DIATOM RECERTIFICATION GUIDELINES

Species-level taxonomic proficiency (level 2) Revised 2024 August

The successful completion of the taxonomic certification process —developed and administered by the Taxonomic Certification Program (TCP) of the Society For Freshwater Science (SFS) [formerly the North American Benthological Society (NABS, 1975-2011)]—results in a certificate of proficiency in performing taxonomic identifications of freshwater diatoms. This process includes passing an exam with a score of 95% for certification and submission of a certification fee. As part of this program, the certification credentials remain valid for a period of 5 years. Additional details of the program can be found at the program's SFS website: https://stroudcenter.org/sfstcp/. The TCP recognizes that a practicing taxonomist, by virtue of their regular professional activities and duties, maintains the skill and understanding to perform at a high level of competency. The TCP also recognizes that, when taxonomy-related activity has been drastically reduced or eliminated from the regular duties of a certified taxonomist, those skills can become less effective, compromising efficiency and accuracy. In response to the reality that many taxonomists who were successfully certified during the first few years of this program would be requesting recertification, the SFS TCP has established two options for consideration: (1) exam-based recertification or, (2) the petition-based recertification, described below. Note that individuals opting for the petition process must complete submission no later than two years after the expiration of the applicant's certification. Also note that the petition option is not available for the diatom genus recertification (level 1). To recertify for the diatom genus-level taxonomic proficiency, the candidate must pay the level 1 exam fee and retake the exam.

The applicant shall make the initial choice (of the two options, above) depending on their circumstances. Regardless of choice, a decision by the TCP to deny recertification of an applicant (whether due to a failed test or unacceptable written petition) cannot be challenged. The only recourse in the event of such a decision by the TCP is for the candidate to take and pass a test again, and at the going cost for that test.

Costs for Petition Based Recertification

The recertification fee is $275 for an SFS member and $375 for a non-member.
Please make all checks payable to —"Stroud Water Research Center" and send to Michael Broomall, SFS Taxonomic Certification Program, Stroud Water Research Center 970 Spencer Rd, Avondale, PA, 19311

Procedures for Recertification by Petition

If the recertification applicant chooses the written petition option, they must provide in electronic format the appropriate information pertinent to the criteria in the petition (below), summarizing the applicant's

professional, academic, and/or research activities during the initial 5-year certification period (and beyond, if that certification had expired). All applications and materials associated with each application should be submitted electronically to tcp@stroudcenter.org. Responses should include appropriate detail. All information provided by the applicant, both within and attached to this petition, shall remain confidential. During the evaluation process, the applicant's petition package will be shared only with the TCP coordinator, his/her administrative assistant, and the Diatom Taxonomic Certification Committee (Diatom TCC) members directly involved in the review and decision process. If the applicant has any concern regarding the sensitive nature of any part of this petition, they are encouraged to state such, in writing, and include the request and reasons in a cover letter accompanying the petition package at the time of its submission to the TCP Administrator. One or more members of the Diatom TCC may contact the applicant or their references to verify information provided in the petition. The Diatom TCC reserves the right, after cursory review, to return the application immediately to the applicant, with explanation of deficiencies, to provide the applicant opportunity for a more complete and/or clarified presentation of her/his credentials. In the case of resubmission of a petition-based recertification, the candidate (member or non-member) can complete or prepare a re-submission at a one-time reduced cost of $100 (SFS member), $125 (non-member). The Diatom TCC will consist of three members and a simple majority vote is required for a final decision on any given application. The decision of the Diatom TCC members reviewing an applicant's petition will make recommendations to the TCP Administrator, who will then convey the decision to the applicant. The TCP Administrator shall remain the point of contact regarding all certification and recertification matters, not individual Diatom TCC members. Please do not communicate directly to Diatom TCC members regarding this process. The review process will be completed and a decision made within 60 days of the submission of a complete petition.

Instructions should be followed explicitly, including limiting information to that requested for each petition item in the Narrative Justification. Note that a successful application is NOT contingent upon addressing all of the items. Applicants should know that "not applicable" (NA) is an acceptable entry for some of the items. If some information, such as client names or project locations, cannot be provided due to confidentiality needs or security reasons, please state **'recused because of confidentiality requirements'** and clearly indicate such in the Narrative Justification. The Diatom TCC evaluation of your petition will in no way be compromised due to the requirement of confidentiality by contractors.

Narrative Justification

Describe your activities within the last 5 years that you consider relevant to maintaining proficiency of taxonomic identification skills. Consideration of your petition by the Diatom TCC will be more effective if you quantify your narrative with substantive and clearly written responses to the following 5 items:

1. The number of samples or slides you have identified to the species level and how many of those have passed the QA/QC requirements for the project(s).

2. The number of projects for which you served as either primary or QC taxonomist in the last 5 years. Provide the following information for each project: a) title; b) name(s) of principal investigator (or project manager, technical lead, or client), including affiliation, telephone

number, and/or email address for confirmation; c) timing of project (approximate beginning and ending dates/years); d) number of locations (study sites or number of streams or lakes involved) associated with each project for which you identified samples or specimens; e) geographic coverage; f) taxonomic level of effort (genus, species, lowest practical, other); and g) address the following question for each of the above-listed projects: If you were the primary taxonomist, what quality control procedures were implemented and maintained during the course of the project? Note: The Diatom TCC understands that some projects are of a confidential nature; thus, it is acceptable to indicate them as such, but the applicant is encouraged to provide as much pertinent information as is allowable.

3. If any of the taxonomic identifications that you made (or approved) underwent a taxonomic check (QA/QC) as part of one or more of your projects, report a summary of the results of those checks; OR, if the identification of any specimens have been verified by other taxonomists, provide a summary of those verifications.

4. The number of technical reports and/or peer-reviewed publications you authored/co-authored/contributed to that focused on or included diatoms (note that if your position does not entail such publications then just say —not applicable to my position at work); if applicable, list full and complete citations of the reports and/or peer-reviewed publications completed (or are in review) within the last 5 years. If applicable, also include any experience as a peer reviewer of articles related to diatoms for peer-reviewed journals.

5. Other experience pertinent to your continuing work with diatoms – e.g., organization/teaching of taxonomic workshops; curation/management of a collection of diatoms housed in an institution, museum, agency, consulting firm, and/or other educational or professional entity; teaching in undergraduate/graduate educational institutions; author/co-author of poster and/or oral presentations at professional meetings; presenting a webinar for the Diatom Web Academy; responsibilities as a lab supervisor or manager that specifically includes formal instruction of coworkers in the taxonomy/systematics of diatoms; responsibility as principal (co-) investigator of research projects focusing on diatoms (including source[s] of funding).