

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
**Section 10(a)(1)(A) Scientific Permit Applicant Guidelines for Conducting
Presence/Absence Surveys, Translocations, and Research of Endangered and
Threatened Freshwater Mussels in Texas**

When completing permit applications, each applicant should list all individuals that will conduct or assist with surveys, their qualifications, and their roles in the proposed project(s). Each permittee and sub-permittee to be covered under the permit should provide the following to demonstrate they have a level of competence, knowledge, and training needed to conduct presence/absence surveys or research on a given threatened or endangered species:

- At least three years of field experience conducting surveys and relocations utilizing the Texas Freshwater Mussel Survey Protocol (Protocol) or a similar sampling methodology (the current Protocol can be found at <https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/texas-freshwater-mussels>);
- For field surveys, at least one year of experience completing surveys for federally listed mussel species in Texas.
- For other activities, one year of laboratory or research experience relevant to the requested permitted activities;
- Two letters of reference from individuals that have first-hand knowledge of the applicant's field, laboratory, and technical capabilities; and
- The applicant's resume or curriculum vitae, which should provide descriptions of tasks completed and roles performed in previous freshwater mussel surveys, laboratory and hatchery research, or ecological studies that demonstrate technical capability in identifying the requested species; understanding the habitats occupied by and behaviors exhibited by the requested species; and identifying commonly confused species in the requested species basin(s).
 - While passing the Texas Freshwater Mussel Identification Test is not required to obtain a Section 10 (a)(1)(A) collection permit, a passing grade can be used to demonstrate technical capability as part of the permit application package.

If an individual does not meet the above qualifications, they may work under the direct, on-site supervision of a permitted biologist until they are able to demonstrate that they independently meet the minimum qualifications. Once an individual can demonstrate capability and meet the above qualifications, they may be considered for inclusion as a sub-permittee under an existing Section 10 (a)(1)(A) collection permit or application for their own permit.

Additionally, permit applicants should demonstrate a valid justification for their permit. A detailed description of the proposed activity(ies) should accompany the permit application (including activity objectives, all materials and methods to be used, timing of the activities, and anticipated activity location(s)). The applicant should justify the proposed activity in terms of its recovery potential for the species and show how the activity will benefit the species. The activity

justification should also include a referral to the species' recovery plan or other recovery guidance documents regarding the recovery action(s) the proposed activity would fulfill or address.

To maintain certification and receive approval of permit renewal request, the applicant should:

- Provide documentation of “continuing education” demonstrating that the applicant is maintaining familiarity with Texas’ federally listed freshwater mussel species, their habitats, and relevant survey or laboratory/hatchery methodologies (e.g., handling, gravidity inspection and mantle clipping/genetic swabbing techniques). This continuing education could be obtained in a variety of ways, such as museum collection training, fieldwork, identification courses, sampling workshops, or a combination of experiences.

- Examples of acceptable “continuing education” documentation include, but are not limited to:
 - Descriptions of surveys and projects completed that involved the collection and identification of federally listed Texas freshwater mussel species, including species identifications, locations, and total number of individuals (by species) that were observed;
 - Date, location, and duration of museum mollusk collection research and training;
 - Date, location, duration, and provider of training courses or workshops attended;
 - Dates, description of, and/or publications of research activities demonstrating continued technical capability related to the handling and study of listed mussels.

Annual reporting as required by the permittee’s existing permit. Failure to complete annual reporting requirements as described in an approve Section 10(a)(1)(A) permit will result in the rection of future permit renewal requests.