Idaho Lidar Standards Version 1.0

Background

As lidar data collections become more frequent in Idaho, it becomes increasingly important to adapt lidar collection and processing standards to aid the first time user, inform contractors, promote collaboration and cost-savings, and ensure long-term usability and wide-applicability of the data.

The following standards are designed to be applicable to most lidar collections in the State of Idaho, whether the data are collected for floodplain mapping or other detailed topographic modeling, research, or other purposes. The lidar standards should be viewed as a solid platform from which to plan a lidar data collection. As lidar technology evolves, the guidelines will be updated.

The following standards are strongly based on the USGS National Geospatial Program Lidar Guidelines and Base Specifications Version 13 (http://lidar.cr.usgs.gov/). Appendix A outlines the differences between the Idaho Lidar Standards and the USGS National Geospatial Program Lidar Guidelines and Base Specifications Version 13. These differences are due to the Idaho Lidar Standards exceeding the USGS recommendations. FEMA lidar guidelines adhere to the USGS National Geospatial Program Lidar Guidelines and Base Specifications Version 13 in most instances. Appendix B reports the instances in which the FEMA lidar guidelines exceed or add upon the USGS National Geospatial Program Lidar Guidelines and Base Specifications Version 13. Definition of terms are reported in Appendix C.

I. COLLECTION

1. Multiple Discrete Return, capable of at least 4 returns per pulse.

   Note: Full waveform collection is both acceptable and welcomed; however, waveform data is regarded as supplemental information. The requirement for deriving and delivering multiple discrete returns remains in force in all cases.

2. Intensity values for each return, including automatic gain control (AGC) when applicable.
3. Nominal Pulse Spacing (NPS) of 35 to 50 centimeters or a point density of 4 pulses/m^2, dependent on the local terrain and landcover conditions. Assessment to be made against single swath, first return data located within the geometrically usable center portion (typically ~90%) of each swath. Average along-track and cross-track point spacings should be comparable.
4. Collections designed to achieve the NPS through swath overlap or multiple passes are generally discouraged. Such collections may be permitted with prior approval.
5. Data Voids [areas => $(4*NPS)^2$, measured using 1st-returns only] within a single swath are not acceptable, except:
   - Where caused by water bodies
   - Where caused by areas of low near infra-red (NIR) reflectivity such as asphalt or composition roofing.
   - Where appropriately filled-in by another swath
6. The spatial distribution of geometrically usable points is expected to be uniform and free from clustering. In order to ensure uniform densities throughout the data set:

- A regular grid, with cell size equal to the design NPS*2 will be laid over the data.
- At least 90% of the cells in the grid shall contain at least 4 lidar points.
- Assessment to be made against single swath, first return data located within the geometrically usable center portion (typically ~90%) of each swath.
- Acceptable data voids identified previously in this specification are excluded.

Note: This requirement may be relaxed in areas of significant relief where it is impractical to maintain a consistent NPS.

7. Scan Angle: Total FOV should not exceed 30° (±15° from nadir)

   Note: This requirement is primarily applicable to oscillating mirror lidar systems. Other instrument technologies may be exempt from this requirement.

8. Vertical Accuracy of the lidar data will be assessed and reported in accordance with the guidelines developed by the NDEP and subsequently adopted by the ASPRS. The complete guidelines may be found in Section 1.5 of the Guidelines document. See:

   http://www.ndep.gov/NDEP_Elevation_Guidelines_Ver1_10May2004.pdf

   Vertical accuracy requirements using the NDEP/ASPRS methodology are:

   FVA <= 24.5cm ACCz, 95% (12.5cm RMSEz)

   CVA <= 36.3cm, 95th Percentile

   SVA <= 36.3cm, 95th Percentile

   Accuracy for the lidar point cloud data is to be reported independently from accuracies of derivative products (i.e., DEMs). Point cloud data accuracy is to be tested against a TIN constructed from bare-earth lidar points.

   Each landcover type representing 10% or more of the total project area must be tested and reported as an SVA.

   For SVAs, the value is provided as a target. It is understood that in areas of dense vegetation, swamps, or extremely difficult terrain, this value may be exceeded. Overall CVA requirements must be met in spite of "busts" in individual SVAs.

   Note: These requirements may be relaxed in cases:

   - Where there exists a demonstrable and substantial increase in cost to obtain this accuracy.
   - Where an alternate specification is needed to conform to previously contracted phases of a single larger overall collection effort, i.e., multi-year statewide collections, etc.
   - Where the USGS agrees that it is reasonable and in the best interest of all stakeholders to use an alternate specification.

9. Relative accuracy ≤ 7cm RMSEZ within individual swaths; ≤ 10cm RMSEz within swath overlap (between adjacent swaths).
10. Flightline overlap of 50%. Any data with gaps between the geometrically usable portions of the swaths will be rejected.
11. Collection Area: Defined Project Area, buffered by a minimum of 100 meters.
12. Collection Conditions:

    - Atmospheric: Cloud and fog-free between the aircraft and ground

- Ground:
  - Snow free. Very light, undrifted snow may be acceptable in special cases, with prior approval.
  - No unusual flooding or inundation, except in cases where the goal of the collection is to map the inundation.
- Vegetation: Leaf-off is preferred, however:
  - As numerous factors will affect vegetative condition at the time of any collection, the USGS NGP only requires that penetration to the ground must be adequate to produce an accurate and reliable bare-earth surface suitable for incorporation into the 1/9 (3-meter) NED.
  - Collections for specific scientific research projects may be exempted from this requirement, with prior approval.

II. DATA PROCESSING and HANDLING

1. All processing should be carried out with the understanding that all point deliverables are required to be in fully compliant LAS format, v1.2 or v1.3. Data producers are encouraged to review the LAS specification in detail.

   http://www.asprs.org/society/committees/standards/lidar_exchange_format.html

2. If full waveform data is collected, delivery of the waveform packets is required. LAS v1.3 deliverables with waveform data are to use external “auxiliary” files with the extension “.wdp” for the storage of waveform packet data. See the LAS v1.3 Specification for additional information.
3. GPS times are to be recorded as Adjusted GPS Time, at a precision sufficient to allow unique timestamps for each pulse. Adjusted GPS Time is defined to be Standard (or satellite) GPS time minus $1*10^9$. See the LAS Specification for more detail.
4. Horizontal datum shall be referenced to the North American Datum of 1983. Vertical datum shall be referenced to the North American Vertical Datum of 1988 (NAVD 88). The most recent NGS-approved Geoid model shall be used to perform conversions from ellipsoidal heights to orthometric heights.
5. The preferred Coordinate Reference System for Idaho is: UTM, NAD83, Meters. Each discrete project is to be processed using the predominant UTM zone for the overall collection area.
6. All references to the Unit of Measure “Feet” or “Foot” must specify either “International” or “U.S. Survey”
7. Long swaths (those which result in a LAS file larger than 2GB) should be split into segments no greater than 2GB each. Each segment will thenceforth be regarded as a unique swath and shall be assigned a unique File Source ID. Other swath segmentation approaches may be acceptable, with prior approval. Renaming schemes for split swaths are at the discretion of the data producer. The Processing Report shall include detailed information on swath segmentation sufficient to allow reconstruction of the original swaths if needed.
8. Each swath shall be assigned a unique File Source ID. The Point Source ID field for each point within each LAS swath file shall be set equal to the File Source ID prior to any processing of the data. See the LAS Specification.

9. Point Families (multiple return “children” of a single “parent” pulse) shall be maintained intact through all processing prior to tiling. Multiple returns from a given pulse shall be stored in sequential (collected) order.

10. All collected swaths are to be delivered as part of the “Raw Data Deliverable”. This includes calibration swaths and cross-ties. All collected points are to be delivered. No points are to be deleted from the swath LAS files. This in no way requires or implies that calibration swath data are to be included in product generation. Excepted from this are extraneous data outside of the buffered project area (aircraft turns, transit between the collection area and airport, transit between fill-in areas, etc.). These points may be permanently removed.

11. Outliers, blunders, noise points, geometrically unreliable points near the extreme edge of the swath, and other points deemed unusable are to be identified using the “Withheld” flag, as defined in the LAS specification.

    - This applies primarily to points which are identified during pre-processing or through automated post-processing routines.
    - If processing software is not capable of populating the “Withheld” bit, these points may be identified using Class=11.
    - “Noise points” subsequently identified during manual Classification and Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) may be assigned the standard LAS classification value for “Noise” (Class=7), regardless of whether the noise is “low” or “high” relative to the ground surface.

12. The ASPRS/LAS “Overlap” classification (Class=12) shall not be used. ALL points not identified as “Withheld” are to be classified.

    - If overlap points are required to be differentiated by the data producer or cooperating partner, they must be identified using a method that does not interfere with their classification, such as:
        - Overlap points are tagged using Bit:0 of the User Data byte, as defined in the LAS specification. (SET=Overlap).
        - Overlap points are classified using the Standard Class values + 16.
        - Other techniques as agreed upon in advance
    - The technique utilized must be clearly described in the project metadata files.

    Note: A standard bit setting for identification of overlap points has been planned for a future version of LAS.

13. Positional Accuracy Validation: The absolute and relative accuracy of the data, both horizontal and vertical, and relative to known control, shall be verified <u>prior</u> to classification and subsequent product development. This validation is obviously limited to the Fundamental Vertical Accuracy, measured in clear, open areas. A detailed report of this validation is a required deliverable.

14. Classification Accuracy: It is expected that due diligence in the classification process will produce data that meets the following test:

    - Within any 1km x 1km area, no more than 2% of non-withheld points will possess a demonstrably erroneous classification value.
    - This includes points in Classes 0 and 1 that should correctly be included in a different Class as required by the contract.

Note: This requirement may be relaxed to accommodate collections in areas where the USGS agrees classification to be particularly difficult.

15. Classification Consistency: Point classification is to be consistent across the entire project. Noticeable variations in the character, texture, or quality of the classification between tiles, swaths, lifts, or other non-natural divisions will be cause for rejection of the entire deliverable.

16. Tiles:

    Note: This section assumes a projected coordinate reference system.

    - A single non-overlapped tiling scheme will be established and agreed upon by the data producer and user prior to collection. This scheme will be used for **all** tiled deliverables.
    - Tile size must be an integer multiple of the cell size of raster deliverables.
    - Tiles must be sized using the same units as the coordinate system of the data.
    - Tiled deliverables shall conform to the tiling scheme, without added overlap.
    - Tiled deliverables shall edge-match seamlessly and without gaps in both the horizontal and vertical.

III. HYDRO-FLATTENING REQUIREMENTS

Note: Please refer to Appendix C for reference information on hydro-flattening.

Hydro-flattening pertains only to the creation of derived DEMs. No manipulation of or changes to originally computed lidar point elevations are to be made. Breaklines may be used to help classify the point data.

1. Inland Ponds and Lakes:
    - ~2-acre or greater surface area (~350’ diameter for a round pond) at the time of collection.
    - Flat and level water bodies (single elevation for every bank vertex defining a given water body).
    - The entire water surface edge must be at or below the immediately surrounding terrain.
    - Long impoundments such as reservoirs, inlets, and fjords, whose water surface elevations drop when moving downstream, should be treated as rivers.
2. Inland Streams and Rivers:
    - 100’ nominal width: This should not unnecessarily break a stream or river into multiple segments. At times it may squeeze slightly below 100’ for short segments. Data producers should use their best professional judgment.
    - Flat and level bank-to-bank (perpendicular to the apparent flow centerline); gradient to follow the immediately surrounding terrain.
    - The entire water surface edge must be at or below the immediately surrounding terrain.
    - Streams channels should break at road crossings (culvert locations). These road fills should not be removed from DEM. However, streams and rivers should not break at elevated bridges. Bridges should be removed from DEM. When the identification of a feature as a bridge or culvert cannot be made reliably, the feature should be regarded as a culvert.

3. Non-Tidal Boundary Waters:
    - Represented only as an edge or edges within the project area; collection does not include the opposing shore.
    - The entire water surface edge must be at or below the immediately surrounding terrain.
    - The elevation along the edge or edges should behave consistently throughout the project. May be a single elevation (i.e., lake) or gradient (i.e., river), as appropriate.
4. Tidal Waters:
    - Water bodies such as oceans, seas, gulfs, bays, inlets, salt marshes, very large lakes, etc. Includes any water body that is affected by tidal variations.
    - Tidal variations over the course of a collection or between different collections, will result in discontinuities along shorelines. This is considered normal and these "anomalies" should be retained. The final DEM should represent as much ground as the collected data permits.
    - Variations in water surface elevation resulting in tidal variations during a collection should NOT be removed or adjusted, as this would require either the removal of valid, measured ground points or the introduction of unmeasured ground into the DEM. The USGS NGP priority is on the ground surface, and accepts there may be occasional, unavoidable irregularities in water surface.
    - Scientific research projects in coastal areas often have very specific requirements with regard to how tidal land-water boundaries are to be handled. For such projects, the requirements of the research will take precedence.

Cooperating partners may require collection and integration of single-line streams within their lidar projects. While the USGS does not require these breaklines be collected or integrated, it does require that if used and incorporated into the DEMs, the following guidelines are met:

1. All vertices along single-line stream breaklines are at or below the immediately surrounding terrain.
2. Single-line stream breaklines are not to be used to introduce cuts into the DEM at road crossings (culverts), dams, or other such features. This is hydro-enforcement and as discussed in Section VI, creates a non-traditional DEM that is not suitable for integration into the NED.
3. All breaklines used to modify the surface are to be delivered to the USGS with the DEMs.

The USGS does not require any particular process or methodology be used for breakline collection, extraction, or integration. However, the following general guidelines must be adhered to:

1. Bare-earth lidar points that are in close proximity breaklines should be excluded from the DEM generation process. This is analogous to the removal of masspoints for the same reason in a traditional photogrammetrically compiled DTM.

    The proximity threshold for reclassification as "Ignored Ground" is at the discretion of the data producer, but in general should be approximately equal to the NPS.
2. These points are to be retained in the delivered lidar point dataset and shall be reclassified as "Ignored Ground" (class value = 10) so that they may be subsequently identified.

3. Delivered data must be sufficient for the USGS to effectively recreate the delivered DEMs using the lidar points and breaklines without significant further editing.

IV. DELIVERABLES

The client shall have unrestricted rights to all delivered data and reports, which will be placed in the public domain. This specification places no restrictions on the data provider's rights to resell data or derivative products as they see fit.

1. **Metadata**

   Note: "Metadata" ***r****efers to all descriptive information about the project. This includes textual reports, graphics, supporting shapefiles, and FGDC-compliant metadata files.*

- Collection Report detailing mission planning and flight logs, including flight path trajectory information (SBETs).
- Survey Report detailing the collection of control and reference points used for calibration and QA/QC.
- Processing Report detailing calibration, classification, and product generation procedures including methodology used for breakline collection and hydro-flattening (see Sections III and Appendix C for more information on hydro-flattening).
- QA/QC Reports, detailing the analysis, accuracy assessment and validation of:
  - The point data (absolute, within swath, and between swath)
  - The bare-earth surface (absolute)
  - Other optional deliverables as appropriate
- Control and Calibration points: All control and reference points used to calibrate, control, process, and validate the lidar point data or any derivative products are to be delivered.
- Geo-referenced, digital spatial representation of the precise extents of each delivered dataset. This should reflect the extents of the actual lidar source or derived product data, exclusive of Triangular Irregular Network (TIN) artifacts or raster NODATA areas. A union of tile boundaries or minimum bounding rectangle is not acceptable. ESRI Polygon shapefile or geodatabase is preferred.
- Product metadata (FGDC compliant, XML format metadata). One file for each:
  - Project
  - Lift
  - Tiled deliverable product group (classified point data, bare-earth DEMs, breaklines, etc.). Metadata files for individual tiles are not required.
  - FGDC compliant metadata must pass the USGS metadata parser ("mp") with no errors or warnings.

2. **Raw Point Cloud**

- All returns, all collected points, fully calibrated and adjusted to ground, by swath.
- Fully compliant LAS v1.2 or v1.3, Point Record Format 1, 3, 4, or 5
- LAS v1.3 deliverables with waveform data are to use external "auxiliary" files with the extension ".wdp" for the storage of waveform packet data. See the LAS v1.3 Specification for additional information.
- Georeference information included in all LAS file headers
- GPS times are to be recorded as Adjusted GPS Time, at a precision sufficient to allow unique timestamps for each pulse.

1. Intensity values (native radiometric resolution). Including automatic gain control (AGC) values when applicable

- 1 file per swath, 1 swath per file, file size not to exceed 2GB, as described in Section II, Paragraph 7.

3. **Classified Point Cloud**

Note: Specific projects may be exempted from this requirement.

- Fully compliant LAS v1.2 or v1.3, Point Record Format 1, 3, 4, or 5
- LAS v1.3 deliverables with waveform data are to use external "auxiliary" files with the extension ".wdp" for the storage of waveform packet data. See the LAS v1.3 Specification for additional information.
- Georeference information included in LAS header
- GPS times are to be recorded as Adjusted GPS Time, at a precision sufficient to allow unique timestamps for each pulse.
- Intensity values (native radiometric resolution). Including automatic gain control (AGC) values when applicable.
- Tiled delivery, without overlap (tiling scheme TBD)

Classification Scheme (minimum):

Code	Description
1	Processed, but unclassified
2	Bare-earth ground
7	Noise (low or high, manually identified, if needed)
9	Water
10	Ignored Ground (Breakline Proximity)
11	Withheld (if the "Withheld" bit is not implemented in processing software)

Note: Class 7, Noise, is included as an adjunct to the "Withheld" bit. All "noise points" are to be identified using one of these two methods.

Note: Class 10, Ignored Ground, is for points previously classified as bare-earth but whose proximity to a subsequently added breakline requires that it be excluded during Digital Elevation Model (DEM) generation.

4. **Bare Earth Surface (Raster DEM)**

Note: Specific projects may be exempted from this requirement.

- Cell Size no greater than 3 meters or 10 feet, and no less than the design Nominal Pulse Spacing (NPS).
- Delivery in an industry-standard, GIS-compatible, 32-bit floating point raster format (ERDAS .IMG preferred)
- Georeference information shall be included in each raster file
- Tiled delivery, without overlap
- DEM tiles will show no edge artifacts or mismatch. A quilted appearance in the overall project DEM surface, whether caused by differences in processing quality or character between tiles, swaths, lifts, or other non-natural divisions, will be cause for rejection of the entire DEM deliverable.
- Void areas (i.e., areas outside the project boundary but within the tiling scheme) shall be coded using a unique "NODATA" value. This value shall be identified in the appropriate location within the file header.
- Vertical Accuracy of the bare earth surface will be assessed and reported in accordance with the guidelines developed by the NDEP and subsequently adopted by the ASPRS. The complete guidelines may be found in Section 1.5 of the Guidelines document. See:

  http://www.ndep.gov/NDEP_Elevation_Guidelines_Ver1_10May2004.pdf

  Vertical accuracy requirements using the NDEP/ASPRS methodology are:

  FVA <= 24.5cm ACCz, 95% (12.5cm RMSEz)

  CVA <= 36.3cm, 95th Percentile

  SVA <= 36.3cm, 95th Percentile

  All QA/QC analysis materials and results are to be delivered to the USGS.
- Depressions (sinks), natural or man-made, are not to be filled (as in hydro-conditioning and hydro-enforcement).
- Water Bodies (ponds and lakes), wide streams and rivers ("double-line"), and other non-tidal water bodies as defined in Section III are to be hydro-flattened within the DEM. Hydro-flattening shall be applied to all water impoundments, natural or man-made, that are larger than ~2 acre in area (equivalent to a round pond ~350' in diameter), to all streams that are nominally wider than 100', and to all non-tidal boundary waters bordering the project area regardless of size. The methodology used for hydro-flattening is at the discretion of the data producer.

Note: Please refer to the Sections III and VI for detailed discussions of hydro-flattening.

5. **Breaklines**

Note: Delivery of the breaklines used in hydro-flattening is a standard requirement for USGS NGP lidar projects. Specific scientific research projects may be exempted from this requirement. If hydro-flattening is achieved through other means, this section may not apply.

- All breaklines developed for use in hydro-flattening shall be delivered as an ESRI feature class (PolylineZ or PolygonZ format, as appropriate to the type of feature represented and the methodology used by the data producer). Shapefile or geodatabase is preferred.
- Each feature class or shapefile will include properly formatted and accurate georeference information in the standard location. All shapefiles must include the companion .prj file.
- Breaklines must use the same coordinate reference system (horizontal and vertical) and units as the lidar point delivery.
- Breakline delivery may be as a continuous layer or in tiles, at the discretion of the data producer. Tiled deliveries must edge-match seamlessly in both the horizontal and vertical.

Appendix A. Table of differences between Idaho Lidar Standards Version 1.0 and USGS National Geospatial Program Lidar Guidelines and Base Specifications Version 13.

	Idaho Lidar Standards v1.0	USGS Lidar Standards v13.0
I. COLLECTION		
I.1 Returns	4 returns	3 returns
I.2 Intensity Values	Intensity including Automatic Gain Control (AGC) values	Intensity w/o AGC
I.3 Nominal Pulse Spacing	35 to 50 centimeters or a point density of 4 pulses/m^2	1 to 2 meter
I.6 2nd bullet Spatial Distribution of Points	90% of cells contain at least 4 lidar points	90% of cells contain at least 1 lidar point
I.7 Scan Angle	30° (±15° from nadir)	40° (±20° from nadir)
I.10 Flightline Overlap	50%	10% or greater, no data gaps
II. DATA PROCESSING and HANDLING		
II.4 Datum	North American Datum of 1983	North American Datum of 1983/HARN adjustment
II.5 Projection	UTM NAD83	UTM NAD83 or State Plane Coordinate Reference System
IV. DELIVERABLES		
IV.1 1st bullet Collection Report	Mission planning and flight logs including flight path trajectory information (SBETS)	Mission planning and flight logs
IV.2 6th bullet Raw Point Cloud Intensity	Intensity including (AGC) values	Intensity w/o AGC
IV.3 5th bullet Classified Point Cloud Intensity	Intensity including (AGC) values	Intensity w/o AGC

Appendix B. FEMA Standards

According to FEMA, if lidar is selected for high risk areas, lidar will be collected in accordance with the USGS *Lidar Guidelines and Base Specification*, v13, and hence, are compatible with the guidelines outlined above. FEMA does not require the data to be hydro-flattened, as specified in v13. Also, FEMA does not require all data to be processed to the bare earth terrain, but instead limits the area to be processed to areas in the vicinity of floodplains that will require hydraulic modeling. See FEMA's Procurement Guidelines for specifics on this topic.

http://www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/fhm/lidar_4b.shtm

The following specifications exceed the guidelines outlined above:

- Specifications for breaklines and hydro-enforcement are addressed below in **Topographic Breakline and Hydro-Enforcement Specifications**.
- Specifications for lidar accuracy testing by land cover categories within the floodplain being mapped are addressed below in **Topographic Data Quality Review and Reporting Process.**

Lidar dataset deliverables shall include the following:

- Metadata should comply with the requirements in the USGS *Lidar Guidelines and Base Specification*, v13. The QA/QC report provided must include the vertical accuracy calculations as a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. In addition, the finished elevation product for hydraulic modeling should be documented by a FGDC-compliant metadata file that complies with the FEMA Elevation Metadata Profile. Project documentation must also include a Pre-flight Operations Plan and Post-flight Aerial Survey and Calibration Report as described below in **Recommended Checklists**.
- Optional breaklines, when produced, shall be delivered in compliance with guidance below in **Topographic Breakline and Hydro-Enforcment Specifications**.

Topographic Breakline and Hydro-Enforcement Specifications

FEMA has no minimum breakline requirements; breaklines are optional and depend upon the procedures used to perform hydrologic and hydraulic modeling. The FEMA Project Manager should specify the breaklines requirements if desired based on the planned approach for hydraulic analysis or the mapping partner may propose breakline requirements based on the anticipated hydraulic modeling approach.

When optional breaklines are produced, the following breakline topology rules must be followed for the applicable feature classes. The topology must be validated by each contractor prior to delivery to FEMA.

Name: BREAKLINES_Topology			**Cluster Tolerance: 0.003** **Maximum Generated Error Count: Undefined** **State: Analyzed without errors**	
Feature Class	**Weight**	**XY Rank**	**Z Rank**	**Event Notification**
COASTALSHORELINE	5	1	1	No
HYDROGRAPHICFEATURE	5	1	1	No
PONDS_AND_LAKES	5	1	1	No
HYDRAULICSTRUCTURE	5	1	1	No
ISLAND	5	1	1	No

Topology Rules

Name	Rule Type	Trigger Event	Orgin (FeatureClass::Subtype)	Destination (FeatureClass::Subtype)
Must not intersect	The rule is a line-no intersection rule	No	HYDRAULICSTRUCTURE::All	HYDRAULICSTRUCTURE::All
Must not intersect	The rule is a line-no intersection rule	No	HYDROGRAPHICFEATURE::All	HYDROGRAPHICFEATURE::All
Must not intersect	The rule is a line-no intersection rule	No	COASTALSHORELINE::All	COASTALSHORELINE::All
Must not intersect	The rule is a line-no intersection rule	No	PONDS_AND_LAKES::All	PONDS_AND_LAKES::All
Must not intersect	The rule is a line-no intersection rule	No	ISLAND::All	ISLAND::All
Must not overlap	The rule is a line-no overlap line rule	No	HYDROGRAPHICFEATURE::All	COASTALSHORELINE::All
Must not self-intersect	The rule is a line-no self intersect rule	No	HYDRAULICSTRUCTURE::All	HYDRAULICSTRUCTURE::All
Must not self-intersect	The rule is a line-no self intersect rule	No	HYDROGRAPHICFEATURE::All	HYDROGRAPHICFEATURE::All
Must not self-intersect	The rule is a line-no self intersect rule	No	COASTALSHORELINE::All	COASTALSHORELINE::All

Topographic Data Quality Review and Reporting Process

To complement the topographic data specifications outlined above in **Topographic Breakline and Hydro-Enforcement Specifications.** The following describes data quality review processes and reporting obligations to be performed on new topographic data procured by FEMA as part of a flood hazard study or Risk MAP project. The mapping partner responsible for producing the elevation data is responsible for the quality of the product. In addition, FEMA may assign another mapping partner to perform Independent QA/QC of Topographic Data

Existing topographic data leveraged by FEMA should be certified to meet or tested for the vertical accuracy requirements specified in this procedure memo. In addition, the quality reviews described here are best practices that may be applied to existing topographic data. However, some of the documentation needed to perform some of these reviews may not be readily available for existing data.

1. Quality Reviews and Reporting Performed by Data Provider

The mapping partner responsible for producing new elevation data must submit copies of QA reports as specified in USGS Lidar Guidelines and Base Specification version 13. Unless the responsibility for checkpoint surveys and vertical accuracy testing is specifically assigned to a different mapping partner performing Independent QA/QC, the mapping partner responsible for producing the elevation data must test the unclassified point cloud data for Fundamental Vertical Accuracy (FVA) and, when lidar post-processing is performed must also test the bare earth product for Supplemental Vertical Accuracy (SVA) and Consolidated Vertical Accuracy (CVA).

1.1. Ground Survey of Quality Review Checkpoints

Quality review checkpoint surveys shall be performed in accordance with procedures in Section A.6.4, Checkpoint Surveys and A.6.5 Survey Records, in Appendix A of FEMA’s Guidelines supplied here:

A.6.4 Checkpoint Surveys

Checkpoint surveys must be performed to establish independent QA/QC checks for points of higher accuracy than the geospatial datasets being evaluated. Checkpoints are used to check the horizontal accuracy of base maps or the vertical accuracy of digital elevation data. They are most commonly used to determine the vertical accuracy of LIDAR datasets. Checkpoint surveys are performed to achieve 5-centimeter Local Network accuracy per NGS-58. The assigned Mapping

Partner shall select checkpoint locations on Government-owned or public areas, where possible, to avoid the need for obtaining individual land owner permission. Checkpoints are normally surveyed with transections or small clusters of points, at least two of which have been surveyed using GPS relative to NSRS monuments that have both "Ellipsoid Order" and "Vertical Order" specified on their NGS data sheets. If selected monuments are farther than 20 kilometers from the test areas to be surveyed, the assigned Mapping Partner shall establish Secondary Base Stations so that final surveys of checkpoints satisfy NGS-58 requirements for Local Network accuracy of 5-centimeters at the 95-percent confidence level.

Alternatively, the assigned Mapping Partner may use GPS real-time-kinematic (RTK) procedures provided:

1. The base station is an existing NGS three-dimensional mark or a new NGS-58 mark,
2. RTK procedures are used only in open areas and each RTK point is occupied twice with at least 2 hours difference in time between observations, and

3. The difference between observations does not exceed 5 cm.

The assigned Mapping Partner may use third-order conventional surveys to extend control from GPS "anchor points" to other transection or cluster points, especially when checkpoints are in forested areas where GPS signals are blocked.

When checkpoints are to be used for QA/QC reviews of digital elevation data (e.g., TINs, DEMs), the checkpoints must be at least 5 meters away from any breakline where there is a change in slope. Such checkpoints must be on flat or uniformly sloping terrain. The assigned Mapping Partner shall take photographs to record the location of the checkpoint relative to its surroundings, and to verify the vegetation category within which the checkpoint is located. The assigned Mapping Partner shall mark each checkpoint with a 60d nail or larger. The assigned Mapping Partner shall write the station ID number on an adjacent above-ground stake within 1 foot of the referenced stake, to aid in subsequent recovery if required during the course of the Flood Map Project. The assigned Mapping Partner shall use "to reach" location descriptions and photographs to document the location, the land cover surrounding each stake, and the uniform slope of the terrain surrounding each stake.

A.6.5 Survey Records

Upon completion of the project, the assigned Mapping Partner shall deliver information meeting the requirements described below, upon request, to the FEMA Lead.

- Field notebooks must be carefully and neatly prepared, identified, indexed, and preserved.
- All data regarding the establishment and extension of vertical and horizontal control, including descriptions of all established and recovered monuments, must be recorded.
- Each field notebooks must contain the name and the field address/location of the Party Chief, and the identity of the survey instruments.
- Each field notebook must be numbered and marked with a brief description of the contents on the cover, carefully indexed, and each page numbered.
- For conventional surveys, each horizontal traverse line and vertical control line must be identified by number and brief description in the field book.
- The first page used on each day of field work must be dated.
- Each field notebook must be free of erasures; any line of horizontal and vertical control may be rejected by the FEMA Lead if any erasure is made in recording the data for that line.
- If the field notes are electronically recorded, printouts of the electronically recorded field notes must be provided.
- For GPS surveys, the full network adjustment report must be provided.

The assigned Mapping Partner must furnish a schematic control diagram of the survey records on a photo index for all basic horizontal and vertical control pertinent to the project. The schematic diagram must show all existing and established control points properly identified in their approximate location. The schematic diagram also must show all traverse lines with their designations to include the beginning and ending points.

Checkpoints surveyed for accuracy reporting shall not be used by the data provider in the calibration or adjustment of the topographic data.

1.2. Assessment of Initial Vertical Accuracy

Assessment of the fully calibrated, raw point cloud initial vertical accuracy is required to ensure data has successfully completed preliminary processing. The absolute and relative accuracy of the data, relative to known control, shall be verified prior to classification and subsequent product development, by calculating FVA, measured in open, non-vegetated terrain. The spatial distribution of checkpoints for FVA testing should be based on the entire project collection area, distributed to avoid clustering, and support vertical accuracy reporting that is representative of the whole project.

If the project area exceeds 2,000 square miles it must be divided into smaller blocks of 2,000 square miles or less and tested as individual areas. In addition, the division of large project areas should apply the following rules if applicable: 20

- Divide areas by vendor used
- Divide areas by sensor type (manufacturer)
- Divide areas by flight dates if significant temporal difference is present
- Other logical project divisions based factors that might have a systematic relationship to data quality.

Reporting of positional accuracy shall be in accordance with ASPRS/NDEP standards as well as the USGS *Lidar Guidelines and Base Specification*, v13, and shall use the following statement:

Tested ____ (meters) fundamental vertical accuracy at 95% confidence level

Reporting on the assessment of the point cloud initial vertical accuracy shall include the following at a minimum:

- A description of the process used to test the points
- A graphic depicting the spatial distribution of the ground survey checkpoints
- Descriptive statistics and RMSEz in FVA calculations

1.3. **Assessment of Bare Earth Vertical Accuracy**

When bare earth post-processing is included in the project, assessment of the vertical accuracy for the delivered bare earth elevation product is required to ensure data has successfully completed post processing. Reporting of positional accuracy shall be in accordance with ASPRS/NDEP standards for FVA and CVA. Testing should be performed on the bare earth deliverable as specified in the mapping activity statement, along with the following guidance:

- If an assessment of initial vertical accuracy (FVA) was conducted prior to the processing of the data (section 1.2), the FVA checkpoints can again be used in the CVA computations if located within the area to be processed
- The SVA for up to three significant land cover categories, in terms of percentage of the project area covered, shall be tested in addition to the open/bare ground areas already tested for FVA Land cover categories making up 10% or more of the project area should be included in the SVA testing
- For smaller projects less than 1,000 square miles, fewer check points for SVA testing is acceptable. The number of checkpoints shall be reduced to control the QA cost to about 10% of the acquisition and processing cost. The checkpoints should be distributed evenly across the SVA land cover types.
- Processing areas greater than 2,000 square miles must be divided into smaller blocks of 2,000 square miles or less and tested as individual areas. In addition, the division of large processing areas should apply the following rules if applicable:

- Divide areas by vendor used
- Divide areas by sensor type (manufacturer)
- Divide areas by flight dates if significant temporal difference is present
- Other logical project divisions based on factors that might have a systematic relationships to data quality.

- Each block of 2,000 square miles or less shall be tested for FVA, SVA, and CVA

Checkpoints used for testing SVA of the bare earth elevation product must be located in the areas where bare earth post-processing was performed, distributed to avoid clustering, and support vertical accuracy reporting that is representative of the post processed areas. The SVA results will then be combined with the FVA results to compute CVA for the entire project area.

Reporting on the assessment of the vertical accuracy of the post-processed, delivered elevation data shall include the following at a minimum:

- A description of the process used to test the points
- A graphic depicting the spatial distribution of the ground survey checkpoints
- An analysis of checkpoints that have errors exceeding the 95th percentile in SVA and CVA calculations
- Descriptive statistics and RMSEz in FVA calculations

1.4. Aerial Data Acquisition and Calibration

The mapping partner responsible for producing new elevation data must also submit a pre-flight Operations Plan and a post-flight Aerial Acquisition and Calibration Report will be provided to FEMA and/or their representatives by the data acquisition provider and uploaded to the MIP by the data provider. This information will aid future quality review efforts. The required reporting includes the following, outlined in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Pre-flight Operations

Plan Item	Contents	Format
Flight Operations Plan	• Planned flight lines • Planned GPS stations • Planned control • Planned airport locations • Calibration plans • Quality procedures for flight crew (project-related for pilot and operator) • Planned scanset (sensor settings and altitude) • Type of aircraft • Procedure for tracking, executing, and checking reflights • Considerations for terrain, cover, and weather in project	MS Word or PDF

Table 2. Post-flight Aerial Acquisition and Calibration Report

Item	Contents	Format
GPS Base station info	• Base station name • Latitude/Longitude (ddd-mm-ss.sss) • Base height (Ellipsoidal meters) • Maximum Position Dilution of Precision PDOP • Map of locations	Excel, TXT, MS Word, or PDF for data; ESRI shape file for map of locations (data and info may be in attribute table)
GPS/IMU processing summary	• Max Horizontal GPS Variance (cm) • Max Vertical GPS Variance (cm) • Notes on GPS quality (High, Good, etc.) • GPS separation plot • GPS altitude plot • PDOP plot • Plot of GPS distance from base station/s	MS Word or PDF with screenshots
Coverage	• Verification of project coverage	ESRI shape files reflecting the actual coverage area and not the applicable tiles.
Flights	• As-flown trajectories • Calibration lines	ESRI shape files
Flight logs	• Incorporated as appendix Should include: • Job # / name • Lift # • Block or AOI designator • Date • Aircraft tail number, type • Flight line, line #, direction, start/stop, altitude, scan angle/rate, speed, conditions, comments •Pilot name • Operator name • AGC switch setting • Laser pulse rate • Mirror rate • Field of view • Airport of operations • GPS base station names or numbers Comments	
Control	• Ground control and base station layouts	ESRI shape files
Data verification/QC	• Description of data verification/QC process • Results of verification and QC steps	MS Word, Excel or PDF

2. **Quality Reviews and Reporting Performed by Independent QA/QC**

When a mapping partner is assigned to perform *Independent QA of Topographic Data* macro and micro reviews of the submitted reports and data shall be performed. Macro reviews are automated processes or are checks required to establish overall data quality and shall be 23

applied to the entire project area. Micro reviews are typically manual in nature and shall be used to check no less than 3 project tiles or 5% of the total number of project tiles, whichever is the greater amount.

Tables 3 and 4 outline macro and micro reviews to be conducted on the raw point cloud and for data that is post-processed. Some reviews are duplicated between the raw point cloud and post-processing phases due to the potential for errors to be introduced into the data during post-processing.

Table 3. Review of fully calibrated raw point cloud

Macro Reviews	
Product	**Reviewed for**
Pre-flight Operations Plan	• Compliance with section 4.1.4 and checklists in 4.2.1 • Compliance with the specifications outlined in the Mapping Activity Statement
Post-flight Aerial Acquisition and Calibration Report	• Compliance with section 4.1.4 and checklists in 4.2.1 • Compliance with the specifications outlined in the Mapping Activity Statement
LAS Point Cloud Files	• Project area coverage – buffered by a minimum of 100 meters • Data voids • Inclusion of GPS time stamp • Correct projection, datum and units • Multiple Discrete Returns (at least 3 returns per pulse) • Correct header information • Other LAS attributes required by Mapping Activity Statement such as intensity values • Correct nominal pulse spacing as required by specific risk and/or level of study and buy-up options.
Metadata	• Compliance with the FEMA Terrain Metadata Profile
Micro Reviews	
Product	**Reviewed for**
LAS Point Cloud Files	• Excessive noise • Elevation steps • Other anomalies present in the point cloud

Table 4. Review of post-processed data

Macro Reviews	
Product	**Reviewed for**
LAS Point Cloud Files	• Compliance with checklists in section 4.2.1 • Project area coverage – buffered by a minimum of 100 meters • Data voids • Inclusion of GPS time stamp • Correct projection, datum and units • Multiple Discrete Returns (at least 3 returns per pulse) • Correct header information • Other LAS attributes required by Mapping Activity Statement such as intensity values • Correct nominal pulse spacing as required by specific risk and/or level of study and buy-up options. • Easting, northing and elevation reported to nearest 0.01m or 0.01 ft • Correct file-naming convention
Metadata	• Compliance with the FEMA Terrain Metadata Profile
Micro Reviews	
Product	**Reviewed for**
LAS Point Cloud Files	• Excessive noise • Elevation steps • Other anomalies present in the point cloud • Correct classification and cleanliness: no more than 2% of the project area classified to bare ground shall contain artifacts such as buildings, trees, overpasses or other above-ground features in the ground point classification (Class 2). In addition, no more than 2% of the project area shall contain incorrect classifications of points. (USGS *Lidar Guidelines and Base Specification*, v13, Section IV.14.
Optional -Breaklines	• Correct topology • Horizontal placement • Completeness • Continuity *See* Topographic Breakline and Hydro-Enforcement Specifications *for breakline topology rules to be checked against*

If the mapping partner responsible *Independent QA of Topographic Data* is tasked to perform assessment of vertical accuracy of the elevation data as described above in sections 1.2 and 1.3:

- Assessment of FVA only for pre-processed data to be stored and FVA, SVA, and CVA for post-processed data
- Review of data provider vertical accuracy assessment reports

Recommended Checklists

The following checklists are recommended for use during Independent QA/QC review to facilitate the process.

Pre-flight review checklist		
Checklist	**Pass / Fail**	**Comments**
Planned lines – sufficient coverage, spacing, and length		
Planned GPS stations		
Planned ground control – sufficient to control and boresight		
Calibration plans		
Vendor quality procedures		
Lidar sensor scan set – planned for proper scan angle, sidelap, design pulse.		
Aircraft utilizes ABGPS		
Sensor supports project design pulse density		
Type of aircraft – supports project design parameters		
Reflight procedure – tracking, documenting, processing		
Project design supports accuracy requirements of project		
Project design accounts for land cover and terrain types		

Post-flight review checklists Checklist for QA of Flight Logs		
Checklist	**Included Yes/No**	**Comments**
Flight logs – job #/name		
Flight logs – block or AOI		
Flight logs – date		
Flight logs – aircraft tail #		
Flight logs – lines - #		
Flight logs – lines - direction		
Flight logs – lines – start/stop		
Flight logs – lines – altitude		
Flight logs – lines – scan angle		
Flight logs – lines – speed		
Flight logs – conditions		
Flight logs – comments		
Flight logs - pilot name		
Flight logs - operator name		
Flight logs - AGC switch		
Flight logs – GPS base stations		

Checklist for Aerial Acquisition Report		
Checklist	**Included? Yes/No**	**Comments**
GPS base station – names		
GPS base station – lat/longs		
GPS base station – heights		
GPS base station – map		
GPS quality – separation plot		
GPS quality – PDOP plot		
GPS quality - horizontal Acc.		
GPS quality - vertical Acc.		
Sensor calibration process		
Verification of AOI coverage		
As-flown trajectories		
Ground control layout		
Data verification process documented		

Final terrain product review checklists Checklist for QA of Terrain Products		
Checklist	**Pass/Fail**	**Comments**
Vertical datum correct		
Horizontal datum correct		
Projection correct		
Vertical units correct		
Horizontal units correct		
Each return contains – GPS week, GPS second, easting, northing, elevation, intensity, return # and classification		
No duplicate entries		
GPS second reported to nearest microsecond		
Easting, northing, and elevation reported to nearest 0.01 m or 0.01 ft		
Classifications correct – 1. Unclassified; 2. Bare-earth ground; 7. Noise; 9. Water; 10. Ignored ground; 11. Withheld		
Cloud file structure conforms to project tile layout		
Naming conforms project requirements		
Deliverable tiles checked for significant gaps not covered by aerial acquisition checks and/or caused by data post-processing/filtering		

Appendix C. Terminology

Digital Elevation Data – Includes all of the following terms: mass points, point clouds, breaklines, contours, TINs, DEMs, DTMs or DSMs.

- **Breakline –** A linear feature demarking a change in the smoothness or continuity of a surface such as abrupt elevation changes or a stream line. The two most common forms of breaklines are as follows:
  - A **soft breakline** ensures that known elevations, or z-values, along a linear feature are maintained (e.g., elevations along a pipeline, road centerline or drainage ditch), and ensures the boundary of natural and man-made features on the Earth's surface are appropriately represented in the digital terrain data by use of linear features and polygon edges They are generally synonymous with 3-D breaklines because they are depicted with series of x/y/z coordinates.
  - A **hard breakline** defines interruptions in surface smoothness, e.g., to define streams, shorelines, dams, ridges, building footprints, and other locations with abrupt surface changes. Although some hard breaklines are three dimensional (3-D) breaklines, they are often depicted as two dimensional (2-D) breaklines because features such as shorelines and building footprints are normally depicted with a series of horizontal coordinates only which are often digitized from digital orthophotographs that include no elevation data.
- **Contours –** Lines of equal elevation on a surface. An imaginary line on the ground, all points of which are at the same elevation above or below a specified vertical datum.
- **Digital Elevation Model (DEM) –** An elevation model created for use in computer software where bare-earth elevation values have regularly spaced intervals in latitude and longitude (x and y). The Δx and Δy values are normally measured in feet or meters to even units; however, the National Elevation Dataset (NED) defines the spacing interval in terms of arc-seconds of latitude and longitude, e.g., 1/3rd arc-second.
- **Digital Surface Model (DSM) –** An elevation model created for use in computer software that is similar to DEMs or DTMs except that DSMs depict the elevations of the top surfaces of buildings, trees, towers, and other features elevated above the bare earth.
- **Digital Terrain Model (DTM) –** An elevation model created for use in computer software of bare-earth mass points and breaklines. DTMs are technically superior to a gridded DEM for many applications because distinctive terrain features are more clearly defined and precisely located, and contours generated from DTMs more closely approximate the real shape of the terrain.
- **Mass Points –** Irregularly spaced points, each with latitude and longitude location coordinates and elevation values typically used to form a TIN.
- **Metadata –** Project descriptive information about the elevation dataset.
- **Point Cloud –** Often referred to as the "raw point cloud", this is the first data product of a lidar instrument. In its crudest form, a lidar raw point cloud is a collection of range measurements and sensor orientation parameters. After initial processing, the range and orientation of each laser value is converted to a position in a three dimensional frame of reference and this spatially coherent cloud of points is the base for further processing and analysis. The raw point cloud typically includes first, last, and intermediate returns for each laser pulse. In addition to spatial

information, lidar intensity returns provide texture or color information. The combination of three dimensional spatial information and spectral information contained in the lidar dataset allows great flexibility for data manipulation and extraction. As used in this procedure memorandum, two additional lidar data processing terms are defined as follows:

  - **Lidar Preliminary Processing –** The initial processing and analysis of laser data to fully "calibrated point clouds" in some specified tile format. All lidar data will be set to American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ASPRS) LAS Class 1 (unclassified) and must include testing for Fundamental Vertical Accuracy (FVA). The tile format can change later, if necessary.
  - **Lidar Post-Processing –** The final processing and classification of lidar data to the required ASPRS LAS classes, per project specifications. This must include testing for Consolidated Vertical Accuracy (CVA). At this point, the datasets are referred to as the "classified point cloud."

- **Triangulated Irregular Network (TIN) –** A set of adjacent, non-overlapping triangles computed from irregularly-spaced points with lattitude, longitude, and elevation values. The TIN data structure is based on irregularly-spaced point, line, and polygon data interpreted as mass points and breaklines and stores the topological relationship between triangles and their adjacent neighbors. The TIN model may be preferable to a DEM when it is critical to preserve the precise location of narrow or small features, such as levees, ditch or stream centerlines, isolated peaks or pits in the data model.
- **Z-Values –** The elevations of the 3-D surface above the vertical datum at designated x/y locations.

Geospatial Accuracy Standard – A common accuracy testing and reporting methodology that facilitates sharing and interoperability of geospatial data. Published in 1998, the National Standard for Spatial Data Accuracy (NSSDA) is the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) standard relevant to digital elevation data when assuming that errors follow a normal error distribution. However, after it was learned that lidar datasets do not necessarily follow a normal distribution in vegetated terrain, the National Digital Elevation Program (NDEP) published its "Guidelines for Digital Elevation Data" and the American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ASPRS) published the "ASPRS Guidelines: Vertical Accuracy Reporting for Lidar Data," both of which were published in 2004 and use newer terms defined below as Fundamental Vertical Accuracy (FVA), Supplemental Vertical Accuracy (SVA) and Consolidated Vertical Accuracy (CVA). All of these standards, designed for digital elevation data, replace the National Map Accuracy Standard (NMAS) that is applicable only to graphic maps defined by map scale and contour interval.

Accuracy – The closeness of an estimated value (e.g., measured or computed) to a standard or accepted (true) value of a particular quantity. Note: With the exception of GPS Continuously Operating Reference Stations (CORS), assumed to be known with zero errors relative to established datums, the true locations of 3-D spatial coordinates or other points are not known, but only estimated. Therefore, the accuracy of other coordinate information is unknown and can only be estimated. Other accuracy definitions are as follows.

- **Absolute Accuracy –** A measure that accounts for all systematic and random errors in a data set. Absolute accuracy is stated with respect to a defied datum or reference system.
- **$Accuracy_r$ –** The NSSDA reporting standard in the horizontal component that equals the radius of a circle of uncertainty, such that the true or theoretical horizontal location of the point falls within that circle 95-percent of the time. $Accuracy_r = 1.7308 \times RMSE_r$. Horizontal accuracy is defined as the positional accuracy of a dataset with respect to a horizontal datum.
- **$Accuracy_z$ —** The NSSDA reporting standard in the vertical component that equals the linear uncertainty value, such that the true or theoretical vertical location of the point falls within that linear uncertainty value 95-percent of the time. $Accuracy_z = 1.9600 \times RMSE_z$. Vertical accuracy is defined as the positional accuracy of a dataset with respect to a vertical datum.
- **Consolidated Vertical Accuracy (CVA) –** The result of a test of the accuracy of vertical checkpoints (z-values) consolidated for two or more of the major land cover categories, representing both open terrain and other land cover categories. Computed by using the 95^{th} percentile, CVA is always accompanied by Fundamental Vertical Accuracy (FVA).
- **Fundamental Vertical Accuracy (FVA) –** The value by which vertical accuracy can be equitably assessed and compared among datasets. The FVA is determined with vertical checkpoints located only in open terrain, where there is a very high probability that the sensor will have detected the ground surface. FVA is calculated at the 95% confidence level in open terrain only, using $RMSE_z \times 1.9600$,
- **Local Accuracy –** A value that represents the uncertainty in the coordinates of a control point relative to the coordinates of other directly-connected, adjacent control points at the 95-percent confidence level. The reported local accuracy is an approximate average of the individual local accuracy values between this control point and other observed control points used to establish the coordinates of the control point.
- **Network Accuracy –** A value that represents the uncertainty in the coordinates of a control point with respect to the geodetic datum at the 95-percent confidence level. For National Spatial Reference System (NSRS) network accuracy classification in the U.S., the datum is considered to be best expressed by the geodetic values at the CORS supported by the National Geodetic Survey (NGS). By this definition, the local and network accuracy values at CORS sites are considered to be infinitesimal, i.e., to approach zero.
- **Percentile –** Any of the values in a dataset of errors dividing the distribution of the individual errors in the dataset into one hundred groups of equal frequency. Any of those groups can specify a specific percentile, e.g., the 95^{th} percentile as defined below.
- **Precision –** A statistical measure of the tendency of a set of random numbers to cluster about a number determined by the dataset. *Precision* relates to the quality of the method by which the measurements were made and is distinguished from *accuracy* which relates to the quality of the

result. The term “precision” not only applies to the fidelity with which required operations are performed, but, by custom, has been applied to methods and instruments employed in obtaining results of a high order of precision. Precision is exemplified by the number of decimal places to which a computation is carried and a result stated.

- **Positional Accuracy** – The accuracy of the position of features, including horizontal and/or vertical positions.
- **Relative Accuracy** – A measure that accounts for random errors in a data set. Relative accuracy may also be referred to as point-to-point accuracy. The general measure of relative accuracy is an evaluation of the random errors (systematic errors and blunders removed) in determining the positional orientation (e.g., distance, azimuth) of one point or feature with respect to another.
- **Root Mean Square Error (RMSE) –** The square root of the average of the set of squared differences between dataset coordinate values and coordinate values from an independent source of higher accuracy for identical points. The vertical RMSE ($RMSE_z$), for example, is calculated as the square root of $\Sigma(Z_n - Z'_n)^2/N$, where:
    - Z_n is the set of N z-values (elevations) being evaluated, normally interpolated (for TINs and DEMs) from dataset elevations of points surrounding the x/y coordinates of checkpoints
    - Z'_n is the corresponding set of checkpoint elevations for the points being evaluated
    - N is the number of checkpoints
    - n is the identification number of each of the checkpoints from 1 through N.
- **Supplemental Vertical Accuracy (SVA) –** The result of a test of the accuracy of z-values over areas with ground cover categories or combination of categories other than open terrain. Computed by using the 95th percentile, SVA is always accompanied by Fundamental Vertical Accuracy (FVA). SVA values are computed individually for different land cover categories. Each land cover type representing 10% of more of the total project area is typically tested and reported as an SVA. SVA specifications are normally target values that may be exceeded so long as overall CVA requirements are satisfied.
- **95% Confidence Level** – Accuracy reported at the 95% confidence level means that 95% of the positions in the dataset will have an error with respect to true ground position that is equal to or smaller than the reported accuracy value. The reported accuracy value reflects all uncertainties, including those introduced by geodetic control coordinates, compilation, and final computation of ground coordinate values in the product. Where errors follow a normal error distribution, $Accuracy_z$ defines vertical accuracy at the 95% confidence level (computed as $RMSE_z$ x 1.9600), and $Accuracy_r$ defines horizontal (radial) accuracy at the 95% confidence level (computed as $RMSE_r$ x 1.7308).
- **95th Percentile –** Accuracy reported at the 95th percentile indicates that 95% of the errors will be of equal or lesser value and 5% of the errors will be of larger value. This term is used when errors may not follow a normal error distribution, e.g., in forested areas where the classification of bare-earth elevations may have a positive bias. Vertical accuracy at the 95% confidence level and 95th percentile may be compared to evaluate the degree to which actual errors approach a normal error distribution.

Resolution – In the context of elevation data, resolution is synonymous with the horizontal density of elevation data points for which two similar terms are used:

4. **Nominal Pulse Spacing (NPS)** – The estimated average spacing of irregularly-spaced lidar points in both the along-track and cross-track directions resulting from: the laser pulse repetition frequency (e.g., 100,000 pulses of laser energy emitted in one second from a 100 kHz sensor); scan rate (sometimes viewed as the number of zigzags per second for this common scanning pattern); field-of-view; and flight airspeed. Lidar system developers currently provide "design NPS" as part of the design pulse density, although the American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ASPRS) is currently developing standard procedures to compute the "empirical NPS" which should be approximately the same as the "design NPS" when accepting statistically insignificant loss of returns and disregarding void areas, from water for example. The NPS assessment is made against single swath first return data located within the geometrically usable center portion (typically ~90%) of each swath. Average along-track and cross-track pulse spacing should be comparable. When point density is increased by relying on overlap or double-coverage it should be documented in metadata and not by changing the project's reported NPS. The NPS should be equal to or less than the Digital Elevation Model (DEM) post spacing when gridded DEMs are required as part of project specifications. This same definition for NPS could similarly apply to irregularly-spaced mass points from photogrammetry or Interferometric Synthetic Aperture Radar (IFSAR) data. NPS pertains to lidar only and is not intended to pertain to photogrammetry or IFSAR.

5. **DEM Post Spacing –** Sometimes confused with Nominal Pulse Spacing, the DEM Post Spacing is defined as the constant sampling interval in x- and y-directions of a DEM lattice or grid. This is also called the horizontal resolution of a gridded DEM or the DEM grid spacing. It is standard industry practice to have:
   - 1-meter DEM post spacing for elevation data with 1-foot equivalent contour accuracy;
   - 2-meter DEM post spacing for elevation data with 2-foot equivalent contour accuracy;
   - 5-meter DEM post spacing for elevation data with 5-foot equivalent contour accuracy.

6. **Hydro-Flattening –** The subject of modifications to lidar-based DEMs is somewhat new, and although authoritative references are available, there remains significant variation in the understanding of the topic across the industry. The following material was developed to provide a definitive reference on the subject only as it relates to the creation of DEMs intended to be integrated into the USGS NED. The information presented here is not meant to supplant other reference materials and it should not be considered authoritative beyond its intended scope.

   The term "**hydro-flattening**" is also new, coined for this document and to convey our specific needs. It is not, at this time, a known or accepted term across the industry. It is our hope that its use and acceptance will expand beyond the USGS with the assistance of other industry leaders.

   Hydro-flattening of DEMs is predominantly accomplished through the use of breaklines, and this method is considered standard. Although other techniques may exist to achieve similar results, this section assumes the use of breaklines. The USGS does not require the use of any specific technique.

   The Digital Elevation Model Technologies and Applications: The DEM Users Manual, 2nd Edition (Maune *et al.*, 2007) provides the following definitions related to the adjustment of DEM surfaces for hydrologic analyses:

   1. **Hydrologically-Conditioned (Hydro-Conditioned)** – Processing of a DEM or TIN so that the flow of water is continuous across the entire terrain surface, including the removal of all spurious sinks or pits. The only sinks that are retained are the real ones on the landscape.

Whereas "hydrologically-enforced" is relevant to drainage features that are generally mapped, "hydrologically-conditioned" is relevant to the entire land surface and is done so that water flow is continuous across the surface, whether that flow is in a stream channel or not. The purpose for continuous flow is so that relationships/links among basins/catchments can be known for large areas. This term is specifically used when describing EDNA (see Chapter 4), the dataset of NED derivatives made specifically for hydrologic modeling purposes.

2. **Hydrologically-Enforced (Hydro-Enforced)** – Processing of mapped water bodies so that lakes and reservoirs are level and so that streams flow downhill. For example, a DEM, TIN or topographic contour dataset with elevations removed from the tops of selected drainage structures (bridges and culverts) so as to depict the terrain under those structures. Hydro-enforcement enables hydrologic and hydraulic models to depict water flowing under these structures, rather than appearing in the computer model to be dammed by them because of road deck elevations higher than the water levels. Hydro-enforced TINs also utilize breaklines along shorelines and stream centerlines, for example, where these breaklines form the edges of TIN triangles along the alignment of drainage features. Shore breaklines for streams would be 3-D breaklines with elevations that decrease as the stream flows downstream; however, shore breaklines for lakes or reservoirs would have the same elevation for the entire shoreline if the water surface is known or assumed to be level throughout. See figures 1.21 through 1.24. See also the definition for "hydrologically-conditioned" which has a slightly different meaning.

While these are important and useful modifications, they both result in surfaces that differ significantly from a traditional DEM. A "hydro-conditioned" surface has had its sinks filled and may have had its water bodies flattened. This is necessary for correct flow modeling within and across large drainage basins. "Hydro-enforcement" extends this conditioning by requiring water bodies be leveled and streams flattened with the appropriate downhill gradient, and also by cutting through road crossings over streams (culvert locations) to allow a continuous flow path for water within the drainage. Both treatments result in a surface on which water behaves as it physically does in the real world, and both are invaluable for specific types of hydraulic and hydrologic (H&H) modeling activities. Neither of these treatments is typical of a traditional DEM surface.

A traditional DEM such as the NED, on the other hand, attempts to represent the ground surface more the way a bird, or person in an airplane, sees it. On this surface, natural depressions exist, and road fills create apparent sinks because the road fill and surface is depicted without regard to the culvert beneath. Bridges, it should be noted, are removed in most all types of DEMs because they are man-made, above-ground structures that have been added to the landscape.

Note: DEMs developed solely for orthophoto production may include bridges, as their presence can prevent the "smearing" of structures and reduce the amount of post-production correction of the final orthophoto. These are "special use DEMs" and are not relevant to this discussion.

For years, raster Digital Elevation Models (DEMs), have been created from a Digital Surface Model (DSM) of masspoints and breaklines, which in turn were created through photogrammetric compilation from stereo imagery. Photogrammetric DSMs inherently contain breaklines defining the edges of water bodies, coastlines, single-line streams, and double-line streams and rivers, as well as numerous other surface features.

Lidar technology, however, does not inherently collect the breaklines necessary to produce traditional DEMs. Breaklines have to be developed separately through a variety of techniques, and either used with the lidar points in the generation of the DEM, or applied as a correction to DEMs generated without breaklines.

In order to maintain the consistent character of the NED as a traditional DEM, the USGS NGP requires that all DEMs delivered have their inland water bodies flattened. This does not imply that a complete network of topologically correct hydrologic breaklines be developed for every dataset; only those breaklines necessary to ensure that the conditions defined in Section III exist in the final DEM.