



Potomac Valley Master Naturalists (PVMN) FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (19 April 2021)

Basic Requirements for Certification

What are the basic requirements of the Master Naturalist program?

To be certified as a Master Naturalist by the state of West Virginia, you must complete 62 class hours of instruction and 30 hours of volunteer service.

How long do I have to complete the program, and will my fees, courses, and service hours carry over from year to year?

While the goal is to complete the initial coursework and volunteer requirements in the first year, a candidate has three additional years to complete all initial requirements. All fees, courses and service hours will carry over to subsequent years until certification is complete.

Who determines what core and elective classes are required?

The number of core and elective classes, as well as the subject matter of core courses, is determined by the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources. All Master Naturalist programs in the state are bound to those requirements. The PVMN chapter determines the elective courses to be presented each year and offers all required core and elective classes each year.

How do I keep track of my education hours?

Make sure to sign in and out for all attended classes. Your attendance information will be automatically forwarded to the Data Management Coordinator.

How do I keep track of my volunteer service hours?

Volunteer service hours can be submitted at Track It Forward, the PVMN electronic tracking system (<https://www.trackitforward.com/site/potomac-valley-master-naturalists>). Here is a link to the [Track It Forward Instruction Sheet](#). Travel time can be included as part of your time volunteering (i.e., include travel time as part of your service hours in Track It Forward). If you have any questions about capturing your volunteer hours in Track It Forward, please contact the Data Management Coordinator.

Must I complete my coursework before beginning to volunteer?

No, you may start volunteering as soon as you are accepted into the Potomac Valley Master Naturalist program. These hours will count towards the required volunteer service hours.

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Where do I find out about volunteer opportunities?

Volunteer projects must take place in West Virginia and support the advancement of conservation, resource management and protection. One of the best resources to find volunteer opportunities is through the PVAS calendar of events (<https://www.potomacaudubon.org/calendar/category/volunteer-opportunities/>). There is a tab for “Volunteer Opportunities” that will include volunteer opportunities for Master Naturalist students/certified Master Naturalists. In addition to the PVAS events calendar website, Potomac Valley Master Naturalist students will receive emails from PVAS about volunteer opportunities. These opportunities include trail maintenance or tree planting work at nature preserves, assistance with PVAS activities and camps, and similar kinds of activities. In addition, volunteer work in support of the PVMN program counts, including course support, clerical work such as taking minutes, coordinating tours and trips that will enhance the PVMN participant’s knowledge about a natural history subject, and participation on the PVMN Coordinating Committee. You can also meet the volunteer service requirements through projects outside of what PVAS/PVMN offers. Volunteer service opportunities advertised through PVAS and taking place in West Virginia automatically count. Please contact the PVMN Coordinating Committee if you are unsure if a planned volunteering activity would be eligible for recertification.

Do I have to pass a test or complete any other assignment in order to become a Master Naturalist?

No. However, new PVMN students are strongly encouraged to make a poster presentation on a topic of their choice at the end of the first year of classes, during the PVMN Annual Meeting. Presentations can be made singly or in pairs and should cover a natural history topic, either elaborating on a topic brought up in one of the core or elective courses or a new topic. Presentations will be on display during the entire Annual Meeting for participants to view, and ideally students will be present at the Annual Meeting to answer questions about their presentation. The presentation can take either of the following forms: a trifold tabletop poster or a slide program on a laptop. Each student will be awarded one elective education hour for making a presentation.

Attending/Missing Classes

Can I still receive credit for a class if I arrive late or leave early?

No. In order to receive credit, you must be in class for the entire time period, including any work in the field or laboratory. Arriving late or leaving early will require you to make up the class.

Do I have to attend an entire day of classes?

No. If you are unable to attend class during part of the day, you may still attend the other classes held that day.

Is it possible to replace core courses and how can I make up missed core courses?

Core courses cannot be replaced by other courses. There are two options for making up a missed core course. You can wait and take the course when PVMN offers it again the following year, or you can take the same core course with another West Virginia Master Naturalist chapter, subject to the permission of that chapter’s contact. You can find a schedule of courses for all West Virginia chapters, with contact information, at: http://mnofwv.org/local_chapters/master_naturalist_class_schedules.

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Is it possible to replace elective courses with other courses?

Although the program is scheduled to encourage you to take all of your elective courses with your class through the annual PVMN classes offered to Master Naturalist candidates, you may contact another WV Master Naturalist Chapter, subject to the permission of that chapter's contact, as an option for elective courses. You can find a schedule of courses for all West Virginia chapters, with contact information, at: http://mnofwv.org/local_chapters/master_naturalist_class_schedules

It is possible in exceptional circumstances to substitute college and online courses and other kinds of training. You must petition to do so by contacting the PVMN Chair.

What documentation should I provide if I attend class at another Master Naturalist chapter?

Before showing up for the class, make sure to get permission from the chapter contact. You must download the DNR Documentation of Attendance form (link below) from the West Virginia Master Naturalist website and obtain the signature of the instructor/coordinator of the class that you attend, and then submit that signed form to the Data Management Coordinator (see contact info below). http://mnofwv.org/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/Documentation_of_attendance.96143558.pdf

Do I need to contact anyone if I plan to miss class?

If you must miss class, please inform the Student Coordinator (the person who contacts you with logistical information before each class).

Am I allowed to bring quests to class with me?

No. Only current Master Naturalist candidates (students) are allowed to attend the Master Naturalist courses.

How can I get copies of PowerPoint presentations from class?

If you are interested in obtaining a digital copy of PowerPoint presentations from class, please bring the thumb drive you received at the first class and request a copy from the Facilitator.

Basic Requirements for Recertification

What are the basic requirements for recertification in the Master Naturalist program?

To be recertified annually, you must complete a minimum of 8 class hours of instruction and 16 hours of volunteer service between January 1 and December 31.

Must I recertify annually? What if I miss a year?

If you are a certified Master Naturalist who has not completed requirements for re-certification during any calendar year but desire to remain in good standing as a chapter member and intend to complete requirements, you may request a time extension by submitting your request to the Student Coordinator. Such an extension may be granted by consensus of the Coordinating Committee but will not exceed three years. All coursework and volunteer hours must be completed in the same calendar year and cannot be carried over. Until the course work and volunteer hours required for annual re-certification have been completed, you will be considered inactive.

Education Hours for Recertification

How can I meet the recertification coursework requirement?

A variety of educational experiences can count toward the coursework requirement; please see the [PVMN Policy Manual](#) for detailed information. One of the best resources to find educational options is through the PVAS calendar of events (<https://www.potomacaudubon.org/calendar/category/master-naturalist/>). There is a tab for “Master Naturalists” that will include educational opportunities (the event should include the text “eligible for PVMN recertification hours.” Each PVAS monthly program you attend in its entirety counts for 1-hour of education. Other educational opportunities count for the actual hours of that class/lecture.

Classes offered at the Annual West Virginia Master Naturalist conference are accepted for recertification coursework requirements. Courses (live or online) offered by various environmental groups (including but not limited to: National Conservation Training Center, Smithsonian Institute, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Cape May Bird Observatory) also are accepted. Please contact the PVMN Coordinating Committee if you are unsure if a course would be eligible for recertification.

How do I keep track of my education hours?

Education hours must be submitted in [Track It Forward](#). Please enter your hours in Track It Forward as soon as you complete the continuing education. Here is a link to the [Track It Forward Information Sheet](#). If you have any questions about capturing your continuing education in Track It Forward, please contact the Data Management Coordinator.

Volunteer Service Hours for Recertification

What counts as approved volunteer service hours?

Volunteer projects must take place in West Virginia and support the advancement of conservation, resource management and protection. One of the best resources to find volunteer opportunities is through the PVAS calendar of events (<https://www.potomacaudubon.org/calendar/category/volunteer-opportunities/>). There is a tab for “Volunteer Opportunities” that will include volunteer opportunities for Master Naturalist students/certified Master Naturalists. In addition to the PVAS events calendar website, PVMN will receive emails from PVAS about volunteer opportunities. These opportunities include trail maintenance or tree planting work at nature preserves, assistance with PVAS activities and camps, and similar kinds of activities. In addition, volunteer work in support of the PVMN program counts, including course support, clerical work such as taking minutes, coordinating tours and trips that will enhance the PVMN participant’s knowledge about a natural history subject, and participation on the PVMN Coordinating Committee. You can also meet the volunteer service requirements through projects outside of what PVAS/PVMN offers. Volunteer service opportunities advertised through

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PVAS and taking place in West Virginia automatically count. Please contact the PVMN Coordinating Committee if you are unsure if a planned volunteering activity would be eligible for recertification.

How do I keep track of my volunteer service hours?

Volunteer service must be submitted in Track It Forward. Please enter your hours in Track It Forward as soon as you complete the volunteering. <https://www.trackitforward.com/site/potomac-valley-master-naturalists>. Here is a link to the [Track It Forward Instruction Sheet](#). Travel time can be included as part of your time volunteering (i.e., include travel time as part of your service hours in Track It Forward). If you have any questions about capturing your volunteer hours in Track It Forward, please contact the Data Management Coordinator.

Miscellaneous

How can I find out more about the requirements and rules for the Master Naturalist program?

You can find out more about the West Virginia program at: <http://mnofwv.org>. For the PVMN chapter specifically, you can access the [PVMN Policy Manual](#). In addition, you may contact the PVMN Coordinating Committee.

What should I do if I have a complaint or other feedback about the program?

You may contact the PVMN Coordinating Committee. If you would like to take your feedback to the West Virginia DNR directly, there is a contact form on its website: http://mnofwv.org/contact_us.

How can I join the PVMN Coordinating Committee?

Elections for the Coordinating Committee are held each year at the annual meeting, where you can nominate yourself or ask someone to nominate you for a position. You can find out more about the various positions in the [PVMN Policy Manual](#) or contact the Coordinating Committee.

Am I required to attend the PVMN Annual Meeting or the WV Master Naturalist State Conference in the summer?

No, but attendance is recommended. Attendance at the PVMN annual meeting is a great place to learn about the chapter's goals, celebrate accomplishments, and enjoy a luncheon with your fellow Master Naturalists. The WV Master Naturalist State Conference provides a valuable opportunity to complete all of your recertification coursework for the year and meet Master Naturalists from all over the state.

What is the relationship of the Potomac Valley Master Naturalist program to the Potomac Valley Audubon Society?

The PVMN program is hosted by PVAS. During the first year of classes, candidates have an automatic one-year membership in PVAS. Thereafter, Master Naturalist candidate and certified Master Naturalists are responsible for their own membership with PVAS. PVAS provides a number of opportunities for Master Naturalist candidates to complete volunteer service hours. They also provide several opportunities for certified Master Naturalist to complete recertification education hours and volunteer service hours.

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What contact information should I give to anyone who might want to verify my participation in the program?

Participation can be confirmed by the Data Management Coordinator (see contact info below).

Is there a code of ethics for Master Naturalists?

Yes. Please see the [PVMN policy manual](#).

Who are the members of the PVMN Coordinating Committee?

Chair:	Rich Brager and Kris Phillips (interim co-chairs)
Chair Emeritus:	Clark Dixon
Data Management Coordinator	Debbie Crouse (dsc325@gmail.com)
Facilitator:	Stacy Toup
Instruction and Training Coordinator:	Kris Phillips
Recognition Coordinator:	Maria Parisi
Recorder:	Laura Clark
Recruitment and Retention Coordinator:	Rich Brager
Student Coordinator:	Lisa Kovatch (lkovatch247@gmail.com)
Treasurer:	Colleen Young
At-Large Members:	Philip Folk and Susan Loonsk
PVAS Representative:	Krista Hawley

How can I contact members of the PVMN Coordinating Committee?

To contact the Coordinating Committee, please send an email to AdultPrograms@PotomacAudubon.org or call 681-252-1387. The PVAS Representative will get you in touch with the appropriate PVMN CC Member.