

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?

1. Assemble a survey crew with the correct equipment.
2. Have at least one person on the survey crew certified as a MBSS fish crew leader.
3. Have at least one person on the survey 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. Only the person certified in fish taxonomy can identify fish collected during the survey. The person on the crew certified as a MBSS fish crew leader must be present while the survey occurs.

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

1. Attend the MBSS Summer Training.
2. Be present during the PowerPoint presentations given on the Fish Crew Leader Certification Day.
3. Be present at the fish sampling demonstration given on the Fish Crew Leader Certification Day.

On the first year of certification, you must:

1. Pass a written Fish Crew Leader test given MBSS training.
2. Undergo a field audit during the first year of certification as described below:
 - a. The applicant must assemble a field crew.
 - b. The applicant must schedule this audit prior to beginning field sampling for the year.
 - c. The applicant and field crew will be observed by an MBSS Quality Control Officer while sampling a complete site.

What is the Fish Taxonomy certification?

This certifies a person to conduct species-level identification of stream fishes in Maryland.

Requirements are:

1. You must score $\geq 90\%$ on the Fish Taxonomy test administered at MBSS Training.
2. You must undergo one field audit. The applicant must schedule this audit prior to beginning field sampling for the year.

How much will each certification cost?

In addition to the MBSS summer training registration fee, Fish Crew Leader certification will cost \$500 for individuals from for-profit companies and \$250 for government agency, NGO personnel, and academic personnel. Fish Taxonomy certification will cost \$180 for individuals from for-profit companies and \$100 for government agency, NGO personnel, and academic personnel. Individuals seeking both Fish Crew Leader and Fish Taxonomy certifications can be audited for both certifications on the same day for a cost savings over individual certification prices - \$560 (for-profit) or \$285 (government, NGO, academic).

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. DNR will not accept payments for certification fees from individuals who register for fish crew leader or fish taxonomy certification until **after** the written tests (administered at training) have been passed. Once written tests are passed, DNR will begin scheduling field or lab audits and accepting the payments for these services. If the written test is not passed the applicant cannot be certified, and no audit or 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?

Fish Crew Leader certification is valid for THREE years.
Fish Taxonomy certification is valid for ONE year.

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.

Revised February 2, 2023 by William Harbold