

Nutrient Management Specialist Certification

Certification Process and Requirements

The Nutrient Management Certification Program certifies specialists to prepare and/or review nutrient management plans to determine compliance with the requirements of Act 38. Nutrient management specialist certification criteria and requirements are outlined in the Nutrient Management Certification regulations (7 Pa Code, Chapter 130b). The following information summarizes the certification program requirements.

Categories of Certified Specialists

There are four categories of nutrient management specialist certification:

- **Commercial** - A person who develops nutrient management plans for others.
- **Public Review** - An agency employee who reviews nutrient management plans, or recommends approval to a conservation district or the State Conservation Commission.
- **Public Dual** - An agency employee who reviews or develops nutrient management plans for another person's agricultural operation or make recommendations for the approval or denial of nutrient management plans which they have not personally written or developed.
- **Individual** - A person who develops a nutrient management plan for their own agricultural operation.

Certification Requirements

All applicants must attend and complete the mandatory certification trainings scheduled by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (Department) and pass an examination administered by the Department or its designee.

- **Commercial specialists**, in addition to successfully completing the mandatory certification trainings and passing the examination, must prepare three (3) nutrient management plans which comply with Act 38 requirements. In order to demonstrate competency in plan development, the scope of these plans should include the majority of the required Act 38 plan components.
- **Public review specialists**, in addition to successfully completing the mandatory certification trainings and passing the examination, must prepare one (1) nutrient management plan and review two (2) nutrient management plans in compliance with Act 38 requirements. In order to demonstrate competency in plan review, the scope of these plans should include the majority of the required Act 38 plan components.
- **Public dual specialists**, in addition to successfully completing the mandatory certification trainings and passing the examination, must prepare two (2) nutrient management plans and review two (2) nutrient management plans in compliance with Act 38 requirements. In order to demonstrate competency in plan development and review, the scope of these plans should include the majority of the required Act 38 plan components.
- **Individual specialists** will become qualified for certification after completing the mandatory certification training and passing the examination.

Required Certification Trainings

Applicants, to be eligible for final certification, must attend and complete each of the trainings listed below in their entirety, including all required exercises and assignments. The [Training Course Descriptions](#) provides a more detailed description of each training course including course objectives and prerequisites.

Commercial (Private Sector)

- Nutrient Management Orientation
- Managing Manure Nutrients Workshop
- Plan Writing Workshop
- ACA & Manure Storage Workshop
- Stormwater & Soil Loss Workshop
- P Index Workshop

Public (Government Sector)

- Nutrient Management Orientation
- Managing Manure Nutrients Workshop
- Plan Writing Workshop
- ACA & Manure Storage Workshop
- Stormwater & Soil Loss Workshop
- P Index Workshop
- Plan Review Workshop

Individual (Farmers)

- Individual Certification Training (or)
- Nutrient Management Orientation
- Managing Manure Nutrients Workshop
- Plan Writing Workshop
- ACA & Manure Storage Workshop
- Stormwater & Soil Loss Workshop
- P Index Workshop

Examinations

Examinations are held at various locations throughout the state. The [Nutrient Management Certification Application](#) can be obtained at this link or by calling the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture at 717-772-5218.

1. Applications must be filled out completely and accompanied by the appropriate examination fee. **All fees should be paid by check, or money order and made payable to "The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania".** Cash cannot be accepted.
 - Commercial - \$50.00
 - Public - \$50.00
 - Individual - No Charge(This fee includes one examination retake)

2. The [Nutrient Management Examination Application](#) must be submitted **at least** 10 days before the date they plan to take the exam. Incomplete applications will be returned.
3. When the application and fee have been received, the applicant will be sent registration confirmation, including the date and location of the examination. Applicants will receive an examination study packet containing materials relevant to the exam competency areas at the Nutrient Management Orientation training or by mail.

Certification Application & PAPlants Enrollment

The first step in obtaining nutrient management certification is to enroll in the Nutrient Management Certification Program. This requires completing and submitting the [Nutrient Management Certification Application](#). The completed application should be mailed or faxed to:

Michael Aucoin
Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture
State Conservation Commission
Nutrient Management
2301 North Cameron Street, Room 311
Harrisburg, PA 17110-9408
717-705-3778 (FAX)

The second step is to enroll in [PAPlants](#). PAPlants is PDA's online licensing and certification program. Guidelines for using PAPlants are outlined in the [PAPlants User Guide](#).

Provisional Certification (Note: This does not apply to "Individual specialists")

Applicants who have successfully completed the required certification trainings and passed the examination will be granted "**provisional certification**." The Department will notify these successful applicants of their provisional certification status.

Provisional certification is valid for a maximum of three years. During this time applicants should develop and/or review the nutrient management plans required for them to qualify for final certification.

1. Provisional public review specialists are required to develop one (1) approved plan and successfully review two (2) plans to be eligible for final certification.
2. Provisional public dual specialists are required to develop two (2) approved plans and successfully review two (2) plans to be eligible for final certification.
3. Provisional commercial specialists are required to develop three (3) approved plans for final certification.

A copy of the plan approval letter for plans written by the specialist should be sent using the same address as the one above under Certification Application.

Final Certification

Applicants will be required to submit an application and the appropriate certification fee to apply for final certification:

- Commercial - \$200.00
- Public Review - \$ 25.00

- Public Dual - \$ 50.00
- Individual - \$ 15.00

All fees should be paid by check, or money order made payable to the "Commonwealth of Pennsylvania".

The Department will send specialists notification that they have completed all requirements. Specialists will also receive an identification card verifying final certification.

Reciprocity

The Department reserves the right to enter into reciprocal agreements with other states, departments and organizations. This will entitle the applicant to reciprocal arrangements agreed to in the agreement. Specialists will be notified if reciprocal arrangements are available to them at the time of application.

For questions or additional information, please contact the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, State Conservation Commission, Nutrient Management Certification Program, 2301 N. Cameron Street, Room 311, Harrisburg, PA 17110-9408. Phone 717-772-5218; Fax 717-705-3778.

Continuing Education

Specialists, who have completed all requirements and have been notified by the Department of their final certification, will need to complete continuing education credits (CECs) to maintain certification. CECs will be issued on a 1 credit per 1 hour of instruction.

- Commercial & Public Specialists must complete 20 CECs credits every three years with 5 of those credits being in SCC or PDA sponsored courses.
- Individual Specialists must complete 6 CECs every three years.

You will not be responsible for accumulating CECs during provisional certification.

Training courses which provide CECs must be preapproved by the Department.

Who can I contact with more questions on certification?

Michael Aucoin
Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture
State Conservation Commission
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