

# Chapter Management and Operations Protocols



## Texas Master Naturalist Program™

Revised June 2015

*[This document is intended to provide the minimal requirements for TMN Chapters and assist Chapters in initiating, developing and managing a local Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist Program. It is intended also to clarify and amplify articles of the Texas Master Naturalist State Bylaws and to aid in developing a local Chapter Operating Handbook.]*

# Chapter Management and Operations Protocols

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## **Article I. Texas Master Naturalist**

**A. Mission.** To develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the State of Texas.

**B. Bylaws.**

Reference State Bylaws, Article I, E. Bylaws Compliance.

All Texas Master Naturalist Chapters must adopt Chapter Bylaws using only the language specified in the State Bylaws Template selecting two Chapter specific options, 1) concerning the 'Term of Officers' (see Bylaws, Article V, G.) and 2) the Addendum for 501 (c) (3) Chapters. Chapter Bylaws adoptions and amendments must meet the procedures in Article X, Adoption and Amendment of Bylaws. In case of any conflict between the Chapter Management and Operations Protocols and the Bylaws, the Bylaws shall prevail.

**C. Sponsorship.** At the state level, the Texas Master Naturalist Program™ is sponsored jointly by the *Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service* and the *Texas Parks & Wildlife Department* (TPWD). Partnerships at the local level are necessary, encouraged and may include other public agencies, as well as private organizations whose interests are within the boundaries of the program. At the state level, the Texas Master Naturalist Program is supported financially by Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service along with grants from other outside sources.

**D. Objectives**

1. Improve public understanding of natural resource ecology and management by developing a pool of local knowledge about natural resource ecology that can be used to enhance education and conservation efforts within local communities.
2. Enhance existing natural resources education and outreach activities by providing natural resources training at the local level, thereby developing a supply of dedicated and informed volunteers.
3. Develop a Texas Master Naturalist coordinated volunteer network.

## **Article II. Program**

**A. Overview**

The Texas Master Naturalist Program exists as a collection of local programs that adhere to a set of objectives, procedures, and minimum requirements set at the state level. The program, at the state level, is guided by a the Texas Master Naturalist Statewide Committee (TMN Statewide Committee) made up of Certified Texas Master Naturalist Volunteers, as well as statewide sponsor representatives from Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and support from program advisors. The TMN Statewide Committee sets the minimum standards and curriculum requirements, as well as reviews and approves each local Chapter's development, curriculum and maintenance.

Texas Master Naturalist volunteers are trained and certified at the local level through

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their respective Chapters. When feasible, each local Chapter should have at least a local Coordinating Committee participation by local Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and/or Texas Parks & Wildlife Department personnel – these individuals form the administrative and advisory connection to the statewide coordinators for the respective sponsoring agencies. It is highly recommended that each local Chapter should engage advisors from each sponsoring organization. It is required that each Chapter have at least one of the sponsoring organizations involved and supporting their Chapter.

It is important for Texas Master Naturalist Chapters to capitalize on local resources and expertise through partnerships. Representatives of these local partners may serve on a planning committee. This committee may include natural resources personnel, the leaders of local natural resources groups, interested landowners, and other interested individuals. When Chapters are in their early stages (i.e., during the planning of their first training sessions) the local Planning Committee may be led by Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and/or Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service personnel or in some cases, a volunteer or other organization. As a Chapter matures, trained Texas Master Naturalist volunteers should assume a larger role in the administration of the program. Once the Chapter has attained a trained cadre of volunteers, these volunteers should take on larger roles in the coordination of the Chapter by developing and maintaining a Chapter Board and committee chairs. At this time, the original local Chapter Planning Committee begins serving in an advisory capacity to the Chapter and its Board. (Appendix I lists guidelines for these Advisors).

There are many ways for Chapters to conduct training sessions. Many Chapters conduct training programs at different times of day and at different times of year to meet the demand and needs of the community and clientele in a Chapter's service area. Some Chapters alternate a daytime versus evening training programs. Some Chapters alternate spring versus fall. Other Chapters hold two training programs a year.

Overall, Chapters that hold training classes once a week for 12 to 15 weeks (vs. once a month over the course of a year) have better training class retention, certification rates and long term member retention rates.

Many Chapter training programs include hours above the minimum 40 hours of state required training to adequately cover the local issues and topics of their service area.

### **B. Curriculum Development**

Because Texas has such a diversity of climate, population and land types, the natural resources (and their uses) in each area of the state are unique. Therefore, each local Chapter should consider customizing their training program based on the TMN Statewide Program Curriculum to focus on their local ecosystems.

The TMN State Office will periodically review the Chapter's curriculum and training agenda to ensure the minimum requirements are being met and delivered. It is required the Chapter have its training agenda reviewed if any curriculum item changes from the last time it was reviewed by the TMN State Office. Each Trainee of the Texas Master Naturalist Program shall receive an official TMN Program Statewide Curriculum. The

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Curriculum is the assurance that every TMN Member has the same basic knowledge statewide and it allows a Chapter to add more training detail to cover the ecoregion they serve. Curriculum can be ordered by the Chapter at bulk prices by contacting the Texas AgriLife Bookstore at: [www.agrilifebookstore.org](http://www.agrilifebookstore.org).

When planning the training schedule, the local Training Coordinating Committee (New Class Training Committee) should try to use expertise from local universities, nature centers, and research centers, as well as local landowners and managers. The local coordinators should plan and facilitate the training sessions so that class and field sessions adequately cover the following suggested categories of topics:

- **Roles, responsibilities, and benefits of being a Texas Master Naturalist.**  
Trainees should understand the purpose and mission of the program – and they must commit to participate as a volunteer. This should be briefly discussed during the first meeting of the class; the Mission of the program should be continually reinforced throughout subsequent training sessions. It shall also be the responsibility of the Training Coordinating Committee or other appropriate Chapter representatives for informing and enforcing appropriate adherence to the content of this Chapter Management and Operations Protocols document to the new Texas Master Naturalist trainees of each class.
- **Historical perspectives of naturalists in Texas and elsewhere.**  
Naturalists were frontiersmen, pioneers, observers, interpreters, and teachers. They were important in the history of our state. Texas Master Naturalist training should include programs designed to create an appreciation for the role that these early naturalists played in Texas and US history. Because many of the early naturalists kept accurate records of what they observed, this study can provide an interesting way for people to realize the changes in our landscapes over time. Also, studying those early “master naturalists” creates a sense of appreciation that goes along with the title of Texas Master Naturalist.
- **Traditional disciplines of a naturalist.**  
The original naturalists were *botanists, entomologists, ornithologists, mammalogists, herpetologists, paleontologists, and geologists*. Professionals within these disciplines are available at universities, nature centers, and research centers. These natural scientists are generally eager to share their disciplines and may be excellent teachers. An effective way to incorporate these disciplines into a training session is in a field trip situation. Inviting natural scientists along as “Master Naturalist faculty” on field sessions is an effective way for Master Naturalist’s trainees to be exposed to these disciplines first hand. Many of those enrolled in Texas Master Naturalist training may also have some formal training in these disciplines.
- **Ecological concepts.**  
Ecological concepts may be discussed in a classroom situation – but when combined with case studies and/or field demonstrations, these concepts take on more relevant meaning. Texas Master Naturalist trainees should come away from their training sessions with an accurate baseline understanding of what is meant by some of the

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ecological concepts and ideas that need to be understood in order to manage natural resources. These include the functional definitions of ecosystems, landscapes, communities, species assemblages, and populations. They should be exposed to concepts of biodiversity and species diversity. Training sessions should provide instruction on the dynamics of natural systems – including succession; natural and human disturbances; recovery and restoration.

- **Eco-regions of Texas.**

Texas Master Naturalists should be trained to understand the basic differences among the various eco-regions of the State. In addition, they should be trained to understand the unique characteristics and interactions among the geology, climate, water, soils, flora, fauna, and major land uses in their local eco-region(s). Chapters need to include at least one field session in each of the ecoregion(s) occurring within their Chapter's territory as part of the Chapter's training class.

- **Management of natural systems.**

Texas Master Naturalists should be exposed to the management of natural systems, including forest ecology & management, rangeland ecology & management, wetland ecology & management, urban ecology & management, and aquatic ecology & management as they apply to your Chapter's ecoregion(s). These applied fields are each represented by natural resource professionals to lead these sessions. Because not all parts of the State have land types suitable for these managed systems, training sessions should focus on those managed systems that are a dominant feature in the local area.

- **Interpretation and communications.**

The Master Naturalists you are training will represent Chapter efforts to the public. Through their training, trainees should be given an opportunity to develop presentation skills and active learning techniques. The Texas Master Naturalist Chapter should function as a reservoir of teaching resources and materials for use by Chapter members. The availability and effective use of these resources should be reviewed as part of the initial training.

- **Natural Resource Stewardship, Laws, Regulations, Ethics and Citizen Science**

The Texas Master Naturalist Program curriculum should include an introduction to the history of land conservation, stewardship and land management ethics, focusing on the local regions and habitats of the Chapter. New member training should promote a discussion of ethics, with each trainee being encouraged through the use of best practices, to develop their own conservation ethic. Emphasis should be placed on the interconnected relationship between good land management practices, habitat and all wildlife survival. Appropriate local, State and national laws and regulations pertaining to conservation and the protection of natural resources should be emphasized. Citizen Science and its role in the Master Naturalist volunteer program, as a means to contribute to natural resource research, better management practices and conservation efforts in Texas, should also be presented.

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### C. Mentor Program

Where formal Mentor Programs have been developed, there is a distinct correlation to the number of new trainee certifications and ultimate Chapter retention of new members. The role and responsibility of the Mentor cannot be over emphasized in the success of a trainee's interest, involvement and completion of the required curriculum and certification requirements. The Mentor must be fully informed of their responsibilities and the governing documents of the Chapter in order to provide the most beneficial and accurate counsel to the trainee. See Appendix II, Mentor Program for more information.

### D. Class Attendance

In anticipating the need to set standards for maintaining class attendance, the TMN State Committee has set the following policy:

Each Chapter may set a local standard for the maximum number of class hours that may be missed during a given training cycle. Chapters are required to keep the use of this standard to a minimum, but in any case the minimum of 40 hours of training must be maintained. Regardless of the number of classes that can be missed, a participant must make up the class(s) by attending the appropriate class(s) within 12 months.

'Appropriate' means the Chapter can allow an advanced training class to count as make-up or the Chapter may require that it be the same subject class presented during the next training cycle. If an advanced training class is used as make-up, then for that individual, it does not also count as reported advanced training hours. In this case the session must account for only one type of training, initial training OR advanced training. A participant may also attend the same subject class of a neighboring Chapter within the same ecoregion given adequate prior notification and space availability of the neighboring Chapter. If a participant must miss more classes than the local standard allows, then the respective Chapter may consider an exception to their rule in special circumstances, such as medical problems, family illness, accidents, etc. However this should be the exception, not the rule. Until these classes are made up, a volunteer cannot become a 'Certified' Texas Master Naturalist, but may earn volunteer service hours or advanced training hours towards certification.

### E. Texas Master Naturalist Title

The title, Texas Master Naturalist™ or Master Naturalist (in Texas) is a trademark of the Texas Master Naturalist Program and is to be used **only** by individuals defined by one of the Member Categories, Bylaws Article IV B. This membership includes all approved programs that are officially affiliated with, and operating under the certification, training, and curriculum policies established by the TMN State Committee. The Texas Master Naturalist title **may not** be used for advertising or other business, personal or professional purposes. The Texas Master Naturalist Program is a public service program operated by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to provide accurate, unbiased natural resources information. The Texas Master Naturalist title **may not** be identified with any particular political viewpoint and **may not** be used by groups or individuals as they participate in political advocacy. The title is to be used **only** when doing unpaid volunteer work associated and approved by the program. When Texas Master Naturalists speak before groups on natural resource



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subjects they may accept unsolicited expense reimbursements or gifts. *Violation of the policy concerning the use of the title of Texas Master Naturalist is grounds for removing the certification of a member and/or possible grounds for revoking the charter of a Chapter.*

Administrators of the Texas Master Naturalist Program, the TMN State Committee members and members of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department who are in a direct supporting role may show or wear the Texas Master Naturalist logo thus supporting, promoting and/or advertising the program. However, they may not promote themselves as a Master Naturalist, Texas Master Naturalist or Certified Master Naturalist unless they have completed their training and all certification requirements.

A Chapter may, and is encouraged to provide shirts, nametags and other wearable items for their volunteers with the expectation that the Chapter include at least a Texas Master Naturalist logo and the "Texas Master Naturalist" text with the Trade mark (™) symbol. The volunteer's name and Chapter identifier text should be similar to the "Texas Master Naturalist" text (See the Texas Master Naturalist Marketing and Identity Guide, MKT-3342 for further information). Texas Master Naturalist shirts, hats, patches, back packs and other items are available at: [www.agrilifebookstore.org](http://www.agrilifebookstore.org). In the event a Chapter sets up their own shirts with a local vendor, the design must meet the TMN Program Marketing and Identity Guidelines. The TMN logos are trademarked, and vendors will need permission from the State office to reproduce the logo.

### Article III. Membership

#### A. Membership Categories - Reference Article IV, State Bylaws A-D.

Texas Master Naturalist volunteers in any given year are either 'Certified', or working towards certification for that given year.

#### B. Active/Inactive Membership

For the purpose of fulfilling a Chapter's State Annual Report, a database must be maintained to reflect both active and inactive Chapter members, applying the following tests.

1. Active
  - a. A Texas Master Naturalist on the roll of a viable Chapter of the state, reporting volunteer and advanced training hours.
  - b. A Texas Master Naturalist on the roll of a viable Chapter of the state, current in dues, if required, but may not have reported volunteer hours. For example, these would be members who are engaged in the Chapter's programs but cannot submit hours due to the activities being part of their jobs.
2. Inactive
  - a. A Texas Master Naturalist member on the roll of a viable Chapter of the state who has not reported volunteer service hours or advanced training hours within the period of a calendar year for which the State Annual Report is submitted.
  - b. A Texas Master Naturalist member on the roll of a viable Chapter of the state who is



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not current in the payment of dues, if required, by the end of the calendar year for which the State Annual Report is submitted.

- c. A Texas Master Naturalist member on the roll of a viable Chapter of the state who has submitted a request to the Chapter to become 'inactive', or is known to be deceased.
- d. Inactive Members who in the past were Certified Master Naturalists may contact the Chapter in which they were active in the past and request to be reinstated. The applicant must pay dues for the current year, if applicable and begin volunteering with the Chapter. Inactive Members may also apply at a new Chapter of their current residence using the Member Transfer process below.

### 3. Not Reportable/Not Eligible

This would be a category of support people for the Chapter who have TMN Volunteer Management System (VMS) 'system log-ins' to assist with running agency reports, but do not have a need to report service in the system such as Chapter Advisors.

## C. Member Transfer

When a member moves to a different part of the state or wishes to become active in an alternative Chapter, that member may join the nearest Chapter of choice. The transfer can be affected under the following conditions:

1. The transferee brings written documentation (a letter or email) from the old Chapter certifying that the transferee is a member in good standing, which includes paid dues if applicable. In addition, the letter should state the number of volunteer service hours and advanced training hours that have been accrued during the current year and whether the transferee has received annual certification and any due milestone awards. Cumulative volunteer hours during the exiting Chapter membership should also be stated.
2. It is *strongly* recommended that a transferee complete additional training that is specific to the new area, Chapter and/or ecoregion during the new Chapter's next class training period.
3. The transferee must agree to adhere to all the rules and policies of the new Chapter even if they are more stringent than those of the old Chapter.
4. The new Chapter should accept all volunteer service and advanced training hours certified in the transfer letter from the old Chapter. This includes, but is not limited to dues, volunteer service, initial training and advanced training requirements.
5. Transferees from other US State programs: Due to the significant differences among other Master Naturalist programs in other US States in regards to training, program requirements and certification standards accepting transferees from other US States is not recommended. However, they should be given preference as an applicant for your next training class. A simple transfer from US State program to Texas State program will not be able to take place in this case in the same manner as a transfer within the state of Texas.

## D. Multiple Chapter Membership

Membership in multiple Chapters is not allowed. (Reference TMN State Bylaws, Article IV, G.)

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## Article IV. Requirements

The *minimum* training requirements include 40 hours of combined classroom and field experiences. These educational sessions should be designed to expose volunteers to a wide variety of natural resources disciplines, providing them with a high-quality learning experience. The sessions should be designed not only to teach the volunteers, but also to provide them with access to the resources that they need in order to teach this information to others in an interesting, useful and meaningful way.

Texas Master Naturalist Volunteers are required to have a criminal background check when working on projects that have youth 17 years of age or younger are present, using TPWD and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension facilities, resources and equipment, or involve handling money or Chapter financial administrative functions.

To become a Certified Texas Master Naturalist, a trainee must complete the following:

- The state committee approved curriculum with a *minimum* of 40 hours of combined field and classroom instruction.
- Obtain a *minimum* of 8 contact hours of approved advanced training.
- Complete a *minimum* of 40 hours of approved volunteer service. (Volunteer service hours are those direct contact hours spent on Texas Master Naturalist projects approved by the local Chapter.)

Volunteers who have completed the required field and classroom training must complete the required State and Chapter minimum Certification requirements for advanced training and volunteer service to become ‘Certified’ within the calendar year following the start of the training period. A special ‘Recertification’ (AKA “Double Certification”) is allowed if an **additional** 8 (total 16) hours of Advanced Training and an **additional** 40 (total 80) hours of volunteer service are completed within the year following the start of the original class.

To retain the Certified Texas Master Naturalist™ title during each subsequent year, volunteers must complete a minimum of 8 hours of advanced training and provide a minimum of 40 hours of volunteer service through approved Chapter project opportunities within the calendar year.

A Chapter is to allow participants to begin earning volunteer service hours once they begin the Texas Master Naturalist training program. Once the volunteer has completed all the training requirements, they may optionally receive a certificate indicating completion of the training requirements and a nametag from the Chapter. This is not a service of the TMN State Program office. A nametag template has been set up. Resources for ordering name tags are available at: <http://txmn.org/resources/Chapter-supplies/>. However, the nametag cannot use the term ‘Certified’ until the trainee has completed their initial training and certification. The dragonfly Certification pin and TMN Certificate will only be awarded to Members who have completed the full requirements for Certification as a Texas Master Naturalist.

### A. Certification

When a volunteer has completed all of the required 40 hours of Texas Master Naturalist training; the minimum 40 hours of volunteer service; and the minimum 8 hours of

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advanced training, the volunteer shall be considered 'Certified', if completed within the calendar year following the start of field and classroom training, and shall be awarded a Texas Master Naturalist Certificate and a color dragonfly Certification pin. Volunteers are encouraged to begin service and training at the same time. Training periods for Chapters may vary throughout the state over different periods of time. Some volunteers completing the required field and classroom training will have more time to 'Certify' by the end of the following year, but none will have less than one (1) full year. Once a Member has been initially 'Certified', the certification years thereafter follow each calendar year.

The Texas Master Naturalist Program will have a specially designed pin for each year a volunteer maintains their certification by obtaining the required service and advanced training hours annually within the calendar year. Volunteer service hours may **not** be carried forward from one year to the next, with the exception of a Master Naturalist Trainee or Pledge working toward certification. There will be a new pin design each year and this design will only be available during that given year. Each volunteer, given that they have attained the requirements, should only receive one of these pins during the given year. Volunteers being 'Certified' for the first time through the program will receive their certificate and the color dragonfly certification pin.

Once the volunteer has completed all the requirements for certification, they shall receive a State Certificate (MKT- 3338) and color dragonfly pin as a Certified Texas Master Naturalist. At this time, volunteers are also eligible to receive a Texas Master Naturalist nametag using the term 'Certified' if provided by the Chapter.

### **B. Milestone Pins**

The Texas Master Naturalist Program offers a series of pins commemorating different milestone achievements within the program. Please see: [www.txmn.org](http://www.txmn.org) . The milestone pins honor those volunteers that have given:

- 250 hours - bronze dragonfly pin
- 500 hours - brushed silver dragonfly pin
- 1,000 hours - brushed gold dragonfly pin
- 2,500 hours - polished [shiny] silver dragonfly
- 4,000 hours - polished [shiny] gold dragonfly w/ ruby and US Presidential Volunteer Service Award
- 5,000 hours - polished [shiny] gold dragonfly w/ diamond and letter of achievement from State Program Director
- 10,000 hours - polished [shiny] gold dragonfly w/ emerald. The recipient also receives a letter of achievement from State Program Director, special recognition at the TMN Annual Meeting, and other recognition through social media. Many Chapters also provide a plaque and additional special recognition locally for this grand achievement.

The State Program may develop other official milestone pins beyond 10,000 hours as needed.

A volunteer may reach these milestones within one year or over the course of several

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years. Volunteers should only receive one of each of these pins during their involvement in the program once they meet these Milestones. It is important that a Chapter and a volunteer continue to report service hours above and beyond the 40-hour minimum as volunteer service hours are cumulative year-to-year for the purpose of awarding milestone pins.

Chapter leaders may obtain pins by contacting Mark Klym, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, [Mark.Klym@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:Mark.Klym@tpwd.texas.gov), 512-985-5163. Please be aware that we are not able to expedite shipment of pins when there is short notice. All pin designs may be viewed on the State website <http://txmn.org>.

A Chapter may also establish local awards as it may desire. An example of such an award might include "the most hours served" or "Chapter Texas Master Naturalist™ of the Year" or milestones in between those recognized by the state program.

Hours submitted late, after the annual deadline, cannot be reported for the State Annual Report.

### **Article V. Advanced Training Requirements**

The purpose of Advanced Training (AT) is to provide Texas Master Naturalists an opportunity to focus their interests on one, or a few, specific topics that interest them. Also, advanced training on an annual basis promotes continued learning and development. Advanced training is a benefit in itself, providing the experienced Texas Master Naturalist with tools to work in more advanced volunteer efforts. Although the State Texas Master Naturalist Program may occasionally provide statewide or regional advanced training opportunities, it is generally the responsibility of the local Chapter to insure that there are sufficient advanced training opportunities offered on the local natural ecosystems, so that members can attain their 8-hour minimum requirement. In addition, the local Chapter should be a clearinghouse for notifying members of approved advanced training opportunities. Advanced training can be accepted from, workshops, seminars and conferences held outside of the state boundaries, if, and only if, the training material meets the AT guidelines, the program guidelines and the mission of the Texas Master Naturalist Program. It is mandatory that any training material from outside the state be beneficial to the citizens and the natural resources of Texas and be Chapter and/or State Program approved.

Advanced training courses may be made available directly through the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, or any number of short-courses provided by universities or nature centers. One way for a Chapter's Members to meet their advanced training requirements is by actually sponsoring the advanced training sessions. The local Chapter's Advanced Training Coordinator, Committee, or equivalent, should pre-approve all advanced training opportunities before the volunteer attends. In special circumstances, approval may be sought in retrospect. With the exception of college courses, advanced training hours are counted one hour for each hour of advanced training. Travel time is **not** included for advanced training hours. Pre-approval must be obtained for an advanced training session that is outside the Chapter boundaries.

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In the event a college course is accepted as AT each Credit Hour of the course counts as an AT hour (not each hour spent in class). This is not retroactive to cover courses taken prior to involvement in the TMN program.

Training by its nature assumes there is an instructor as well as a student. To be effective, training must allow for an exchange between the two. If material is complex or confusing and the student cannot ask questions or request clarification, then no learning can occur. With the advancement of online communication media, new forms of online-based training can be accepted for Advanced Training hours.

Online-based training will only be accepted for a maximum of 4 hours of the required 8 hours of advanced training hours. Educational television shows, videos, DVDs, **may not** be approved. And, it should be kept in mind that nothing can substitute for being able to learn about our natural resources by being out on the land.

Chapter sponsored Book Clubs related to the mission of TMN may receive advanced training credit for the club discussion and presentation, but time spent reading the book does not receive credit.

The Chapter Advanced Training Coordinator and/or Chapter Advanced Training Committee should use the following criteria or ask the following questions of the opportunity when reviewing and approving Advanced Training Opportunities:

Does the Advanced Training opportunity:

1. Promote continued learning and development of naturalist skills?
2. Provide Master Naturalists with knowledge and skills to work in volunteer efforts?
3. Direct trained volunteers toward specific programs in need of their services?
4. Provide practical information and training for application in volunteer efforts?
5. Take advantage of local partnerships?
6. Provide Master Naturalists an opportunity to focus their interests in one or a few specific topics?
7. Build on the core curriculum initially provided by the local Chapter?
8. Provide natural resource management issues and information applicable to Texas?

Advanced Training opportunities must meet the criteria of: 1, 2, 6, 7, and 8 above. It is suggested that the remaining criteria also be a part of the approval consideration.

### Article VI. Volunteer Service Requirements

In order to attain certification, a Texas Master Naturalist 'Trainee' and 'Pledge' must complete a minimum of 40 volunteer service hours on pre-approved projects. In order to retain the title of Certified Texas Master Naturalist, a volunteer must complete another 40 service hours on pre-approved projects in every subsequent year. Volunteer hours credited for the TMN program may not be credited from or to another TMN volunteer or other volunteer program or location. Travel and prep time for specific project opportunities may be counted as service time as determined by the local Chapter. Service activities relating to the development and management of a local

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Chapter, such as serving as a Board member, receives volunteer service credit hours.

Volunteer service project opportunities can be presented by various entities ranging from the state program sponsors, the Chapter, local Chapter partners, an individual volunteer, nature centers, schools, city, county, state and federal agencies. Often Chapters institute a “class project” where the current training class of the Chapter finds/develops and mutually agrees to volunteer for the project as a group and receive their required volunteer service hours at the same time.

Volunteer projects may be a series of short experiences or they may involve the long-term efforts of a volunteer team. The opportunity to do meaningful and interesting work is the reward of the Texas Master Naturalist volunteer. There are few constraints for Texas Master Naturalist volunteer projects whether Chapter initiated or individually initiated, except that volunteer service must meet the TMN Program Mission by being dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their local communities for the State of Texas and approved by the Chapter.

The pre-approval of volunteer service projects and opportunities is important to:

- Ensure that volunteers are covered by the available State Program accident and liability insurance (see FAQs)
- Provide a list of service projects for volunteers of the Chapter
- Ensure the mission and goals of the organization and the partners are met

The following are points for the Chapter’s Volunteer Service Coordinator and/or the Volunteer Service Committee to consider in approving and issuing a code or title for a project opportunity:

- A. Is the proposed service project representative of the goals, practices and teachings of the Texas Master Naturalist Program?
- B. How does the project address a pressing naturalist, natural resource management, Chapter and/or partner need for meaningful service or resources?
- C. What is the scope of the project in terms of when it would need to be conducted, where, estimated time needed to complete or maintain per month, how many volunteers would be needed, etc.?
- D. Is the project within the Chapter’s service area and ecological training?
- E. How does the project allow the Chapter to focus and/or create visibility, identity and/or recruitment for the Chapter?
- F. How can the project’s impact on the community and our natural resources be measured?

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### Actual Volunteer Service Examples:

<b>Bad/Unacceptable</b>	<b>Better</b>	<b>Best</b>
Being “on call” as a wildlife rescuer for a non-partner organization	Performing licensed wildlife transport service	Performing licensed wildlife rescue service in cooperation with a partnering rehabilitation and public education non-profit organization
Planting exotic plants or a vegetable garden	Planting native plants or a Wildscape at a local school	Leading 5 <sup>th</sup> graders and staff in implementing a native plant garden or Wildscape at a local school
Monarch monitoring in Colorado	Monarch monitoring in Texas	Monarch monitoring within your local Chapter’s area
Cleaning the elephant cage at a zoo	Caring for the Prairie Chicken area at a local zoo that is in partnership with the local Chapter	Leading interpretive programs about Prairie Chickens at a local zoo that is in partnership with the local Chapter
Maintenance at a private native plant nursery	Maintenance of a demonstration garden at a park/nature center or being part of a native plant propagation team for the city’s botanical garden	Holding a workshop on how to install and maintain a Wildscape or other similar type of native habitat.
Conducting wildlife management activities on your own land	Conducting wildlife management practices/activities on public land	Teaching/assisting landowners to develop their own wildlife management plans that the landowner would carry out
A teacher receiving service credit for natural resource education activities he/she conducts in their classroom	A teacher receiving service credit for natural resource education activities he/she conducts as an unpaid after school Environmental Club leader	A teacher /volunteer who organizes and conducts a natural resource education workshop for other Master Naturalists or the general public.
Stream clean-up by a volunteer who is employed by and works for a local watershed protection program	Stream clean-up by volunteers who do not work for a local watershed protection program	Texas Master Naturalist Volunteers conducting stream or watershed restoration practices. Or Master Naturalist volunteers coordinating a stream clean-up for the local community to participate in.



## Chapter Management and Operations Protocols

<p>Receiving service credit for time spent as a Board member or Committee member for an organization whose mission is NOT involved with natural resources or the environment,</p>	<p>Receiving service credit for time spent serving as a Board or Committee member for a non-profit organization devoted to education, conservation and management of natural resources or the environment.</p>	<p>Receiving service credit for the time spent serving as a Board or Committee member at any level within the TMN program.</p>
	<p>Conducting endangered species surveys; developing nature trails or habitat brush piles at a local park/nature center which is in a partnership with your local Chapter.</p>	<p>Maintaining a nature classroom/training area for that same partner who also allows the Chapter to keep an office and/or hold Chapter meetings in this same space.</p>

## Chapter Management and Operations Protocols

### Texas Master Naturalist Service Project Activity Categories

To assist the TMN State Program in its administrative functions, Chapters are required to use the following Service Activity codes when reporting hours to the state.

<b>Service Activity</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Training & Educating Others (Direct)	TR	Leading, organizing, instructing or staffing an educational activity where participants have a planned learning objective and generally stay for the full event (e.g., planned start and end times with a single agenda).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom instruction</li> <li>• Workshops</li> <li>• Presentations</li> <li>• Conducting/Leading Webinars</li> <li>• Chapter MN trainees/interns class</li> <li>• AT you prepare and present as a TMN member</li> </ul>
Advanced Training	AT	Advanced Training you attend as a participant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AT sessions at TMN Statewide Annual Meeting</li> <li>• Rainwater Harvesting Steward Program Training</li> <li>• Project WILD Instructor/Facilitator Training</li> </ul>
Public Outreach (Indirect)	PO	Leading, organizing, or staffing an educational activity where participants come and go and are able to inquire on a broad set of topics. <or> Writing an educational article or brochure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manning booth or visitor center</li> <li>• Writing articles or brochures/newsletters</li> <li>• Wildlife Hotline</li> </ul>
Technical Guidance	TG	Any work that provides natural resource or program related business, land management, and other expertise consultation and/or written management recommendations to cooperators, Chapters, partners, land owners and/or land managers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site visits for and writing ecosystem management plans</li> <li>• Land Management Assistance Program (LMAP)</li> <li>• City/Community/Regional Habitat Conservation Plan Committee</li> </ul>

## Chapter Management and Operations Protocols

Natural Resource Management (including Natural Resource Stewardship and Conservation)	RM	Activities that improve the health of a public natural area or resource. Natural resource management, restoration rescue and rehabilitation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invasive species or trash removal</li> <li>• Plant and/or /endangered species rescue (not rehab) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ E.g.: Turtle Patrol</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Restoring or improving natural habitat</li> <li>• Wildlife houses, towers, chimneys</li> <li>• Developing an eco-system plan</li> <li>• Tree planting</li> </ul>
Nature/Public Access	NPA	Field-based activities that improve and manage the public's access to natural areas or resources. Creating and/or maintaining nature trails, Wildscapes and/or interpretive areas	<p>Developing new or maintaining and/or improving existing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hiking trails</li> <li>• Interpretive gardens</li> <li>• Wildlife viewing blinds</li> <li>• Wildscapes/native plant gardens</li> <li>• Interpretive hikes</li> </ul>
Field Research (Including Surveys and Citizen Science)	FR	Planning, leading or participating in data collection and/or analysis of natural resources where the results are intended to further scientific understanding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Field surveys</li> <li>• Banding and tagging</li> <li>• Species watch</li> <li>• Texas Nature Trackers Programs</li> <li>• CoCoRaHs</li> <li>• Stream Watch/Stream Team/ Water Quality Monitoring</li> </ul>
Chapter & Program Support, Business and Administration	CB	Activities related to managing and running a Texas Master Naturalist Chapter and its committees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board of Director or committee duties</li> <li>• Chapter Newsletter or website management</li> <li>• Management of Chapter records</li> <li>• Hours reporting</li> <li>• Chapter reporting</li> <li>• Representing Chapter at multi-Chapter events</li> <li>• Other Chapter administration</li> <li>• Assistance to State Program and State Program Office</li> </ul>
Other	OT	<p>Any activity approved by a Chapter that is not defined above.</p> <p>In general a Chapter should only have a small percentage of hours in this activity (&lt; 5%). When this activity code is used, a Chapter should investigate the reason.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time spent serving as a Board or committee member for a natural resource/environmental organization in partnership with the local Chapter</li> <li>• Time spent supporting partnering organization activities, i.e., NPSOT, Friends organizations</li> </ul>

## Chapter Management and Operations Protocols

### Article VII. Chapter Donations

The State's recommendation is that Chapters donate member's time and expertise to outside natural resource conservation, education and management versus donating money to outside organizations. The Texas Master Naturalist program and Chapters are to be service organizations first and foremost versus donors of monetary funds.

If a Chapter insists on donations to other organizations, then it should be understood that this is on a very limited basis least the requests become overwhelming and further removes the focus of the Chapter from the heart of the program.

Chapters wishing to donate to an outside organization need to consider the guidelines which follow, to insure the organization is in keeping with the Texas Master Naturalist mission, goals and principals. Exceptions to this would be donations to the State Texas Master Naturalist Program, or program sponsoring agencies, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

All other organizations (including Chapter partners) should be vetted with these points in mind:

- It should be a non-profit organization.
- The organization should state clearly what the monies would be used for. (For example: is it paying for native plants, or someone's salary? Chapters should learn the specifics of what their donations would be buying/supporting, and it should be in keeping with the mission and spirit of the Texas Master Naturalist Program)
- How does the organization conduct fundraising otherwise? Is it in keeping with the goals and ideals of the Texas Master Naturalist Program?
- Can the organization guarantee that none of its funds are used in any way for lobbying, political interests or campaigning?
- How will the Chapter's Master Naturalist organization's name (and logo) be advertised as a result of the donation? (Would it be done in such a way you would want the Chapter (and TMN Program) advertised?)

### Article VIII. Disciplining and/or Removal of Members

**1. General Policy.** As a policy, in all efforts, the Texas Master Naturalist Program remains fair, objective, accurate and comprehensive. When it becomes obvious that an individual or group of individuals participating in any capacity of the program is misrepresenting the program and its written objectives, then that individual or group of individuals may be asked to step down by the Chapter Board, Chapter Advisor(s), The State Program Coordinator, the TMN Statewide Committee, or the State Program sponsors from positions of leadership and/or participation in the program. Such an action could result in the revoking of a Texas Master Naturalist's participation, certification and/or the Chapter Charter.

**2. Background.** It is important to review the founding principles of the Texas Master Naturalist Program before addressing inappropriate behavior. The **Mission** statement and the Texas Master Naturalist Chapter Management and Operations Protocols (this document) contain the primary tenets of the program.

## Chapter Management and Operations Protocols

a. **Mission.** To develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the State of Texas.

b. **Key Elements of the Chapter Management and Operations Protocols**

- Maintain the program as an unbiased public service.
- Recognize ones responsibilities as a Texas Master Naturalist.
- Recognize the autonomy of the various partners when coordinating or implementing projects and other Chapter events.
- Keep accurate records.
- Present a positive public image that speaks well of the Texas Master Naturalist Program.
- Actively participates as a team member with other individuals of the Texas Master Naturalist Program.

Local Chapters should be instrumental in making members aware of these key elements through their Bylaws and Chapter Operating Handbook. Chapters shall be vigilant and responsible for ensuring members and affiliates are following policy.

**3. Applicability.** All Volunteers, Coordinating Committee Members, Chapter Advisory Committee Members, Local Chapter Executive Board Members (Officers), and Chapter Committee Chairpersons are subject to the same level of conduct.

**4. Procedures for disciplining and/or dismissal.** The subsequent procedures are to be followed on the occasion of disciplining and/or dismissing an applicable member of the Texas Master Naturalist Program.

a. **Informal Initial Step.** When any member of the Texas Master Naturalist Program and/or public thinks an infraction of the tenets, policies, written rules, guidelines or protocols of the State or Chapter has occurred, that person, should weigh, with good judgment, whether or not to speak with the offending party directly, or to defer to the Chapter President or Advisor with the matter (see b. Formal Process). Not all members are fully aware of the guidelines and protocols of the program and may just be acting out of a lack of knowledge or understanding and not malice. A congenial approach to bring the misunderstanding to that person's attention often precludes future problems for the organization. It is important for individuals, Officers, Directors and Committee chairman to know that their actions are being noted with regard to the other tenets of the program. If an informal approach is unsuccessful in resolving the problem then proceed to the formalized procedure.

b. **Formal Process**

1. In order to demonstrate grounds for this action, the case must be presented in writing. If the case involves a volunteer, committee member, or committee, then the written case must be submitted to the Chapter Executive Board. If the infraction involves a member of the Chapter Advisory/Coordinating Committee {Advisor(s) and Executive Board}, then the written case must be submitted to the State Program

## Chapter Management and Operations Protocols

Coordinator.

2. A case may be brought to the attention of the local Chapter by:
  - a. general public, non-affiliates of the Texas Master Naturalist Program
  - b. partnering organizations of the Chapter or State Program
  - c. member(s) of the Chapter
  - d. member(s) of the Chapter Executive Board
  - e. member(s) of the Chapter Advisory/Coordinating Committee
  - f. member(s) of the TMN State Committee
3. The offending individual(s) shall be notified of the allegations within 7 days after the written case has been submitted. The individual(s) shall have 30 days to respond in writing to the case details before suggestions toward disciplinary action are made.
4. The Chapter Advisory/Coordinating Committee shall review the documented case, make recommendations toward disciplinary action and submit this information in writing to the State Program Coordinator. The submitted documentation must include a statement(s) from the offending person(s) and the original written case submitted to the Chapter Advisory/Coordinating Committee. The State Program Coordinator, in consultation with the Chapter Advisory/Coordinating Committee, may contact all involved parties regarding the case prior to taking the case to the TMN State Committee. The State Program Coordinator will notify (in writing) to the petitioners with the acceptance or non-acceptance of the outlined grounds and recommendations on the further process of disciplinary action.
5. The person(s) affected by the documented allegations and resulting disciplinary action shall be notified by the State Program Coordinator of the case and the final disciplinary action.

**c. Appeal Process.**

The individual(s) have 30 days to respond or appeal to the Chapter Advisory/Coordinating Committee. No response indicates an acceptance of the case recommendation and disciplinary action unless otherwise stated within the disciplinary course of action. In the case of an appeal, the Chapter Advisory/Coordinating Committee shall make a recommendation and resubmit the case to the State Program Coordinator for final resolution. Circumstances that may warrant reconsideration requests may include substantive error or omission of information that was submitted to the State Program Coordinator.

### **Article IX. Dissolution of a Chapter**

#### **A. Reference State Bylaws, Article XI, Dissolution**

### **Article X. 501 (C) (3) Chapters**

#### **A. Reference State Bylaws, Addendum for 501 (C) (3) Chapters**

# Chapter Management and Operations Protocols

## Article XI. Additional Information

For any point not yet addressed by this document, Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, or for any issue that arises that may need development of formalized procedures, please inform the State Texas Master Naturalist Program Coordinator (see Appendix I, B Contacts). Issues will be brought forth and reviewed by the TMN State Committee. When possible and appropriate, guidelines and protocols will be developed and amended to the current statewide Chapter Management and Operations Protocols document. It is the responsibility of the local Chapter representatives to inform the State Coordinator of such issues.

### A. Available Documents for Download: <http://txmn.org> /

- Texas Master Naturalist Program State Bylaws Template
- Texas Master Naturalist Program Operating Handbook Template
- Texas Master Naturalist Program Code of Ethics and Conduct
- Texas Master Naturalist Volunteer Background Check
- Texas Master Naturalist Program Marketing and Identity Guide (MKT-3342)



# Chapter Management and Operations Protocols

## Appendix I, Advisor Guidelines

### A. The Advisor's Role:

1. Give advice, make recommendations, inform and notify the Chapter on appropriate business in a professional way.
2. The Advisor should not be the manager of the Chapter business or activities. They are to be a Chapter supporter and available to advise, recommend, inform and notify the Chapter and/or its members on and of appropriate and professional matters.
3. Be familiar with the goals, activities and mission of the organization.
4. Be willing to meet with the Officers of the organization to discuss expectations for roles and responsibilities.
5. Assist the organization in maintaining the original goals, mission, vision, and operational framework set forth by the organizers of the Chapter as well as assist in further developing realistic goals with the Chapter's Executive Board that are within the parameters of the statewide Texas Master Naturalist Program.
6. Facilitate opportunities for Texas Master Naturalist volunteers to exercise initiative and judgment within proper measure of autonomy when coordinating Chapter events and activities. In keeping with this approach, Advisors should participate in event planning and attend events when possible or when identified as necessary through the planning process.
7. Be aware of the Chapter's financial status via review of financial statements and approval of expenditures.
8. Be aware of the Texas Master Naturalist State policies and guidelines, protocols and other agency or organization guidelines and protocols that establish expectations for volunteer requirements, behavior and activities. Ensure that the group and its Officers know where these policies, guidelines and protocols are published, what the rules are, why they exist, and the consequences for choosing to operate outside their parameters. You are expected to report violations or potential violations to the appropriate Texas Master Naturalist Program and/or agency officials.
9. The Advisor should be ready to assist the Texas Master Naturalist State Program and TMN State Committee as needed as they may be called upon to implement regulations or policies from time to time.
10. The Advisor is responsible for notifying the Chapter Officers and the State Program Office and Committee regarding Chapter concerns. The Chapter Officers are responsible for notifying the State Program Office and TMN State Committee regarding Advisor problems or concerns.

The Chapter Advisor relationship is not a one-way street, in that the Chapters and their leaders also have responsibilities. These responsibilities include an appropriate level of communication, providing opportunities for Advisor interaction and a commitment to the success of the organization as a whole.

## Chapter Management and Operations Protocols

### B. Contacts

#### **Texas Master Naturalist™ Program Office**

Michelle Haggerty  
Texas Master Naturalist State Program Coordinator  
Texas Parks & Wildlife Department  
309 Sidney Baker South Kerrville, TX 78028  
Phone: (830) 896-2504, Fax: (830) 792-6167  
E-mail: [mhaggerty@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:mhaggerty@ag.tamu.edu)

Mary Pearl Meuth  
Texas Master Naturalist Assistant Program Coordinator  
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service  
102 Nagle Hall, 2258 TAMU College Station, TX 77843-2258  
Phone: (979) 845-7294, Fax: (979) 845-7103  
E-mail: [mpmeuth@tamu.edu](mailto:mpmeuth@tamu.edu) , State Program Website: <http://txmn.org>

#### **Texas Master Naturalist™ State Committee Members**

##### Certified Texas Master Naturalist Volunteers

Tom Hynes	Certified Texas Master Naturalist Volunteer
Floyd Trefny	Certified Texas Master Naturalist Volunteer
Vern Crawford	Certified Texas Master Naturalist Volunteer

##### Committee Chairs

Michelle Haggerty - TX Master Naturalist State Program Coordinator (TPWD)  
Mary Pearl Meuth - Asst. TX Master Naturalist Program Coordinator (Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service)

##### Administrative, Resource and Ex-Officio Members

John Davis	TPWD--Wildlife Diversity Program
Dr. Barron Rector	AgriLife Extension--Rangeland Ecology & Management
Dr. Jim Cathey	AgriLife Extension--Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries Sciences
Richard Heilbrun	TPWD- Wildlife Diversity Program, Conservation Outreach
Marsha May	TPWD- Wildlife Diversity Program, Texas Nature Trackers and TMN Program
Mark Klym	TPWD- Wildlife Diversity Program, Texas Nature Trackers and TMN Program
Cullen Hanks	TPWD-Wildlife Diversity Program, Texas Nature Trackers and TMN Program

##### Contract and Program Support Staff

Jennifer Buratti, TMN Social Media Coordinator  
Ashley Steinbach, TMN Student Worker  
Cheryl Foster, TMN Volunteer Management System Implementation Team  
Dale Hughling, TMN Volunteer Management System Implementation Team  
Brad James, TMN Volunteer Management System Implementation Team

# Chapter Management and Operations Protocols

## **APPENDIX II: Mentor Program**

The Membership Director and the Training Director should begin to solicit and vet Mentor candidates for the New Class applicants when the application process is opened for new members.

The Membership Director will convene a meeting of Mentors as soon as possible following the Board approval of New Class applicants to conduct the following business:

- Distribute the Class Curriculum, New Class Manuals, and other materials, including a copy of the Mentor Guidelines for Mentors
- Review Mentor Guidelines (Ref. Mentor Guidelines below) stressing timing of material delivery to the applicant, New Class Reception/Orientation date and location (if applicable), responsibilities and their review of Chapter governance documents and where they can be found
- Stress that a mentor's responsibility to his/her trainee never expires
- Be familiar with Chapter governance documents to enable answering all questions thoroughly, particularly regarding when Advanced Training and Volunteer Service hours may begin being accumulated and reported by the new trainee
- Mentors should be informed of the Chapter's Volunteer Service Project Opportunity Code to report their hours associated with all mentoring activity

### **Mentor Guidelines**

Mentors will attend a meeting of Mentors scheduled and convened by the Membership and Training Directors at a location of the Class Director's choice. Each Mentor may receive for distribution to New Class trainees; the Class Curriculum, New Class Manuals, and other appropriate materials. Alternatively, the Membership Director may use experienced Mentors to lead a welcome meeting for all Mentors and give out the TMN Statewide Curriculum, New Class Manual and materials.

These Mentor Guidelines have been established to help provide a positive mentoring experience, and must also be distributed and reviewed with each Mentor. Each Mentor may have been assigned one or more New Class applicants, generally within their geographical area, and will have been provided a copy of the Application of each of their assigned applicant(s) to provide the Mentor biographical information.

Mentors should:

1. Contact their assigned trainee(s) by phone and set up a physical meeting in order to deliver their class material. Try to have all materials in the hands of the trainee(s) prior to the New Class Reception/Orientation date (if applicable).
2. Provide the Curriculum and Class Manual, stressing reading assignments prior to each class (if applicable).
3. Provide personal contact information and review the local Chapter list of contacts and where the information can be found.
4. Inform the trainee(s) of early programs to attend such as, Monthly Chapter meetings, other naturalist related organization programs, the Texas Master Naturalist State Meeting, or an event in your immediate area.
5. Talk to trainee(s) about your experience as a Texas Master Naturalist and volunteer projects you are involved with.
6. Provide a New Class Roster for those trainee(s) interested in carpooling to classes
7. Provide information on how to make-up a missed class or field trip (Ref. Chapter Operating Handbook and the Chapter Management Operations and Protocols).
8. (If Applicable) Provide information on the New Class Reception/Orientation, including time, date and location; plan to carpool with them or meet them at the event.

## Chapter Management and Operations Protocols

9. (If applicable) At the New Class Reception, introduce your trainee(s) and present a biography that can be delivered orally in less than 2 minutes. **Lengthy biographical discussions or overly praising of prior accomplishments should be avoided.** Provide your trainee(s) with a copy of their biography by e-mail for review before the Reception for comment and approval. Write a condensed version of each biography, and e-mail it to your trainee(s) to review before releasing to any published source.
10. Plan to attend one or more classes with your trainee(s), if possible; coordinate attendance permission with the New Class Director, as space may be limited.
11. Emphasize the commitment and requirement of Volunteering and Advanced Training, and, how and when to report those hours.
12. Mentors should meet often throughout and following the Class schedule with their trainees on a mutually convenient basis to answer questions and help solve problems, and to help assure eventual certification of trainees.
13. Mentors should be aware of obstacles or reasons a trainee falls behind in class, drops out of the class, fails to eventually 'Certify' or fails to remain engaged in the organization. The Mentor should report such information to the Training Director, Membership Director or Board as appropriate.
14. Mentors should develop a lasting relationship with their assigned new Members that continues following the training class and should continue to provide guidance and assistance as needed. Special attention should be focused on those new Members who have not completed their initial certification or otherwise have not become engaged in Chapter volunteer activities.

## Chapter Management and Operations Protocols

### FAQs

1. Where do I find documentation governing the Texas Master Naturalist (TMN) Program?

Answer: Local Chapter documents are found on the local Chapter's website. State documents are found on the State website at: <http://txmn.org> .

2. Can I hold membership in more than one TMN Chapter at the same time?

Answer: No.

3. Who are the state sponsors of the TMN Program?

Answer: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

4. Can a Chapter lose its Charter?

Answer: Yes.

5. Are dues required to be a member of a TMN Chapter?

Answer: Yes and no. This depends on the chapter. Dues are a local option for each Chapter to determine as a requirement for membership.

6. Is TMN strictly a volunteer organization?

Answer: Yes. A Member of a TMN Chapter may not receive compensation for their volunteer service.

7. How do I become a Member of a TMN Chapter?

Answer: Submit an application to attend an approved training class of 40 hours (minimum) classroom and field experiences; complete an additional 40 hours of volunteer service and 8 hours of Advanced Training and abide by the Code of Ethics, Code of Conduct, and submit to a Texas Master Naturalist Volunteer Background Check.

8. Is there a fee required to attend the training class toward membership?

Answer: Yes. The fee is set by the local Chapter.

9. Can I transfer from one Chapter to another?

Answer: Yes. You must meet the requirements of the local Chapter to which you wish to transfer.

10. How is a local Chapter managed?

Answer: There is a governing Board made up of four elected Officers (President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer) and a number of appointed Directors determined by the local Chapter Operating Handbook. There also is a Chapter Advisor(s).

11. How are the Chapter Officers chosen?

Answer: A Chapter Nominating Committee presents candidates from the membership to be voted upon by the membership at the Last General Membership meeting of the year.

12. How are Director positions filled?

Answer: Director Candidates are selected by a committee appointed by the Chapter President and

## Chapter Management and Operations Protocols

presented to the elected Officers for confirmation.

13. When do Officers and Directors assume office?

Answer: In the month of January as determined by the Local Chapter Operating Handbook. The exception being the New Class Director. The New Class Director assumes office following confirmation by the Chapter Board of Directors usually immediately following the completion of a class.

14. How long may Officers and Directors serve?

Answer: This is a local Chapter option of either 12 or 24 months, stated in their Bylaws, with eligibility for re-election or re-appointment.

15. Is there an insurance 'umbrella' for TMN in a volunteer capacity?

Answer: There is coverage by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department as well as Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service for **approved** volunteer activity. However, it is vitally important for each Chapter to perform due diligence and to understand the limits of all aspects of insurance coverage. Further, to understand personal liability, volunteer event property liability and Chapter Directors & Officers (D&O) Insurance as pertains to the local Chapter. Resources for this subject can be found at: The State Office of Risk Management (SORM) - <http://www.sorm.state.tx.us> and Texas A&M University System Office of Risk Management – <http://www2.tamus.edu/offices/risk/>.

16. Why is a Code of Ethics important for TMN?

Answer: To establish on a personal level the highest standard of conduct in fulfilling the mission, goals and objectives of the Texas Master Naturalist Program as a TMN member. (Ref: Article XI. A. Additional Information)

17. Why is a Code of Conduct important for TMN?

Answer: To establish a uniform policy that insures the ultimate trust, dignity and integrity of the TMN Program and its members. (Ref: Article XI. A. Additional Information)

18. Why is a Volunteer Screening policy important for TMN?

Answer: The Youth Protection Standards Program (YPS) volunteer screening was developed by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service to provide a safe and secure environment for both youth and volunteers, and to manage volunteer service risk and integrity of associated organizations. (Ref: Article XI. A. Additional Information). The Texas Parks & Wildlife Department also requires volunteer screening for its programs' participants for these same reasons as well.

19. Can I make a Federal tax deductible donation to my local Chapter?

Answer: Donations to a Chapter are not restricted. However, as a minimum for it to be tax deductible, the Chapter must be incorporated as a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization.

20. May any Chapter member attend a Chapter Board meeting without invitation?

Answer: Yes. Every Chapter Board meeting is open to every member of the Chapter, and public, to attend, and to engage in the proceedings as monitored by the Chapter President.