

EIM Help – Marine Benthic Organisms - Identification and Numeration (Counts)

Version 2.1
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Marine benthic invertebrates are organisms which live on or just below the surface of the ocean floor (the benthos). Samples are collected and sent to labs for sorting, taxonomic identification, and counting. Benthic count data provides an important source of information for assessment of the health of marine ecosystems. Much of the assessment is through the use of statistical metrics. **This document describes how to enter only the raw count data, not metrics.**

It is very important to work with the laboratory that will be identifying and counting your samples to ensure that they provide all of the information necessary for your EIM data entry. They also need to provide you with the raw counts, not density estimates. If possible, meet with your lab prior to sampling to discuss if they can provide your data electronically in the required EIM format.

Prior to loading your data, you should compare your study's taxon list to [EIM's Taxa valid values](#). Otherwise, you will probably get some loading errors due to taxon names not matching. Taxonomy labs are notorious for not being able to agree on taxon names. ☺ The Integrated Taxonomic Information System (ITIS) website is useful for checking for valid taxon names and Taxonomic Serial Numbers (TSN's) if you have taxon names that are not in EIM Taxa valid values.

Composites

If you have composites, samples from more than one area that were combined in a single sample container, you also need to indicate how many samples were composited. EIM does not have a field specific only for this. **For each composited sample you will need to enter an additional result with a Result Parameter Name of “*Number of Benthic Samples in Composite*.”** For this result, enter the number of samples composited into the Result Value field. The rest of the fields for this result will be the same as you enter for the taxon count results except the **Field Collection Type, Result Value Units, Result Method**, and the **Result Lab Name** (enter as described in Required Fields section). You also won't need to fill out the taxon fields (columns BC-BH).

Composite Locations

Enter only one location into EIM for each unique set of composited samples. For example, if you composited samples from four areas in a stream, find the coordinates of approximately the middle of that stream reach and enter a single location with those coordinates. The [Get Lat Long Coordinates and Elevations from EIM Map](#) help document describes how to generate coordinates and build a downloadable table containing the coordinates of the sites you choose.

When entering your composite Locations, populate the **Horizontal Coordinates Represent** field (column AC in the Locations template) with “25,” which is “Centroid of Monitoring Area.” Also, include in the **Location Description** field (column D) that the “*location represents the centroid of four sample collection sites*” (number of composites of four used as an example).

Required Fields (for Results data)

The fields and associated values listed below are required for this type of data. The remaining standard required fields not listed below that also need to be filled out are: **Study ID** (A), **Location ID** (B), **Study-Specific Location ID** (C), and **Field Collector** (E). All fields are described in detail in [Result Help](#) downloadable from [Templates & Guidance](#).

Field Collection Type (column D): enter enter “*Sample*” for the taxon count results OR enter “*Measurement*” for the “*Number of Benthic Samples in Composite*” result

Field Collection Start Date (F): required, *MM/DD/YYYY* format

Field Collection Start Time (G): optional, *HH:MM:SS* format, in 24 hour time

Field Collection End Date (H): required only if sampling unit was left in the waterbody and retrieved at a later date (ex. when sampling unit remained in the waterbody for days/weeks), *MM/DD/YYYY*

Field Collection End Time (I): optional, *HH:MM:SS* format, in 24 hour time

Field Collection Area (K): enter the numeric collection area, for example, enter “.10” if you collected an area of .01 m². If multiple samples were composited into a single sample container, enter the summed area of all of the samples composited.

Field Collection Area Units (L): enter the units corresponding to your collection area (“m²” or “ft²”)

Field Collection Reference Point (M): enter “*Sediment Surface*”

Field Collection Upper Depth (N): enter the distance from the Reference Point (M) to the upper boundary where sample was collected (ex. “0”)

Field Collection Lower Depth (O): enter the distance from the Reference Point (M) to the lower boundary where sample was collected (ex. “10”)

Field Collection Area Units (L): enter the units corresponding to your collection area (“ft²” or “m²”)

Sample ID (R): use your field ID’s or create a unique ID for each of your samples

Sample Composite Flag (V): enter “N” if samples were not composited OR “Y” if samples were composited (see Composite section on page one for more info)

Sample Matrix (X): enter “*Solid/Sediment*”

Sample Source (Y): enter “*Marine Taxonomy*”

Sample Collection Method (AA): enter the method used to collect the sample (ex. “*VANVEEN.10*”, or “*VANVEEN.20*”), request a new code be added if yours is not in the EIM

Sample Preparation Method (AB): if available, indicate the sieve size used on the sample (ex. “*SIEVE-0.5MM.*”, “*SIEVE-1MM*” etc.), request a new method be added if your sieve size is not in the EIM valid values

Sample Percent Sorted (AG): enter the percent of the sample that the lab sorted, which is usually “100” for marine samples (enter the numeric value only, don’t include the percent sign)

Required Fields – cont.

Result Parameter Name (AH): enter “*Number of Individual Organisms*” for individual counts, “*Number of Colonial Organisms*” for colonial animals counted as 1, OR “*Number of Benthic Samples in Composite*”

Lab Analysis Date (AJ): because benthic samples are not ID'd and counted in one day, enter date accurate to the month or year, MM/DD/YYYY format

Lab Analysis Date Accuracy (AK): enter “*M*” for month or “*Y*” for year

Result Value (AM): enter the number of individuals, the number of colonial organisms, OR the number of samples in the composite

Result Value Units (AN): enter “*Count*” for the taxon counts OR enter “*Number*” (if this is the “*Number of Benthic Samples in Composite*” result)

Result Method (AY): enter “*Count*” for the taxon counts OR enter “*Number*” (if this is the “*Number of Benthic Samples in Composite*” result)

Result Lab Name (BC): enter name of lab that identified and counted your taxa (leave this field blank if this is the “*Number of Benthic Samples in Composite*” result)

Result Taxon Name (BE) enter the taxon’s scientific name (leave this field blank if this is the “*Number of Benthic Samples in Composite*” result)

Result Taxon TSN (BF): enter the Taxonomic Serial Number (leave this field blank if this is the “*Number of Benthic Samples in Composite*” result)

Result Taxon Unidentified Species (BG): Use this field only if the lab was unable to positively identify a taxon and reports as SP1, SP2 etc. Enter the lab’s SP# designation into this field and enter the next highest taxonomic level (usually genus) into the Result Taxon Name field. See [Unidentified Species Data](#) help document.

Result Taxon Life Stage (BH): Indicate the life stage if other than adult. Because marine benthic samples contain mostly adult taxa, you only need to populate this field it’s not adults. Leave blank for adult taxa, otherwise enter any of the permitted values found in the Result Help (ex. Egg, Larvae, Nymph, Pupa, etc.). This field is used to separate counts, for example when there are both adults and larvae with the same taxon name in an individual sample. If this field is not populated when the same taxon is listed more than once in the same sample (ex. more than one life stage), EIM will see them as duplicates and they will not load.

Related EIM Help Documents and Links

[Get Lat Long Coordinates and Elevations from EIM Map](#) - instructions on how to use EIM’s Lat/Long Tool to generate coordinates and build and download a table of coordinate, elevation and EIM Location metadata fields for one or more points

[About EIM Valid Values](#) – describes how to search EIM’s valid values for permitted values for Methods, Parameters, Taxon, Lab, Tissue Type, Data Qualifiers, or Units

[Composite Samples](#) - describes the field and gives examples for different types of data

[The Integrated Taxonomic Information System \(ITIS\)](#) – a useful searchable database housing taxonomic names, TSN’s, and their hierarchical classification

Revision History

| Revision Date | Revision No. | Summary of Changes | Reviser(s) |
|---------------|--------------|--|------------|
| 11/06/09 | 1.0 | Original Document | CL |
| 8/16/13 | 2.0 | Renamed document from "Marine Benthic Macroinvertebrate Data." Updated with new field names and permitted values per data model changes. Added new requirements or conditional requirements for sediment to enter Result Basis, Field Collection Ref Point, and Depth fields. Added Result Method to the list of required fields. Added End Date requirement for certain data. Expanded descriptions for Unidentified Species and Life Stage fields. Added "prior to loading" info. Added Composite and Composite Locations sections. Added related help document links. | CL |
| 09/08/17 | 2.1 | Updated links and terminology | KC |
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