

**Field Manual
for
Describing Terrestrial Ecosystems**



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Preface

How to use this manual

This manual has been prepared to assist field surveyors in the completion of the Ecosystem Field Forms, including site, soil, vegetation, mensuration, wildlife habitat assessment, tree attributes for wildlife, and coarse woody debris data forms. These are a series of forms for the collection of ecological data in British Columbia.

The field manual is organized by section—one for each data form. The forms, as a package, are called Ecosystem Field Forms (FS882) and are numbered as follows:

Site Description FS882(1)	SITE
Soil Description FS882(2)	SOIL
Vegetation FS882(3)	VEG
Mensuration FS882(4)	MENS
Wildlife Habitat Assessment FS882(5)	WHA
Tree Attributes for Wildlife FS882(6)	TAW
Coarse Woody Debris FS882(7)	CWD
References	REF
Ground Inspection (included as an insert)	GIF

The forms are designed to be used in various inventories, e.g., ecosystem classification, terrestrial ecosystem mapping, and wildlife habitat assessment. Not all the data fields on all the forms will be completed on every sample plot. Rather, project objectives will determine which forms and fields need to be completed. Likewise, project objectives will determine where and how plots are located.

The field manual follows *Describing Ecosystems in the Field* (Luttmerding et al. 1990), however, it has been updated to accommodate new inventory requirements and standards. The forms evolved from the B.C. Ministry of Forests Ecological Classification Reconnaissance Form, the larger more detailed forms in Luttmerding et al. (1990), and the Vegetation Resource Inventory forms (Resources Inventory Committee 1997).

The size of sample plots has not been identified in this field manual. In most cases, a plot size of 400 m² is considered adequate, however, in species-poor ecosystems, the plot size could be smaller (e.g., some wetlands, grasslands, dense forests). Plot shape can be rectangular, square, or circular, but is usually consistent for a project.

As this is a field manual, the descriptions have been kept as brief as possible. Other supporting references, such as Luttmerding et al. (1990), Green et al. (1993), Howes and Kenk (1997), and Agriculture Canada Expert Committee on Soil Survey (1998), among others, will be required if the user is not already familiar with their contents. See references (Section 8) for a complete list of complementary documents.

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Contributors to other documents and forms also assisted with this field manual by their work on classifications, procedures, diagrams, figures, tables, or design. All the manuals, reports, and publications used to prepare this field manual are listed in the References section. The authors, compilers, and contributors to these primary sources of information are gratefully acknowledged. Their unselfish work has made this field guide possible.

Many others contributed to the production of the field guide. Louise Gronmyr and Christina Stewart typed the original material from *Describing Ecosystems in the Field*. Anette Thingsted assisted with an earlier draft. Susan Bannerman prepared an extremely useful English and format edit. Tetrad Creative Services and Greg Britton prepared the camera-ready version.

The compilers of this field manual greatly appreciate everyone's contributions.

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