MASSWILDLIFE

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Massachusetts Non-Commercial Scientific Collection Permit (Research/Education) Guidelines for Proposals

Possession and use of native flora and fauna of Massachusetts are regulated by the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife) pursuant to M.G.L. c. 131 and 131A and implementing regulations. In accordance with provisions of M.G.L. c. 131, § 4 and c. 131A, § 3, and with 321 CMR 2.02 and 10.04, MassWildlife oversees the issuance of Scientific Collection Permits to authorize research and educational activities involving possession and use of certain plant and animal species. Such activities should minimize the risk of harm to wild populations and habitats while complementing the conservation mission of MassWildlife. This guidance document is intended to facilitate a consistent and timely process for the development, submission, and review of applications for *non-commercial* Scientific Collection Permits in the Commonwealth. The process requires submission of an application form and a supporting proposal for a given research or education project, and the following guidelines aim to assist applicants in the development of complete proposals (or amended versions thereof).

Proposal Development

Each unique research study or educational program is considered a separate project for permitting purposes, and so applicants should plan to apply for a permit specific to a given project. Applications that clearly demonstrate a scientific or educational need while also minimizing potential for harm are more likely to be approved than are applications lacking justification or details needed to understand the proposed work, its likely benefit(s), and the potential for harm. MassWildlife must also receive adequate information to screen for potential conflict with other planned or ongoing research or management activities by MassWildlife or its partners. Please take the following steps when developing a proposal in support of your application for a Scientific Collection Permit (or an amended proposal in support of a request for a permit amendment).

Step 1: Obtain and familiarize yourself with the Massachusetts Scientific Collection Permit (Research/Education) Application Form and any "Standard Conditions" that MassWildlife has developed for work with certain taxonomic groups.

The Application Form and any available Standard Conditions documents are available on the MassWildlife website at: Natural Heritage Forms and Guidelines

- Proposed work that will meet or exceed the protective measures and precautionary practices detailed in any applicable Standard Conditions document is more likely to be permitted with minimal special conditions.

Step 2: Familiarize yourself with the List of Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern Species ("MESA-listed Species") and with the geographic footprint of Priority Habitat of Rare Species ("Priority Habitat").

Some projects or programs focus specifically on MESA-listed species and, therefore, will necessitate work in potentially sensitive habitats containing vulnerable taxa. However, applicants who are designing broader projects that do not require use of MESA-listed species should consider the following:

- Work that does *not* involve MESA-listed Species and does *not* occur within Priority Habitat is more likely to be permitted with minimal special conditions.
- Applicants should attempt to work outside Priority Habitat to the extent practicable to meet their study or program objectives.

A current list of MESA-listed Species can be viewed on the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP) website at: List of Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern species.

The geographic footprint of Priority Habitat can be viewed via the online, interactive mapping application "MassMapper" at: MassMapper. MassMapper contains spatial data layers organized within a menu directory in the upper right viewer panel; each layer can be selected for display on a navigable base map in the main part of the viewer. Within the directory panel, Priority Habitat may be accessed under "Conservation/Recreation > Natural Heritage Data", along with other potentially useful planning resources (e.g., Certified Vernal Pools, Potential Vernal Pools).

Step 3: Prepare your proposal.

Complete all parts of the application form and add a written proposal that, at minimum, provides complete details regarding the following elements of your research or education project:

A. Title or name of the project and date of the proposal.
B. Statement of need (i.e., why the project is needed) and specific objectives to be pursued; if this is a science education project, also include a copy of the curriculum.
C. Species to be sampled or collected.
D. Specific location(s) of sampling/collecting.
E. Number(s) of individuals of each species to be sampled or collected per location, and justification for the sample size(s).
F. Method(s)/technique(s) of sampling/collecting.
G. Seasonal schedule for sampling/collecting.
H. Names and/or locations of any facilities or localities to which sampled/collected individuals will be transferred or disposed (on both an interim and a final basis, as applicable).
I. Expected total duration of the project (i.e., number of years).
J. Expected benefits to science, science education, or conservation and management of wild plant and/or animal populations in Massachusetts.
K. Names, ages, and qualifications of the prospective Permittee and all proposed Subpermittees.

- Your proposal is the foundation of your application and should aim to serve as a stand-alone document. It should contain sufficient detail for a reviewer to gain a full understanding of the "who, what, where, when, why, and how" of your project. For tracking and reference purposes,

it must have a unique title and a date (please include both on a cover page and in the header or footer of each subsequent page). Be sure the title on your proposal matches that given on your accompanying Application Form.

- Your proposal should articulate a clear purpose with tangible benefit(s) to justify the proposed sampling and/or use of wild, native flora or fauna (especially if MESA-listed species are to be sampled/used).
- Be as precise as possible with proposed locations and prepare a supplementary, electronic table (spreadsheet or GIS shapefile) containing, at minimum, separate columns/fields for Town, Site Name, Sampling Unit, Latitude (Decimal Degrees), and Longitude (Decimal Degrees). The Sampling Unit should be a name or code for a subcomponent of the site – e.g., a vernal pool, trap array, or other distinct feature – to be sampled. If a site will not have distinct sampling units but, rather, will be sampled more broadly or randomly, please provide a central Lat/Long coordinate and add a Comment column/field to provide additional information (e.g., acreage) to describe the geographic extent of the sampling area around that coordinate (alternatively, you may provide a GIS shapefile or marked aerial imagery containing polygon features that delineate the Sites).
- Be sure to disclose details about where sampled/collected individuals will be held, transferred, stored, and/or disposed, on both an interim and a final basis, as applicable. If sampled individuals will only be captured, processed on site, and released at the point of capture, provide such a statement.
- Personnel that will engage in any sampling or collection work without the Permittee present must be included in the list of proposed Subpermittees.

Step 4: Submit your application materials.

- Follow the submission instructions provided on the Application Form.
- If you choose to submit materials via email, please ensure that attachments do not exceed 10 MB per message.

Application Deadline and Review Process

An initial application may be submitted at any time of year but should be submitted at least 90 days prior to the proposed start of work. Reviewers will attempt to review *complete* applications within 30 days, though staff availability varies seasonally. Further, if your application is incomplete, or certain elements (e.g., objectives, justification, proposed locations) are vague, we may request additional information, which can slow the review process. Therefore, we recommend that you submit your application well in advance of your expected start date. Proposed work with the following characteristics is more likely to be approvable in an expedient manner:

- Clearly defined objectives
- Justified methodology and sample sizes
- Excludes MESA-listed Species and Tracking List Species (Appendix 1: Tracking List Species)
- Not within Priority Habitat
- Complete and precise location information

- Tangible benefit(s) to science, science education, or applied conservation and management of wild populations
- Minimal potential for harm to native species populations or habitats

Amendment Requests

All amendment requests should be sent via email to natural.heritage@mass.gov. The Permittee (not a Subpermittee or other affiliate) must send the request, and the request must include either a copy of the current permit or a reference to both the Permit Number and the Project Title/Name.

Most permit amendments fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Correction of a clerical error;
- Update of the Permittee's address or contact information;
- Change in personnel (e.g., Subpermittee);
- Change in facilities or in the chain of custody for holding collected individuals; or
- Change in study design (objectives, target species, sample sizes, sampling/collection locations, methodology, etc.).

To request correction of a clerical error or an update of the Permittee's address/contact information on your current permit, please describe the error and provide the desired correction or update in the body of the email.

To request a change in the personnel, facilities, chain of custody, or study design authorized by your current permit, please prepare and submit a *proposal amendment* explaining the desired change(s). **Do not revise content within the original proposal but, rather, add a separate and distinct section to the proposal for "proposal amendments".** Number and date each proposal amendment whenever you submit a corresponding request to change the permit, and lump all of the specific changes for a given request under a single amendment number and date corresponding to the date of the request (e.g., "Amendment #1 – 04/05/2025", "Amendment #2 – 10/31/2025", and so on). Be sure to provide complete information about each proposed change, including any details pertinent to items listed or described in "Step 3" of the Proposal Development section above. In the case of a change in study design, please also include justification/rationale for the proposed change. **Proposed changes in the personnel, facilities, chain of custody, or study design authorized by your current permit may not be implemented until you receive an amended permit or other written authorization from MassWildlife.**

Annual Reporting and Permit Renewal

A Permittee is required to report activity under an issued Scientific Collection Permit **by December 31st of the permit year**. This deadline includes the additional, required reporting of MESA-listed Species and Tracking List Species to the NHESP via Heritage Hub (Heritage Hub Overview | Mass.gov).

Renewal of a Scientific Collection Permit for the subsequent calendar year may be requested only at the time the Permittee submits the required annual reporting information to MassWildlife (see the *Massachusetts Scientific Collection Permit (Research/Education) End-of-Year Report Form* at Natural Heritage Forms and Guidelines. MassWildlife will send a reporting reminder and instructions to the Permittee via email in November and/or early December. Unless specified otherwise in those

instructions, a renewal request requiring corrections, updates, or changes to the permit should follow the instructions given in the Amendment Requests section above (i.e., it should specify corrections to clerical errors and updates to the Permittee address/contact information in the body of an email, but consist of a proposal amendment for other types of changes to the permit). In the event of extenuating circumstances concerning one's ability to meet the December 31st reporting deadline, MassWildlife may, at its discretion, approve a request to extend the deadline on a permit-by-permit basis; otherwise, failure to meet the deadline will result in automatic non-renewal of the permit.

Last updated: July 2025

Appendix 1: Tracking List Species

Amphibians

Anaxyrus fowleri, Fowler's Toad
Gyrinophilus porphyriticus, Spring Salamander
Lithobates kauffeldi, Atlantic Coast Leopard Frog
Lithobates pipiens, Northern Leopard Frog

Birds

Ammospiza maritima, Seaside Sparrow
Astur atricapillus, American Goshawk
Catharus bicknelli, Bicknell's Thrush
Chaetura pelagica, Chimney Swift
Chordeiles minor, Common Nighthawk
Cistothorus palustris, Marsh Wren
Dendroica cerulea, Cerulean Warbler
Falco sparverius, American Kestrel
Haematopus palliates, American Oystercatcher
Pandion haliaetus, Osprey
Petrochelidon pyrrhonota, Cliff Swallow
Porzana Carolina, Sora
Progne subis, Purple Martin
Riparia riparia, Bank Swallow
Rynchops niger, Black Skimmer

Invertebrates

Crangonyx aberrans, Mystic Valley Amphipod
Gomphus vastus, Cobra Clubtail
Neurocordulia obsoleta, Umber Shadowdragon
Neurocordulia yamaskanensis, Stygian Shadowdragon
Elimia virginica, Virginia River Snail

Reptiles

Coluber constrictor, North American Racer
Opheodrys vernalis, Smooth Greensnake
Thamnophis sauritus, Eastern Ribbonsnake
Clemmys guttata, Spotted Turtle
Sternotherus odoratus, Eastern musk turtle

Plants

The up-to-date Plant Watch List can be found on the MassWildlife website: Plant Watch List