

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) or these roles can be filled by multiple people.

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 (through September 30 of the third year), 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 June 15,

- 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. *****NEW FOR 2024*** This certification is good for three field seasons (through September 30 of the third year), inclusive of the season in which the certification was earned.**

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 June 15,
- 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?

*****NEW FOR 2024***** 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 (see website for deadlines). No registration payments will be accepted at the door and we cannot admit walk-ins. Do

not submit certification payments prior to your audit. Payments for certifications are due one week from the audit, which will only be scheduled after you have passed your written test. If you do not pass the written test and are not eligible for an audit there is no certification payment 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?

Fish Crew Leader certification is good for three field seasons (years), inclusive of the season in which the certification was earned.

*****NEW FOR 2024*** Fish Taxonomy certification is good for three field seasons (through September 30 of the third year), inclusive of the season in which the certification was earned.**

Annual attendance 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, with your permission, your name and affiliation will be posted on the MBSS Certification Registry on the DNR website <http://dnr.maryland.gov/streams/Pages/mbsregistry.aspx>.

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