

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs) – STRI SCIENTIFIC PERMIT OFFICE (SPO)

1. Do all original documents have to be sent with the MiAmbiente permit request application?

No, all documents can be sent to the STRI permits office by email (including a scan of the apostilled copy of the passport) to start the permit process with MiAmbiente. However, MiAmbiente requires the **original** apostilled copy of your passport photo page to release the permit to STRI. If you have not sent the original apostilled document by mail or courier to us, you can give us the document once you have arrived in Panama.

2. What does it mean to have my passport legalized or “apostilled”?

MiAmbiente requires one authenticated copy of your passport photo page in order to process your permit.

This authentication requires several steps, and you should check with your local authorities to determine the procedure in your country. In most countries, you will be able to make a color copy of the photo page of your passport and have it notarized locally by a Notary Public. The notary will confirm your identity and signature. Please make sure that your signature matches the signature on your passport. Then this notarized copy can be apostilled. Ask the Notary what is the best way to obtain the apostille in your country/location. This may require mailing the notarized copy to another location for the apostille stamp to be added. In the US, once the passport copy has been notarized, the apostille can happen in the same state and it is not necessary to send the passport to the State Dept. in DC. Plan accordingly as this may take some time.

If you are already in Panama, you can take your passport directly to MiAmbiente for authentication, but please be aware that your permit application will be not submitted to MiAmbiente until this process is completed. Please keep in mind that it may take 90 days after the permit’s office receives your complete application for the permit to be issued by the authorities. Until you receive your permit you won’t be able to conduct any field work outside the Barro Colorado Natural Monument (BCNM), including observations.

3. I am studying or working in another country that is not my home country. How can I apostille the copy of the page of my passport that contains my photo and respective information, if I am not a citizen of that country?

Please check with the authorities of the country where you are currently residing. Generally, the process begins with the verification of a copy of your passport page that contains the photo and personal information by a notary public or circuit judge. The notary public will be able to inform you of the next step once the document has been notarized. It will then become an official document of that country and can be apostilled by the respective officials of that country.

4. Will MiAmbiente process my permit application without an apostilled copy of my passport?

No, you must have your passport apostilled for your permit application to be complete **or** take your passport to MiAmbiente for verification before your permit application will be processed. Please be aware that your permit application will be not submitted to MiAmbiente until this process is completed.

However, MiAmbiente will accept a copy of the apostilled passport in order to start the permit review process. You may send a copy of the apostilled document by email so we can start the permit process with the authority, but you will need to bring the original apostilled copy to us when you arrive in Panama. Keep in mind that it may take 90 days after the permit office receives your complete application for the permit to be issued by the authorities. Until you receive your permit you won't be able to conduct any field work outside the Barro Colorado Natural Monument (BCNM), including observations.

***If your research requires a MiAmbiente permit, your STRI visit request will not be approved until the permit office receives a complete permit application, including a copy of your apostilled passport.

5. How long does the MiAmbiente permit application process take?

By executive decree, MiAmbiente may take up to 45 **business** days to process research, export and import permits. It is possible that the authorities may issue the permit sooner, but the STRI Scientific Permits Office has no control over this time, and therefore cannot guarantee when a permit will be issued. Please also be aware that the STRI permits office does not always submit the application the day they receive it. So please consider an additional 15 business days after the complete application is received, in case the office has a large backlog. Also, your permit application may take longer if approval of a research protocol is needed (See question 13).

6. The MiAmbiente permit application requires that a Panamanian citizen be included on the permit request. Who should I include?

This person is typically a collaborator who is involved with the research project, which can include someone that you will be training or a paid assistant. Consult with your STRI host if you need help with finding a Panamanian citizen to add to your permit request.

7. Can permit applications be submitted in English?

No, all permit applications must be prepared in Spanish, which is the official language of Panama and with which the procedures are carried out by the authorities. You can find a list of translators in Panama on the Scientific Permits Office webpage. Alternatively, online translation services (e.g., Google Translate, SpanishDict, etc.) are usually adequate for permit applications.

8. What is the cost of a permit?

Costs vary according to the institution issuing the permit and the number of participants. You can check the costs associated with the processing and issuance of scientific permits at the following link <https://stri.si.edu/fees/permits>. Your permit cost **will depend on your assigned visitor category**.

9. Can I request amendments to an already issued research permit?

Yes, amendments to research permits may include additions to the personnel, sites, methodology or resources to be collected or studied. Import and export permits and licenses cannot be amended and require a new permit request application.

10. What documents must I submit for the inclusion of new participants to a current research permit?

This may vary by governmental institution. Please check for the institutional permit requirements at <https://stri.si.edu/plan-your-visit/scientific-research-permits>. For example, for MiAmbiente, you must send a CV in Spanish, an apostilled copy of the passport photo page or notarized ID (if in Panama), and signed waiver of responsibility for each person.

11. Can I apply for a research permit without having a project registered with STRI?

No. To apply for a research permit, you must first register the project and have it approved. When you register your visit request, the permits office will provide you with information on which permits you will need to apply for.

12. Can I request an extension of an expiring research permit?

No, Panamanian authorities do not extend the expiration date of issued permits. You need to submit a new permit request application with the required documents.

13. Which research sites require special authorization for access?

Most protected areas such as national parks do not require special authorization. However, the following locations have special approval requirements that need to be obtained in advance to process your permit request: the Parque Natural Metropolitano (PNM), Parque Municipal Summit, Reserva Forestal Fortuna, Reserva del Cerro Ancon, indigenous areas, areas under the jurisdiction of the Autoridad del Canal de Panamá (ACP), private areas (the researcher is responsible for obtaining these authorizations), Parque Nacional Coiba, Agencia Panamá Pacífico (APP). You can find information for these requests at <https://stri.si.edu/plan-your-visit/scientific-research-permits>. Such authorizations are called “CLIPs” (Consentimiento Libre Informado Previo). The permits office will process your request for PNM, Fortuna, Coiba, APP, Summit and ACP, and Ancon.

14. Is it necessary to carry my research permit when in the field?

Yes, granting permit institutions in Panama require that all personnel in the field always carry a copy of their research permit.

14. How can I apply for research permits if I am going to work with vertebrates or my research involves human subjects?

Research protocols must first be submitted for approval by either the SI Animal Care and Use Committee (ACUC) for vertebrates, or the Institution Review Board (IRB) for human subjects. Evaluation of the research protocol by either committee can take up to 45 days so please take this stage into consideration when planning your visit. These approvals must accompany your research permit application.

Requirements for the ACUC can be found here: <https://stri.si.edu/plan-your-visit/scientific-research-permits/animal-care-use-committee>

Requirements for the IRB can be found here: <https://stri.si.edu/plan-your-visit/scientific-research-permits/sd-606>

15. I don't know yet which species I will be collecting. Can I still apply for a permit?

Yes, indicate the number of specimens you would like to collect and a higher taxonomic level in the field for Scientific Name (e.g. Family or Genus) in the permit application. Please add an explanation to your method sections on why you are not able to provide the detailed information.

16. Is a MiAmbiente research and/or collection permit required for work on the Barro Colorado Natural Monument?

No, this authorization is granted by STRI, which has jurisdiction over the Monument. However, if you plan to export material collected at BCI, you need an export permit from MiAmbiente.

17. I am planning to import research samples to Panama. Do I need to have an export permit from the country of origin of the samples before I can apply for an import permit for Panama?

Proof of an export permit is not necessary in most cases to apply for an import permit. Please check the regulation on your country for rules regarding the export. However, for imports of CITES species Panama does require the CITES export permit from the country of origin. It is possible that the authorities, when evaluating your request, may ask you to submit additional documentation due to situations at the country of origin. If in doubt, please contact us at stri-permits@si.edu.

18. Can I apply for a MiAmbiente export permit without having collected my samples?

No, to apply for an export permit you must have collected the material first, for which you must have a collecting/research permit. You will also need to file a collecting report and deposit voucher specimens at the University of Panama – contact the Permits Office for more information about this requirement. Your export permit request will not be complete unless you have a signed statement saying that you have deposited your voucher specimens.

For exporting other types of materials, please contact the permits office at stri-permits@si.edu.

19. Can I use the same export permit for multiple shipments?

No. Export permits are only valid for one export (multiple boxes that travel together to the same destination are considered a single shipment). If you need to send material out of the country on different dates or shipments, you will need to process an export permit for each of

them. If the country where you are bringing the samples requires an import permit or other documentation, you are responsible for obtaining those import permits.

Please email us at stri-permits@si.edu if you have any further questions regarding Panama's research, import or export permits,

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