



## VMN Admin Info Sheet

### Recognition of Certified Virginia Master Naturalist Status

*This Info Sheet is intended for Chapter Board Members in the VMN Program  
Authored by Virginia Master Naturalist State Office*

#### Overview of Volunteer Recognition

The VMN Program has many ways to recognize its volunteers for their service and certifications. These include certificates, pins for recertification and milestones, and electronic badges in Better Impact. Please read through this document and the others listed under “Information on other VMN Recognition guidelines” to better understand what each recognition is for and how they are awarded to volunteers.

If after reading this, or the other documents, you have any questions, please direct them to [masternaturalist@vt.edu](mailto:masternaturalist@vt.edu) and a staff member from the VMN State Office will get back to you.

#### In this document, you will find guidelines on the following:

- Certificates for initial, first-time Certification
- Recertification (Recert) Pins
- Procedures for Requesting Certificates and Recert Pins
- Better Impact Badges for Certification Qualification
- Additional Recognition Options

#### Information on other VMN Recognition guidelines:

Both of these documents can be found on the [Volunteer Management page of the VMN website](#).

- Recognition for Basic Training Course Graduation.
- Recognition of Service Hour Milestones, can be found here.

#### Volunteers May Decline Certification Recognition Items

Volunteers are welcome to decline receiving pins. Some individuals do not want them. We keep track of this preference in Better Impact. There is a question in everyone’s profile in Better Impact under Custom Fields, “Milestones” noting if a volunteer wants to receive recognition items or not. Everyone will default to YES for this question and individuals can update their response at any time. We will not send pins for anyone who changes their preference to NO.

### Certificates for Initial, First-time Certification

#### What is it

The VMN State Office will provide a state-level Badge in Better Impact and a physical Certificate to those individuals who complete all the requirements to become a Certified Virginia Master Naturalist. Badges in BI

will be updated by the VMN Program State Office upon achievement based on the procedures under the sub-heading “Responsibilities” in this section. Physical certificates will be sent in each chapter’s bi-annual packages. Exact timeline and procedures are outlined in the “Procedures for Requesting Certificates and Pins” section of this document.

The BI badge and physical certificate are provided upon initial certification and confer the title of “Certified Master Naturalist”. Volunteers who re-certify each year will receive the recertification pin for that year and keep their badge in Better Impact. Initial certification does not receive a pin, only this certificate.

## **Who is Eligible**

Individuals who complete the VMN Basic Training Course (BTC) and then complete, and log in Better Impact, 40 hours of approved volunteer service and 8 hours of approved continuing education (40+8) within one year of their VMN BTC graduation date.

If an individual who has completed the VMN BTC does *not* complete 40+8 within one year of their VMN BTC graduation date, then they are moved to a calendar year schedule. This means that they can complete, and log in Better Impact, the 40 hours of volunteer service and 8 hours of continuing education in any given calendar year to achieve initial certification.

## **Responsibilities**

### **Chapter Responsibilities**

When a Trainee graduates from their VMN Basic Training Course (BTC), the chapter will need to do two things in Better Impact:

1. Mark them as “Graduate” - This can be found in Better Impact under Main, Qualifications, “VMN Training”. This qualification should be changed from “Current Trainee” to “Graduate”.
2. Update their VMN BTC graduation date – This can be found in Better Impact under Main, Custom Fields, “VMN Basic Training Course Graduation Date”. Enter the date the volunteer graduated.

*NOTE: You can find step-by-step instructions for how to do both of these tasks in our “VMN Admin Info Sheet: Recognition for Basic Training Course Graduation” document on the [Volunteer Management page of the VMN website](#). Look for the section called, “Better Impact Electronic Badges for Training Qualification”.*

Now, the VMN Trainee is a VMN Member who we hope will become a Certified VMN.

### **Volunteer Responsibility \*NEW\***

In an effort to help any newly certified volunteer get recognized sooner than bi-annual packages, we offer the following option. This option is a courtesy, not a requirement, that allows newly certified volunteers to get recognized with an electronic badge within a month of achieving initial certification if they would like.

The next steps are the responsibility of the volunteer and are outlined for them in a separate document called “How to Request a Certification Check” meant to show them, in detail, how to do the following:

- Once a Volunteer thinks they have logged their first 40 hours of approved volunteer service and 8 hours of approved continuing education, they will update a Qualification in BI called “VMN Request for Certification Check” that alerts the VMN State Office to check their hours.
- The VMN State Office will run a report each month to look for anyone who has updated this Qualification.
- If anyone comes up on that report, the VMN State Office will check the hours for those Volunteers.
- If a Volunteer who updated the Qualification *does* qualify for initial certification, the VMN State Office will do the following: 1) Update their “VMN Certified Virginia Master Naturalist” Qualification in BI to Yes, 2) Update the “VMN Request for Certification Check” to neutral, 3) Email the Volunteer with a copy to their chapter’s Membership Chair to let them know of their new status, and 4) Add the volunteer

to their Chapter's upcoming Certification Report to say that they have been updated in BI but need a certificate to be sent in their chapter's next package.

- If the Volunteer does *not* qualify for initial certification, the VMN State Office will return the Qualification to neutral and send the Volunteer an email through Better Impact that says why they didn't qualify and to update the Qualification again when they think that they have achieved initial certification.

It is important to note that even if a Volunteer never checks the box on their own, their certification, if they have earned it, will be found during the bi-annual reporting process. At that time, their qualification will be updated in Better Impact and a certificate sent in the chapter's package.

## Recertification (Recert) Pins

### What is it

In 2011, we began issuing a limited-edition recertification pin for Virginia Master Naturalists who have qualified for recertification. Recertification pins will be mailed in one batch to each chapter in February based on the number of volunteers recertifying according to hours entered in Better Impact.

### Who is Eligible

Volunteers who have achieved initial certification in any previous year, who then complete and log in Better Impact, 40 hours of approved volunteer service and 8 hours of approved continuing education (40+8) between January 1 and December 31 of the applicable calendar year.

Volunteers whose **initial** certification already extends through the end of the applicable calendar year are not eligible for a recertification pin. There are many volunteers who are confused about why they receive a certificate and not a pin. There are also volunteers who would like to know how they can earn a Recert pin before they are technically eligible. In order to help explain how all of this works, we offer the following examples of two different scenarios.

For Scenario #1, we are starting with an individual who graduated BTC in April 2021.

- This volunteer would have until the end of April 2022 to log their first 40+8 and achieve initial certification
- However, this volunteer was very active and completed the requirements for certification in October 2021.
- This means that they are Certified as of November 2021 and that certification is good through December 31, 2022.
- This individual will receive a Certificate for initial certification in their chapter's end-of-year package in February 2022.
- This individual would **not** be eligible for a 2022 Recert pin.
- This individual would now be on the calendar year schedule and their hours from January 1 – December 31, 2022 will count towards their 2023 Recertification.
- Any hours logged from November - December of 2021 would count towards their lifetime milestones but not their next certification (see "Earning the 'Additional 40+8'" section below for the exemption to this rule).

For Scenario #2, we are starting with an individual who graduated BTC in April 2021.

- This person would have until the end of April 2022 to log their first 40+8 and achieve initial certification
- If they complete the requirements for certification in April 2022, then they are Certified as of May 2022 and that certification is good through December 31, 2023.
- This means that they would receive a Certificate for initial certification in their chapter's mid-year package in August 2022.
- This individual would **not** be eligible for a 2023 Recert pin.

- This individual would now be on the calendar year schedule and their hours from January 1 – December 31, 2023 will count towards their 2024 Recertification.
- Any hours logged from May - December of 2022 would count towards their lifetime milestones but not their next certification (see “Earning the ‘Additional 40+8’” section below for the exemption to this rule).
- If this individual does NOT log their first 40+8 by the end of April 2022, then they would move to a calendar year schedule.
  - This means that the VMN State Office would look at their hours from January 1 through December 31 of 2022 to see if they were able to log their initial 40+8 in that timeframe.
  - This means that they would not get to count any hours logged prior to January 1, 2022 towards their initial certification.
  - If the individual did not log 40+8 in 2022, they can continue to log hours and certify in any given calendar year by logging 40+8 between January 1-December 31.

### Earning the “Additional 40+8”

If a volunteer is interested in earning a recert pin the year *before* they are eligible, there is a way it can be done. Continuing with our examples from above, we offer further explanation for Scenarios #1 and #2.

#### Continuing Scenario #1

- This individual has Certified as of November 2021.
- Their Certification is good through December 31, 2022.
- They are not eligible for the 2022 recert pin.
- Any hours completed and logged from November – December of 2021 are counting towards their lifetime milestones but not their next recertification.
- If the volunteer would like to try and earn the 2022 recert pin, they would need to complete and log in Better Impact, an **additional** 40 hours of approved volunteer service and 8 hours of approved continuing education from November – December 2022.
- We call this the “Additional 40+8” and if a volunteer achieves this, then they receive the 2022 recert pin.
- These additional hours will be looked for by the VMN State Office during the bi-annual reporting process.

#### Continuing Scenario #2

- This individual has Certified as of May 2022.
- Their Certification is good through December 31, 2023.
- They are not eligible for the 2023 recert pin.
- Any hours completed and logged from May – December of 2022 are counting towards their lifetime milestones but not their next recertification.
- If the volunteer would like to try and earn the 2023 recert pin, they would need to complete and log in Better Impact, an **additional** 40 hours of approved volunteer service and 8 hours of approved continuing education from May – December 2022.
- We call this the “Additional 40+8” and if a volunteer achieves this, then they receive the 2023 recert pin.
- These additional hours will be looked for by the VMN State Office during the bi-annual reporting process.

### **Responsibilities**

See the section entitled “Roles for Chapter Leaders and VMN State Office”.

## **Procedures for Requesting Certificates and Recert Pins**

### **Our Current Procedures for Requesting Certificates**

- The VMN State Office sends recognition items to chapters twice a year based on bi-annual reports generated by the VMN State Office.

- We call this Mid-year (MY) Reports and End-of-year (EOY) Reports.
- Mid-year Reports will be created and reviewed in July of each year and will report on hours logged from January 1 through June 30 of that year. Qualifications will be updated in Better Impact and packages sent to chapters in August.
- EOY Reports will be created and reviewed in January of each year and will report on hours logged from July 1 through December 31 of the year just ended. Qualifications will be updated in Better Impact and packages sent to chapters in February.
- Timelines for both the Mid-year and EOY Reports are outlined in the following section.

### **Timeline for Mid-year (MY) and End-of-year (EOY) Reports**

- MY and EOY packages will be sent to all chapters. Please plan to distribute the items we send as volunteers should be able to receive their latest recognitions at least twice a year.
- In May/June (for MY) and Nov/Dec (for EOY), Chapters will need a plan to encourage their members to have all hours updated in Better Impact by June 30 (for MY) and December 31 (for EOY).
- In early-July (for MY) and early-January (for EOY), Staff from the VMN State Office will pull reports from Better Impact to view all hours reported as of June 30 (for MY) and December 31 (for EOY).
- VMN Staff will send an email to each chapter's Membership Chair and President around July 15 (for MY) and January 15 (for EOY) with two reports attached: 1) Milestone Report, and 2) Certification Report (new initial certifications). EOY will also include a third report: 3) Recert Report.
- Each chapter will have at least two weeks to review the reports and respond with any questions or corrections.
- Once both the VMN State Office and the chapter agree that the reports are correct, VMN Staff will update the chapters milestones and certifications (initial and recerts) in Better Impact.
- Next, the chapter's package will be put together
- Mid-year packages will include certificates, re-certification pins (if any were missed at the previous EOY Reports) and milestones earned through June 30.
- EOY packages will include certificates, re-certification pins and milestone pins earned through December 31.

### **What Chapters should do when reviewing Reports**

- We are not expecting chapters to re-run the reports (though we are happy to provide directions on how to do that if a chapter is just the type of people who want to do it).
- The data in Better Impact should be such that we can tell who should be getting recognition items.
- However, we know that the data in Better Impact isn't always complete and so we want to give chapters the opportunity to double check us.
- If you have a big chapter where it is difficult to have individual knowledge of people then you may only be able to glance at it and say 'looks good'.
- A smaller chapter might know of some individual circumstances that need to be addressed.
- There is always the option to just trust us!
- Really, these reports are meant as a courtesy so that you can have input if you want to do so before we ship everything out AND to make sure we didn't miss something that you know should be looked at.

### **Important note about packages**

Check your package as soon as it comes in to make sure the items you received are correct. If the package sits for four weeks and only gets checked the day before your chapter-wide recognition event, there is no time to replace anything that might be missing. The person putting the package together is only human and can make mistakes (inadvertently, of course). Help them out and allow some time to send corrections if they are needed.

Make a plan to get every volunteer the recognition items they have earned, even if they are unable to attend the chapter meeting or other special event. If you choose to mail the items to members, document envelopes are recommended for sending certificates and padded envelopes are recommended for sending pins.

# Roles for Chapter Leaders and the VMN State Office

These are the roles of the Chapter Leaders and the VMN State Office as we see them:

## Chapter Leaders

- Encourage/remind volunteers in the chapter to enter any hours by June 30 and December 31 of each year.
- Apply Qualification for “VMN Training” in Better Impact to indicate new basic training graduates. We need this information so that we can determine who is eligible for certification.
- Please do not update any other Qualifications or Milestone info in Better Impact. Those updates will be done by the VMN State Office.
- Let volunteers know they can opt out of receiving pins by updating that field in their profile on Better Impact.
- Review the Reports sent to you by the VMN State Office and respond with any questions or corrections by the deadline listed in the email.
- Receive the recognition items at a single address and distribute to volunteers.

## VMN State Office

- Generate reports from Better Impact to create lists of new certifications, new milestones, recertifications.
- Send reports to chapter leaders for their review and respond to any resulting questions or corrections.
- Apply Qualifications to each volunteer’s Better Impact profile for 1) Certified VMN volunteers and enter the date of initial certification and 2) Milestone Levels, and enter the date of the last milestone.
- Compile and send out packages to each chapter with the recognition items.

## Additional Recognition Options

Chapters are welcome and encouraged to use additional means of recognizing newly certified or recertified volunteers. Some possibilities include:

- Celebration event to hand out certificates and pins. Many chapters make this activity part of an annual social gathering.
- Press release or announcement for the local newspaper highlighting the volunteers’ accomplishments. It can also be shared on the chapter’s social media accounts, website, and newsletter.
- Interviews with certified VMN volunteers for the chapter newsletter or website in which the volunteer describes the service they did to achieve certification.

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