

MBSS Fish Crew Leader and Fish Taxonomy Certifications Frequently Asked Questions

I want to collect stream fish data and have been asked to comply with the MBSS certification process. What is required?

The requirements are:

1. Assemble a field crew.
2. Have at least one person on the crew certified as a MBSS fish crew leader.
3. Have at least one person on the crew certified as a MBSS fish taxonomist.

One person can fulfill multiple duties, e.g. the person certified in fish taxonomy can also be the person certified as fish crew leader.

Must everyone working on a fish sampling crew receive Fish Crew Leader certification?

No. DNR realizes that fish sampling crews often consist of student interns, seasonal employees, and volunteers. However, a support member of a fish sampling crew should follow the direction of a MBSS certified fish crew leader during fish data collection. An individual who is not MBSS certified in fish taxonomy should not identify fish.

What is the Fish Crew Leader certification?

Fish Crew Leader certification qualifies a person to lead a stream sampling field crew to conduct MBSS fish sampling. This certification is good for three field seasons (years), inclusive of the season in which the certification was earned.

For each of the three years the certification is valid, you must:

- a) attend the MBSS summer training,
- b) be present during the presentations and field demonstration covering fish sampling protocols at MBSS summer training, and
- c) pass a written Fish Crew Leader certification test given during MBSS summer training following the presentations and field demos.

On the first year of certification, in addition to the requirements described above, you must undergo and pass one field audit by:

- a) assembling a field crew and equipment to sample your own site (not MBSS-selected),
- b) scheduling this audit before the sampling season begins,
- c) successfully sampling this site in adherence to MBSS protocols while being observed and assessed by a MBSS Quality Control Officer.

What is the Fish Taxonomy certification?

This certifies a person to conduct species-level identification of stream fishes in Maryland. This certification is good for three years.

For each of the three years the certification is valid, you must score $\geq 90\%$ on the Fish Taxonomy test administered at MBSS summer training (minimum score of 36 out of 40).

On the first year of certification, in addition to scoring $\geq 90\%$ on the Fish Taxonomy test, you must undergo and pass one field audit by:

- a) scheduling this audit with a MBSS Quality Control Officer at a fish survey site (your own or MBSS-selected) before the sampling season begins,
- b) correctly identifying all the fish (individuals) from at least one electrofishing pass at that site that includes a total richness of at least 15 fish species, and
- c) misidentifying no more than one individual among all the individual fish collected.

The field audit may extend to multiple electrofishing passes and/or sites if needed to obtain a richness of 15 fish species.

How much will each certification cost?

In addition to the annual MBSS summer training registration fee, Fish Crew Leader certification and Fish Taxonomy certification will EACH cost \$300. Individuals seeking both Fish Crew Leader and Fish Taxonomy certifications can be audited for both certifications on the same day for \$400 combined.

Can our firm/organization/agency become certified?

No. Only individuals can be certified in MBSS fish sampling protocols and taxonomy.

Must I pursue all certifications?

No. The MBSS certification is *a la carte*. You can choose which MBSS certifications to pursue.

How can I pay for certification?

Payment for MBSS trainings and certifications may be made via credit card on DNR's online store. Payment for training must be made in advance of MBSS summer training (see website for deadlines). No registration payments will be accepted at the door and we cannot admit walk-in registrants. Do not submit certification payments via credit card prior to your audit. DNR will not accept payments for certification fees from individuals who register for benthic macroinvertebrate sampling, fish crew leader, or fish taxonomy certification until after the written tests (administered at training) have been passed. If

the written test is passed, DNR will accept the payment within 48 hours of the field audit. If the written test is not passed, no certification payment is required.

Can I attend MBSS summer training without pursuing MBSS Fish Crew Leader and Fish Taxonomy certifications? If so, what are the costs?

Yes. MBSS training will continue, as in previous years, to be open to those who are not seeking certifications. Please check the MBSS training website for current registration costs.

Will MBSS trainings continue to be open to non-professionals?

Yes. However, MBSS training registrations will continue to be accepted on a first come-first served basis.

If I submit payment for registration or certification but then cannot attend the training, can I get a refund?

Training fee refunds will be approved on a case-by-case basis. To eliminate the need for certification fee refunds, DNR will only accept payment for certifications after written certification tests are passed and a field or lab audit is complete.

How long does certification last?

Both Fish Crew Leader and Fish Taxonomy certifications are good for three field seasons (years), inclusive of the season in which the certification was earned.

Annual attendance and testing at MBSS Summer Trainings is required to maintain both certifications.

What will I receive if I pass all requirements for certification?

Following completion of the MBSS Fish Crew Leader, and/or the Fish Taxonomy certifications, your name and affiliation will be posted with your permission on the MBSS Certification Registry on the DNR website <http://dnr.maryland.gov/streams/Pages/mbsregistry.aspx>. MBSS certification may qualify you to work on certain stream-related projects in Maryland. Some state and county agencies are considering making MBSS certification a requirement for working on certain projects.

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