



CCS Verifier Training Q&A

What's this training all about?

The Conservation Credit System is a robust program that is complex and requires training. Verifier Training involves many components of the Conservation Credit System (CCS) that allows certified individuals to implement its tools, understand the outputs, and provide guidance to clients.

What is a certification required for?

Verification is essentially all efforts that work towards entering a project into the system and running the HQT to build a project submission that correctly calculate credits or debits according to the User's Guide and SETT Guidance, which are then corroborated by the SETT. Certification is also good to help introduce other field personnel to the program concepts, field work, GIS analysis, etc. and groom future project managers. There are presently certifications for leading efforts in the field (Field Verification) as well as for conducting all the GIS associated with projects (GIS/Desktop Certification).

- **Field:** Someone certified as a Field Verifier must be present on the project site during field work. This certification presently ensures personnel are capable of field work and entering those data into the Habitat Quantification Tool (HQT) calculators. It also allows for leading all efforts involved in Verification as a project manager. For the PFC component of field work, at least one person certified in Fieldwork with up-to-date PFC training must be a part of each PFC team.
- **GIS/Desktop:** Someone certified for GIS means they are capable of running the desktop analysis on projects, creating map units, conducting credit and debit estimates, and running through the GIS tools numerous times along a project's route to finalization of the HQT.

Who can manage a project?

Personnel may have both Field and GIS certifications or one can work with another on a project. The project manager must be certified (in either Field, GIS, or both), and is ultimately responsible for the project management in its entirety including the GIS components and the HQT calculator. Thus, they must have a holistic understanding of the program including what goes in the field and a functional understanding of the GIS analysis and the HQT calculator. Ultimately, they should have ample connection to all project components to sign off on the completeness and accuracy of their final submission.

In the future, it is possible there may be certifications for project manager, field personnel, and GIS components to ensure project managers have this holistic perspective.

Why is training and a test required for Certification?

The trainings and tests are to ensure Verifiers thoroughly understand the complexities of what they are certifying for and can collect quality data and find accurate results according to program parameters. The tests also give consultants an idea how much work is involved and the time it takes to complete even the simplest projects.

How do I become Certified?

To become a certified verifier for the Conservation Credit System, you must:

- Take the in-person training
- Pass the verifier tests (closed-book and take-home)
- Field verifiers working on Credit Projects: Attend PFC training within your first year as a verifier

To remain a certified verifier, you must:

- Participate in a yearly one-day refresher course that will be offered online
 - If you worked as a verifier on a project, no tests required
 - If you did not work as a verifier on any projects, tests must be retaken
 - If you miss the refresher course, you will not be re-certified for the year, and you will be required to attend the in-person training the following year
- Field verifiers working on Credit Projects: Attend PFC training every 5 years
- All verifiers: Re-take the in-person training and pass the tests every 5 years

How do I find work after becoming Certified?

Certified individuals and their contact information are put on a Verifier List each year. That list is displayed on the Sagebrush Ecosystem Program's website, and is provided to credit and debit project project proponents.

What else is the training good for?

Knowledge of the CCS, especially for certified verifiers could lead to opportunities to draft CCS management plans, conduct annual monitoring, design or implement management practices or conservation efforts, assist in mitigation transactions, provide guidance for mitigation on public lands, and otherwise advise potential or current project proponents.

When is Verifier Training?

Typically during the last week of January each year.

How do I sign up for Verifier Training?

If interested, contact Sarah Hale of the SETT (sarah.hale@sagebrusheco.nv.gov) and she will get you signed up for the next training. If sufficient qualifications are not apparent, staff will work with the applicant to advise them on steps that can be taken to become better qualified prior to certification.