the commercial thinning survey method can be modified for intermediate cuts.
- Removed the coastal mixedwood stand structure section. The deleted text can be found in *Hardwood Management in the Coast Region*.
- Added remote sensing as a sampling method for green-up surveys.

Appendix 3.2 Hybrid Ocular Assessments

- Added guidance defining the hybrid ocular assessment method, the UAV-derived products they may generate, and how these products can be used alongside ocular assessments or targeted field verification. The appendix outlines appropriate applications, limitations, and due diligence considerations.