

CHAPTER OPERATING HANDBOOK

May 2018



South Texas Border Chapter Texas Master Naturalist Program

Our Mission Statement

The South Texas Border Chapter Texas master Naturalist is organized exclusively for charitable, scientific, and educational purposes, more specifically to develop a group of knowledgeable volunteers to provide education, outreach and service dedicated to the study and conservation of natural resources and natural areas within the Rio Grande Valley of Texas

May 7, 2018

CHAPTER OPERATING HANDBOOK

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OPERATING HANDBOOK

South Texas Border Chapter

Texas Master Naturalist Program

I: CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

The documents governing the Chapter will be this Chapter's Bylaws and the guiding practices found in the Chapter Management and Operations Protocols and the Chapter's Operating Handbook. In case of conflicting language, first the Chapter's Bylaws, second the Chapter Management and Operations Protocols shall govern the Chapter's Operating Handbook. The Chapter will be structured for governance as follows.

A. BOARD

1. Officers

The duly elected Officers shall consist of:

- President
- First Vice President
- Second Vice President
- Treasurer
- Secretary

The terms and limits of office: All elected Officers shall serve for a period of 12 months or a period of 24 months, and are eligible for re-election.

2. Duties of Officers

The duties of Officers are defined in the following:

President

- a. Serve as Chair of the Board of Directors.
- b. Prepare and distribute the agenda for Board meetings.
- c. Preside over Board and Chapter meetings.
- d. Sign all Board-approved documents that may be legally binding on the Chapter.
- e. Co-sign checks with the Treasurer or other designated Chapter Officer for amounts greater than \$1000.
- f. Authorize in writing credit/debit card and PayPal transactions for accounts greater than \$1000.
- g. Present a summary of the Chapter's accomplishments at the Chapter's first general meeting of the new year.
- h. Prepare correspondence between the Chapter and the State Office, other Chapters or State agencies as appropriate.
- i. Review Chapter's completed annual report before submission to State office.
- j. Communicate with Board and Chapter Members as needed; conduct votes by remote communications technology including email on issues between meetings as required by Section B, Responsibilities of the Board paragraph 4.
- k. Appoint all committee Chairs and be an ex-officio member of all committees, assisting as appropriate.
- l. Appoint and present a slate of candidates for all new Director positions for review and

- approval by a majority vote of the elected Officers, Past-President, and Advisor(s).
- m. Become Immediate Past President upon completion of term as President.
 - n. Be an ex-officio member of all committees, assisting as appropriate
 - o. Ensure that before the Chapter makes any written commitments to County Governments, City Councils, etc., or executes Contracts or Memorandums of Understanding with other entities, that the TMN State Coordinator's approval is obtained.
 - p. Be the Chapter's representative to State Annual Meeting or appoint a Chapter State Representative (See Chapter State Representative under 3. Directors).
 - q. Facilitate a retreat of all newly elected Officers and Directors with the outgoing Board Members before the first Board meeting in January to facilitate exchange of responsibilities and chart the Chapter's new year. During the retreat, provide all Officers and Directors an opportunity to read and become familiar with their duties, responsibilities and program guiding documents (i.e. Bylaws, Protocols, etc.) stated in the Chapter Operating Handbook.
 - r. Write appreciation letters for donations to the Chapter.
 - s. Present Recognition Awards to out-going Officers and Board Members.

First Vice President

- a. Assist the President and act for the President in the President's absence.
- b. Prior to the September Board meeting, meet with the President to establish Chapter and Board meeting dates for the following year, to be presented for review and approval at the September Board meeting.
- c. Participate as a member of the Annual Financial Examination Committee.

Second Vice President

- a. Chair the Program Committee, scheduling Chapter programs and speakers for membership meetings. In absence of a Program Committee, the Second Vice President will schedule speakers and programs for the coming year.
- b. Ensure that meeting space and AV equipment is appropriate for presentations.
- c. Select and secure the venue for monthly Chapter meetings for the year based on approved Board meeting dates.
- d. Serve as an ex-officio member of the Advanced Training Committee. In absence of an Advanced Training Committee, the Second Vice-President will schedule Chapter field trips for the Chapter.
- e. Schedule and coordinate annual Chapter social activities.

Treasurer

- a. Receive all dues and monies for the Chapter and maintain them in a Chapter bank account.
- b. Develop and maintain an annual budget for the Chapter with input and approval by the Board of Directors. The proposed budget should be finalized and submitted for approval prior to the start of the new calendar year.
- c. Pay all bills promptly upon receipt of a written statement or receipt for approved expenses. Treasurer or President and one other Officer shall sign all checks, drafts or other instruments for payment of money or notes of the Chapter.
- d. For any payments greater than \$1000, the Treasurer must co-sign the payment instrument with the President.
- e. Submit all annual financial records, reports, and audits as required by law (and/or sponsoring agencies).
- f. Make a financial report at all Board meetings that includes the status of all financial transactions and bank statement reconciliations.

- g. Present the financial records to the annual Financial Examination Committee before the last Board meeting of the calendar year.
- h. Keep an account of all income, expenses, disbursements and other financial matters including a hard copy file of such documentation for seven years plus the current calendar year according to the Chapter's Data Retention Policy.
- i. Make available all financial reports and documents to any Chapter member and/or Advisors as may be requested.
- j. Maintain an annually updated inventory of all purchased and donated equipment or other property.
- k. Collect and submit information for member background checks.
- l. Report membership dues and background check status to Membership Director on a monthly basis.

Secretary

- a. Make available at each Board and Chapter meeting, in either hard copy or digital form, the minute book, a copy of the Bylaws, Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, the Chapter Operating Handbook, a list of all committee memberships, and a copy of the parliamentary authority adopted by the Chapter.
- b. Conduct all necessary Chapter correspondence in coordination with the President.
- c. Record, publish, and preserve the minutes of all meetings of the Board of Directors, General Membership meetings, and special meetings.
- d. Furnish the minutes to all Board members, and make them available to other Chapter members when requested.
- e. Keep a record of attendance at each meeting and whether or not a quorum is present.
- f. Maintain a hard copy file of all minutes and correspondence.

3. At-Large Board Members

At-Large Board Members represent the geographic regions and/or the interests of the Chapter. The duly appointed At-Large Board Members shall consist of:

- Member At-Large: South Texas Border Chapter region
- Member At-Large: Winter Texan

All At-Large Member positions are by appointment and approved according to the Chapter Bylaws ARTICLE V, Sections F and G.

The terms and limits of office: The appointed At-Large Members shall serve for a period of 12 months, and are eligible for re-appointment.

4. Duties of At-Large Board Members

The duties of At-Large Board Members shall be to assist the Officers in their respective responsibilities. In addition, their specific duties are listed along with their title. All At-Large Board Members are voting members of the Board. The list which follows includes the responsibilities of the appointed At-Large Board Members.

- a. Represent members within the area or interest assigned.
- b. Assist in recruitment and retention of Master Naturalists within the area assigned.
- c. Assist with publicity and notification of meetings and Chapter activities.
- d. Assist as needed in Chapter operations.
- e. Must participate on one or more standing or ad hoc committees.

5. Directors

The duly Appointed Directors shall consist of, but not be limited to, the following:

- Immediate Past President
- Membership Director
- New Class Director
- Communications Director
- Advanced Training Director
- Volunteer Service Projects Director
- New Class Representative
- State Chapter Representative
- Advisor(s) if available to the Chapter

All Director positions are by appointment and approved according to the Chapter Bylaws ARTICLE V, Sections F and G.

The terms and limits of office: All appointed Directors shall serve for a period of 12 months or a period of 24 months, and are eligible for re-appointment.

6. Duties of Directors

The duties of Directors shall be to assist the Officers in their respective responsibilities. In addition, their specific duties are listed under their title in the local Chapter Operating Handbook as required for the operation of the Chapter. All Directors and Advisors are voting Members of the Board. The list which follows may be considered the critical appointments for a successful Chapter operation, but is not intended to encompass all requirements a Chapter may have. Neither does it state all responsibilities that may be required of a Director's position.

- Immediate Past President
 - a. Provide continuity from prior Board of Directors with counsel for undocumented procedures and works to document those procedures.
 - b. Lead an annual review and update if necessary of the Chapter's Chapter Operating Handbook document.
 - c. Assist the President.
 - d. Assume the responsibility as the State Representative for the Chapter if that position is not otherwise filled.
 - e. Chair the Nominating Committee...Ref. Chapter Bylaws, Article V, Section E, Paragraph 2, Item a.
 - f. In the absence of an Immediate Past President, the President will reassign above responsibilities as needed.
- Membership Director
 - a. Maintain a roster of all Chapter Members with pertinent contact information and membership status for individual members.
 - b. Oversee Chapter position of Data Manager.
 - c. Monthly maintain and publish names of Members achieving certification and milestone awards.
 - d. Present awards frequently at Chapter meetings.
 - e. Organize, publicize and manage New Class Application process.

- f. Manage the Chapter's Mentor Program (Ref. State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Appendix II, Mentor Program).
 - g. Manage the Chapter's use of the TMN Volunteer Management System (VMS), (Ref. State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Article VI, Volunteer Service Requirements) for reporting volunteer service hours and Advanced Training.
 - h. Supervise the VMS Chapter Administrator(s)' reviewing and approving volunteer service hours and advanced training for accuracy, correct categorization and appropriateness.
 - i. For Chapter Members not having access to the VMS, provide the Chapter Activity form for reporting Volunteer Project and Advanced Training hours by members.
 - j. Ensure all Members or a Member-in-Training receives appropriate training in the use of the TMN VMS.
 - k. Compile the State Annual Report with the support of the preceding year's President and Data Manager.
- New Class Director
 - a. Form the Training Committee.
 - b. Serve as Manager for the New Class, planning, curriculum development, calendar, instructors, venue, reception, etc., through graduation.
 - c. Recommend the class tuition to the Board of Directors.
 - d. Work with Membership and Communications Directors to develop the New Class recruiting brochure.
 - e. Work with the Membership Director to manage the Mentor Program and the new class application process.
 - f. Assist the Membership Director in ensuring new members/Members-in-Training receive appropriate training to use the TMN VMS.
 - g. Work with the Membership Director; manage the chapter's Mentor Program (Appendix A).
- Communications Director
 - a. Oversee a committee(s) or positions performing the functions of:
 - Publicity Manager
 - Newsletter Editor
 - Webmaster
 - Outreach
 - Historian/Archivist
 - b. Write publicity press releases for print and electronic media covering New Class Application, Chapter meetings and special events.
 - c. Arrange for printing and distribution of New Class Recruiting Brochure.
 - d. Finalize and maintain a Chapter Data Retention Policy approved by the Board.
 - e. Oversee social media content and formats used by the Chapter Members. Social media should follow TMN Marketing & ID Guidelines as well as TPWD and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service policies.

- Advanced Training Director
 - a. Develop a form for Members to request that a program be considered for an Advanced Training Code.
 - b. Review and recommend for approval or disapproval all Advanced Training requests and events.
 - c. Assign Advanced Training Codes and Advanced Training Titles to qualifying events and notify Chapter membership of approved Advanced Training opportunities.
 - d. Set up and manage Advanced Training opportunities in the Chapter's TMN VMS.
 - e. Use State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Article VI. Advanced Training Requirements, including VMS, to review and approve Advanced Training Codes, as well as using the STBCTMN Chapter Operating Handbook, Appendix E.

- Volunteer Service Projects Director
 - a. Develop a form for Members to request a Volunteer Service Project Code.
 - b. Review and recommend for approval or disapproval all Chapter volunteer service project opportunity requests using the State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Article VII Volunteer Service Requirements as a guide to review and approve.
 - c. Use State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Article VI, Volunteer Service Requirements, including VMS, to review and approve Volunteer Service Project Codes.
 - d. Ensures that a complete description of those Project activities for which volunteer service hours may be accumulated. Ensures detailed descriptions are promptly posted in Chapter VMS Opportunities.
 - e. Assign Volunteer Service Project Codes to qualifying projects and publicize to Chapter Members.

- New Class Representative
 - a. Represent the New Class as a member on the Board attending all Board meetings.
 - b. Participate as a member of the New Class Committee.
 - c. Participate as a member of the annual Financial Examination Committee.
 - d. Attend selected New Class training sessions to provide the new class insight into the New Class Representative Board position.

- Chapter State Representative
 - a. Work as a Chapter liaison with the State Program Coordinator.
 - b. Represent the Chapter in State level matters of the Texas Master Naturalist Program.
 - c. Review draft State Documents as requested.
 - d. Help with coordination of activities at the Annual State Conference.
 - e. Help in finding presenters for the Annual Conference.
 - f. Enhance the communication between the State and the Chapters.
 - g. Help guide and educate the Member Chapter's new Officers and Directors through use of the state governing documents.
 - h. Participate in conference calls as requested.
 - i. Attend the Annual State Conference if possible.
 - j. Attend the semi-annual State Volunteer Representatives Council meetings.

- Advisor(s)

Reference TMN State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Appendix I, Advisor Guidelines and Article V, Section B, State Bylaws.

The Chapter-Advisor relationship is not a one-way street, in that the Chapter and its 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.

B. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD

The Board is responsible for the success of the Chapter and has the authority to conduct the business of the Chapter as defined in the Chapter Bylaws (Ref: Article VI, Section A. Paragraphs 2-3), approved by the membership. All business before the Board requires approval of either a majority vote of Board Members in attendance at a Board meeting where a quorum is present, or a majority vote of all Board members using Remote Communications Technology.

All official Board communications, *i.e.*, voting, etc., via electronic media, shall be recorded and contained in the Chapter Secretary's records.

1. Committee Oversight. All committees and their activities are subject to review and approval by the Board.
2. Expenditure Limits. The Board will honor expenditure limits as set forth in the local Chapter Operating Handbook.
3. Chapter Business. The Board shall conduct the business functions of the Chapter as may be stated in the Chapter Bylaws, Chapter Management and Operations Protocols and the local Chapter Operating Handbook.
4. Voting by Remote Communications Technology. A meeting of the Board or the Nominating Committee may be held by means of a remote electronic communications system, including videoconferencing technology, email, or the Internet, only if:
 - a. three business days' notice is given to each person entitled to participate in the meeting and includes relevant information to be discussed; and
 - b. the system provides access to the meeting in a manner or using a method by which each person participating in the meeting can communicate with each other; and
 - c. motions are made and votes are recorded in the written minutes of the meeting; and
 - d. documentation of each of the requirements of paragraphs a, b, and c above must be contained in the Secretary's minutes.
5. Establishment of Dues. The Board of Directors may, with approval of a majority of Members present at a duly called and convened general membership meeting, set and change the amount of an initiation fee, if any, and the annual dues, if any, payable to the Chapter. The Board of Directors must notify all voting Members 60 days prior to the general meeting that the subject of dues or their increase will be brought before the convened general membership for action. The Board of Directors, under special circumstances, may waive—in part or in whole-- individual membership fees on a case-by-case basis, if approved by a majority vote of the Board of Directors.
 - Dues Schedule. Dues shall be payable on or before the first day of January for each fiscal year. If dues are not paid by March 31 in each fiscal year, then all privileges afforded a 'Certified Member' are rescinded until dues are paid. A Texas Master Naturalist Member who is not current in the payment of dues, if required, by the end of the calendar year, will be considered "inactive" for purposes of the State Annual Report.

C. COMMITTEES

All committees serve subject to the oversight and approval of the Board. The President appoints the Chair of the Standing Committees. The Chair is responsible for seeing that the Committee fulfills the responsibilities and objectives for which it was formed.

1. Standing Committees

- Executive Committee
- Training Committee
- Membership Committee
- Volunteer Service Projects Committee
- Advanced Training Committee
- Program Committee
- Newsletter Committee
- Outreach Committee
- Historian/Archivist Committee
- Host Committee

- Executive Committee
 - a. The Executive Committee shall be comprised of the elected Officers of the Chapter.
 - b. Authority: Reference Chapter Bylaws, Article VI, Section B. Paragraph 2. Authority.

- Training Committee
 - a. Serves under the leadership of the New Class Director for the Chapter's training program.
 - b. Plans, implements and evaluates the Chapter training curriculum and develops training calendar.
 - c. Acquires the TMN State Curriculum for each new Member-in-Training and prepares additional class materials.
 - d. Select all presenters and make arrangements for their class/presentation including materials, handouts and audio-visual equipment needed for the class/presentation.
 - e. Arranges for speaker gifts, travel, lodging needs, confirmation, and thank you letters.
 - f. Arranges for publicity – newspapers, flyers, brochures, and electronic media.
 - g. Arranges for training venue, and required facilities equipment for all class periods facilitates class field outings/trips.
 - h. Hosts initial New Class social and presentation reception.
 - i. Arranges for refreshment amenities during class periods.

- Membership Committee

Serves under the leadership of the Membership Director, typically composed of the Data Manager(s).

 - a. Manages and/or assists in managing the Chapter's records and reports within the TMN VMS.
 - b. Maintains a roster of the Chapter Member's names, including a Members-in-Training, plus pertinent contact information within the TMN VMS.
 - c. Maintains a record of volunteer and advanced training hours within the TMN VMS.
 - d. Supports Membership Director with compilation of the State Annual Report.
 - e. Supports the Membership Director in ensuring that VMS time reported is accurate and fitting of the activity description and criteria.
 - f. Frequently reports the names of Members who have achieved Certification, Re-certification, and Milestone awards so that the Members can quickly be recognized.

- Volunteer Service Projects Committee
 - a. Supports the Volunteer Service Projects Director in reviewing, organizing, assigning codes and notifying Chapter Members of approved Volunteer Service opportunities and projects.
 - b. Assists in drafting a complete description of those Project activities for which volunteer service hours may be accumulated and assures such detail descriptions are promptly posted in the Chapter VMS Opportunities.
 - c. Assists in managing project opportunities with the Chapter's TMN VMS.
- Advanced Training Committee
 - a. Supports Advanced Training Director in reviewing, organizing, assigning codes and notifying Chapter Members of approved Advanced Training opportunities.
 - b. Assists in managing the Chapter's Advanced Training Opportunities within the TMN VMS.
- Program Committee
 - a. Serves in support of the duties and responsibilities of the Second Vice-President.
- Newsletter Committee
 - a. Collects, produces, and distributes Chapter and state TMN news in the Chapter's Newsletter.
 - b. Solicits and accepts contributions from Officers, Directors and Members for the Newsletter.
 - c. Assists the Chapter Communications Director, as necessary.
- Outreach Committee
 - a. Coordinates the Chapter outreach activities under the direction of the Communications Director/Membership Director.
 - b. Ensures that outreach booths are staffed when planned.
 - c. Acquires and maintains a Chapter display board.
 - d. Coordinates activities with the Chapter Webmaster.
 - e. Assists the Training Committee in promoting the Chapter.
 - f. Assists the New Class Director and Membership Director as necessary.
- Historian/Archivist

Maintains the historical records of the Chapter under the direction of the Communications Director.

 - a. Historical records include but are not limited to: training classes, projects, recognitions, events, elections, meetings, Chapter scrapbook and Chapter Newsletter archives.
 - b. Assists the Chapter Secretary as necessary.
- Host Committee
 - a. Assists the New Class Director/Training Chairman with class social activities.
 - b. Coordinates General Membership meeting social activities with Second Vice- President.
- 1. AD HOC Committees

Ad Hoc committees are formed for a particular and specific short-term purpose.

 - Annual Financial Examination Committee. Responsible for conducting the annual examination of the financial records of the Chapter. Members will include the Vice-President, New Class Representative, Secretary and Advisor(s) if applicable. The President appoints the Chair. The Treasurer provides the financial records for review. The results of the Financial Examination will

be reported to the Board and recorded in the minutes of the following Board meeting with signed attestations from each member of the committee.

- Officer Nomination Committee. Proceed in accordance with Chapter Bylaws, Article V, Section E, Paragraph 2. Election Process.

The Past President will chair the Officer Nomination Committee formed by Chapter Members who are appointed by the Chapter President. The committee will present their slate of Officer candidates to the President, taking into account the following attributes.

The Officer Nomination Committee shall endeavor to select candidates from the Chapter membership who demonstrate appropriate skills for managing the office of President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer; and where possible, with an eye to increasing diversity. Diversity being not limited to sex, ethnicity, creed, or national origin, but including attributes such as age, sexual orientation, gender identity, formal education, background experience, and county of residence. Preference may be given to candidates whose total time in any Board capacity and total time of service in a single Board position is less than other candidates for the same position. Selection of candidates based on these additional diversity attributes would maintain experience and continuity for the Board while recruiting new Members to serve. Officer candidates must be Certified Members of the Chapter, except for Chapters in their first year of operation.

The Officer Nomination Committee must review the required skills, duties and responsibilities of each Officer position with the proposed candidate to assess the candidate's understanding and willingness to perform the functions of the office prior to nominating the candidate for any position.

The President must publish the slate of candidates to the Chapter membership in writing, 15 days prior to the last general membership meeting before the end of the calendar year.

The Officer Nomination Committee will present a slate of candidates and conduct the election process at the last general membership meeting of the calendar year.

This committee will also serve when an Officer or Board vacancy occurs which requires candidates. The committee may serve at the request of the incoming President upon election to present a slate of Director Candidates.

The TMN State Program Coordinator may provide oversight to a Chapter's nomination process.

- Director Nomination Committee. Proceed in accordance with Chapter Bylaws, Article V, Section F, Paragraph 3. Appointment Process for Board Members other than New Class Director. The Director Nomination Committee may be created at the discretion of the incoming President.

The incoming President will chair the Director Nomination Committee formed by Chapter Members who are appointed by the incoming Chapter President. The committee will present their slate of Director candidates to the incoming President, taking into account the following attributes:

The Director Nomination Committee shall endeavor to select candidates from the Chapter membership who demonstrate appropriate skills and where possible, with an eye to increasing diversity. Diversity being not limited to sex, ethnicity, creed, or national origin, but including attributes such as age, sexual orientation, gender identity, formal education, background experience,

and county of residence. Preference may be given to candidates whose total time in any Board capacity and total time of service in a single Board position is less than other candidates for the same position. Selection of candidates based on these additional diversity attributes would maintain experience and continuity for the Board while recruiting new Members to serve.

The Director Nomination Committee must review the required skills, duties and responsibilities of each Director position with the proposed candidate to assess the candidate's understanding and willingness to perform the functions of the position prior to nominating the candidate.

The incoming President will present a slate of Director candidates to the newly elected Officers, Past President and Advisor(s) for confirmation by a majority vote of this Executive Committee prior to the end of the calendar year in which they are elected.

The TMN State Program Coordinator may provide oversight to a Chapter's nomination process.

- Other Ad Hoc Committees. May be formed by the Board as needed to address specific tasks or purposes.

II: MEMBERSHIP

Membership in a Chapter is open to qualifying individuals regardless of race, age (must be 18 years of age or older), sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability or national origin. All persons who are Chapter Members or persons applying for TMN membership must submit to, and pass the required Criminal Background Check.

Member Categories (Reference Chapter Bylaws, Article IV, Membership)

- Texas Master Naturalist-in-Training
 - Texas Master Naturalist Pledge
 - Certified Texas Master Naturalist
 - Texas Master Naturalist Member
 - Honorary Texas Master Naturalist
1. Where Chapters have established dues, by a majority vote of Chapter Members, a qualifying Member must be current in the payment of those dues as defined by the local Chapter Operating Handbook.
 2. Members may readily transfer between Chapters within the State of Texas, but must meet all requirements of membership for the Chapter into which they are transferring.
 3. Members who may have been 'inactive' for some reason, may petition a local Chapter for reinstatement, providing all Chapter membership requirements are met.

III: ADOPTION AND AMENDMENT OF THE CHAPTER OPERATING HANDBOOK

1. Adoption.
 - a. Initial adoption and ratification of the COH and Appendices will be by a majority vote of those present at the next scheduled general membership meeting following written distribution of the

proposed COH to the general membership ten (10) days before the meeting, with notice that the ratification vote will be held at the next general membership meeting.

- b. Written distribution may be via conventional mail, email or other equivalent means.

2. Amendment.

- a. Changes and amendments may be proposed by the Board of Directors at a regular Board meeting with a two-thirds vote of the Board Members in attendance. The general membership must be notified in written form of the proposed changes or amendments ten (10) days before the next Board meeting and be given an opportunity at that Board meeting to voice any concerns about the changes or amendments.
- b. The general membership must then be notified in written form of the final proposed changes or amendments ten (10) days before the next general membership meeting at which time a membership vote will be held.
- c. Written form may be via conventional mail, email or other equivalent means.

3. State Office Notification

Once a Chapter has adopted a revised and/or amended Chapter Operating Handbook, an electronic copy must be sent to the TMN State Coordinator within 30 days.

IV: APPENDICES

A. Mentor Program

The New Class Director and the Advanced Training Director should begin to solicit and vet Mentor candidates for new Member-in-Training applicants when the application process is opened for Members-in-Training. Following Board approval of New Class applicants, the New Class Director will convene a meeting of Mentors as soon as possible 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), Mentor and Member-in-Training responsibilities and their review of Chapter governance documents, and where those documents can be found.
- Stress that a mentor's responsibility to his/her Member-in-Training never expires.
- Ensure that Mentors are familiar with Chapter governance documents to enable them to answer all questions thoroughly, particularly regarding when the new Members-in-Training may begin reporting Advanced Training and Volunteer Service hours.
- Ensure that Mentors are familiar with the Chapter's Volunteer Management System to assist Members-in-Training in reporting their hours associated with all chapter-related activity.

Mentor Guidelines

The Training Director and the Membership Director will schedule and conduct a meeting of Mentors. (Alternatively, the Training Director may ask experienced Mentors to lead the meeting.) At the discretion of the Training Director, each Mentor may receive for distribution to new Members-in-Training: the Class Curriculum, New Class Manuals, and other appropriate materials, or the Training Director may retain the materials for distribution at the Members-in-Training Orientation meeting.

These Mentor Guidelines have been established to help provide a positive mentoring experience, and the Training Director must distribute and review them with each Mentor. In addition, the Training Director will assign each Mentor one or more new Member-in-Training, generally within the Mentor's geographical area, and will provide each Mentor a copy of the Application of each of her/his assigned Member-in-Training for biographical information.

Mentors should:

1. Contact their assigned Member-in-Training by phone and, if instructed by the Training Director, set up a physical meeting in order to deliver their class materials. In the latter case, Mentors should try to have all materials in the hands of the Member-in-Training prior to the New Class Reception/Orientation date.
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 Member-in-Training of other programs to attend, such as: Monthly Chapter meetings, other naturalist related organization programs, the Texas Master Naturalist State Meeting, or other relevant events in the area.
5. Talk to Members-in-Training about the Mentor's experience as a Texas Master Naturalist and volunteer projects with which she/he is involved.
6. Provide a Membership Directory and New Class Roster, (*e.g.* for any Member-in-Training interested in carpooling).
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. Plan to attend one or more classes with his/her Member-in-Training, if possible, coordinating attendance permission with the New Class Director, as space may be limited.
9. Emphasize the commitment and requirement of Volunteering and Advanced Training, and how and when to report those hours.
10. Meet often throughout and following the Class schedule with their Member-in-Training on a mutually convenient basis to answer questions, to help solve problems, and to help ensure eventual certification of Member-in-Training.
11. Be aware of obstacles or reasons a Member-in-Training falls behind in class, drops out of the class, fails to eventually 'Certify', or fails to remain engaged in the organization, reporting such information to the Training Director, New Class Director, Membership Director, or Board, as appropriate.
12. Develop a lasting relationship with their assigned new Member(s) that continues following the training class and should continue to provide guidance and assistance as needed, focusing special attention on those new Members who have not completed their initial certification or otherwise have not become engaged in Chapter volunteer activities.

B. TMN Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct

1. Each member, in striving to meet the mission, goals and objectives of the Texas Master Naturalist Program, pledges to abide by the following Code of Ethics:
 - a. Subscribe to the highest standard of integrity and conduct.
 - b. Promote and support the State-wide and local Texas Master Naturalist Program.
 - c. Respect the state sponsors of Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, their roles and expectations.

- d. Disseminate information to promote understanding of and appreciation for the values of our natural resources.
 - e. Strive to increase knowledge and skills to advance as a Texas Master Naturalist volunteer.
 - f. Promote competence as a Texas Master Naturalist volunteer by supporting high standards of education, service and performance.
 - g. Encourage the use of sound biological information in education and outreach and in management decisions.
 - h. Support fair and uniform standards of service and treatment of those engaged in the Texas Master Naturalist Program.
 - i. Know and follow established Texas Master Naturalist Program protocols and policies.
 - j. Abide by the local Texas Master Naturalist Chapter Bylaws.
 - k. Do not use the Texas Master Naturalist title, logos and trademarks for personal endeavors and/or profit.
 - l. Act as trustworthy and ethical stewards of the environment.
 - m. Never inappropriately disturb or harass wildlife or inappropriately remove anything from its natural state or area.
2. Texas Master Naturalist Program volunteers shall at all time abide by the following Standards of Conduct:
- a. Uphold the Commitment made to the Program and the required volunteer and advanced training hours required by the Texas Master Naturalist Program and the Local Chapter.
 - b. Uphold the dignity and integrity of the Texas Master Naturalist Program, endeavoring to avoid even the suspicion of dishonesty, fraud, deceit, misrepresentation, or unprofessional demeanor.
 - c. Conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to the context and setting at all times (*e.g.* refrain from the use of inappropriate/foul language).
 - d. Be considerate and respect others' points of view.
 - e. Keep accurate records of volunteer service, training and research, and report these records to your local Chapter monthly (at a minimum).
 - f. Avoid performing service when such service is judged to be contrary to the Code of Ethics or detrimental to the wellbeing of the Texas Master Naturalist Program and its sponsors, Texas A&M AgrLife Extension Service, and/or the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.
 - g. Provide maximum possible effort in the best interest of each client and/or volunteer project.
 - h. Be mindful of their responsibility to society and the Texas Master Naturalist Program.
 - i. Studiously avoid discrimination in any form, or the abuse of Texas Master Naturalist Program authority, Certification, or Membership for personal satisfaction. **Advocacy, lobbying or promoting political issues while performing as a TMN volunteer is strictly prohibited.**
 - j. Cooperate fully with professionals and other Master Naturalist volunteers in the best interest of our natural resources.
 - k. Refrain from advertising in a self-laudatory manner—beyond statements intended to inform prospective client or members of qualifications—or in a manner detrimental to the Texas Master Naturalist Program and its volunteers.
 - l. Avoid all use of alcohol and controlled substances while on duty as a Texas Master Naturalist volunteer. **Reporting for service while under the influence**

- of alcohol or a controlled substance will result in termination from volunteer service.**
- m. Accept responsibility for decisions made and actions taken based on these decisions.

C. Guide to Membership

A copy of the “Guide to Membership” will be provided to every Member-in-Training at Orientation.

1. Obtaining Your Texas Master Naturalist Certification. Requirements for Certification as a Texas Master Naturalist (TMN):

- a. Each Member-in-Training will submit an application, with all information completed and the current fee included, to the address on the form. Acceptance into the Chapter is contingent upon passing the background check.
- b. Each new Member-in-Training must attend orientation in order to continue in the yearly training class. The training fee will be refunded only if the prospective Member-in-Training does not attend orientation. There will be a non-refundable fee of \$35.00.
- c. Each Member-in-Training must complete a minimum of forty (40) hours of training consisting of thirty (30) hours of classroom training and ten (10) hours of field trip training drawn from the State-approved curriculum during designated times.
- d. Each Member-in-Training is responsible for signing the attendance sheet at each classroom session upon arrival and upon departure. Each Member-in-Training must sign in at field trips. Members-in-Training are required to attend an entire class or field trip session in order to receive full credit (hours) for attendance. Make-up classes and field trips must be approved by the New Class Director and may differ in content from the original curriculum.
- e. The Membership Director will keep a file for each Member-in-Training. This will include all attendance records, volunteer hours, and advanced training hours. At no time shall AT, training, and service hours ever be counted as anything else or converted to any other type of hours no matter how much time a volunteer has accumulated in each category. Travel time to and from volunteer opportunities may be counted in the total number of hours volunteered. Travel time to and from advanced training is not counted. Each Member-in-Training is responsible for reporting all volunteer and advanced training hours to the membership secretary on a weekly basis, using the online TMN VMS. Class hours and field trips will be reported by the New Class Director or designee.
- f. Each Member-in-Training in the program is encouraged to attend all the monthly general meetings of the STBCTMN. One hour of advanced training may be reported if a speaker presents an educational program. General meetings are held to promote both learning and social contact with all STBCTMN members.
- g. Upon completion of the required thirty (30) hours of classroom and ten (10) hours of field trip training, the Member-in-Training will be awarded a certificate of course completion and becomes a Texas Master Naturalist pledge, eligible to complete the requirements for TMN certification.
- h. Each pledge must complete a minimum of forty (40) hours of approved volunteer service before TMN certification is granted. Volunteer service hours may be earned at any time after starting the classroom and field trip training. Refer to the website for the list of volunteer opportunities approved by the Board of Directors. Work for which compensation is received will not be approved as volunteer service hours.
- i. Each pledge must complete a minimum of eight (8) hours of approved advanced training before TMN certification is granted. Refer to the website for the list of advanced training opportunities approved by the Board of Directors.

Advanced training hours may be earned at any time after starting the basic classroom and field trip training.

- j. Upon completion of all certification requirements, the Member-in-Training will receive a TMN certificate, a Chapter logo pin, an initial certification pin (white dragonfly), and a TMN name tag. Because a Member-in-Training or pledge may earn Texas Master Naturalist certification within the calendar year following the start of the training period, these awards may be made at graduation or at any general meeting during the training year, which runs from the beginning of one training period through the end of the following training period.
- k. Texas Master Naturalists, in their first year of certification, are eligible for the current year's recertification pin if the following requirements are met:
 - i. The volunteer is in his/her first year of the program.
 - ii. The volunteer completes all of the minimum training, advanced training, and volunteer service requirements for the initial certification pin within that year, AND
 - iii. The volunteer completes an additional forty (40) hours of volunteer service and eight (8) hours of advanced training within that same year for the annual recertification pin.

2. Maintaining Certification through Volunteer Service and Advanced Training Hours.

The purpose of maintaining Texas Master Naturalist Certification is to promote continued learning and development and to provide experienced Texas Master Naturalists with tools for more advanced volunteer efforts.

- a. Each certified Texas Master Naturalist must pay dues to maintain active Texas Master Naturalist status. Dues are payable to STBCTMN during the month of January each year.
- b. Dues are set by the Board of Directors each year.
- c. Each certified Texas Master Naturalist must complete forty (40) hours of volunteer service and eight (8) hours of advanced training each calendar year to recertify. Travel time to and from volunteer opportunities may be counted in the total number of hours volunteered. Travel time to and from advanced training is not counted. Recertification pins will be awarded frequently at general meetings
- d. All members will have a background check completed every two years by TPWD.
- e. All members must have a signed liability form on file (form is included with the application). Effective in 2014, this form will be collected one time only and maintained in an electronic file in perpetuity.

3. Members-in-Training Questions.

- a. Any Member-in-Training should address all questions first to her/his mentor.
- b. Each Member-in-Training may consult with the Membership Director regarding class and field trip attendance, volunteer service and advanced training hours.
- c. Any Member-in-Training may also consult with the Board of directors with any problems regarding the organization. Send questions to the President who will forward all questions to the Board of Directors. Resolution of all questions will be handled at a regular meeting of the Board of Directors.
- d. Use of Texas Master Naturalist Logo.
The Texas Master Naturalist or Master Naturalist (in Texas) is a registered trademark of the Texas Master Naturalist Program and its use is outlined in the State guidelines.

4. Adoption and Amendment of the Membership Guidelines for Members-in-Training. Changes and amendments may be made by the Board of directors at a regular Board meeting with a two-third vote of all board members. The general membership must be notified in written form of the proposed changes or amendment ten days before the meeting and be given an opportunity at the board meeting to voice any concerns about the changes or amendments. Written form may be via conventional mail, by remote communications technology including email, or other equivalent means. An updated version reflecting changes will be posted to the Chapter website.

D. Volunteer Service Project Requirements

1. 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. A current training class may adopt a “class project” where the members of the class find/develop and mutually agree to volunteer for the project as a group and receive their required volunteer service hours at the same time.
2. Volunteer projects may be a series of short-term projects, or they may involve the long-term efforts of a volunteer team. Texas Master Naturalist volunteer projects 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.
3. The pre-approval of volunteer service projects and opportunities is important to:
 - a. Ensure that volunteers are covered by the available State Program accident and liability insurance.
 - b. Provide a list of service projects for volunteers of the Chapter.
 - c. Ensure that the mission and goals of the organization and the cooperating organizations are met.
4. The Chapter’s Volunteer Service Projects Director and/or the volunteer Service Committee will consider the following points 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 cooperating organization 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. Does the project fall within the Chapter’s service area and ecological expertise?
 - 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?

Actual Volunteer Service Examples:

Bad/Unacceptable	Better	Best
Being "on call" as a wildlife rescuer for a non- partner organization	Performing wildlife transport service under the direction of personnel licensed for this purpose	Performing wildlife rescue service under the direction of personnel licensed for this purpose and 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 5th 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 Kemp's Ridley Turtle area at a local zoo that is in partnership with the local Chapter	Leading interpretive programs about Kemp's Ridley Turtles 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 the 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
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	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	Receiving service credit for the time spent serving as a Board or Committee member at any level within the TMN program
	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	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

10/19/2015

E. Advanced Training Policies.

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. 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 is the clearinghouse for notifying members of approved advanced training opportunities.

Advanced training can be accepted from: workshops, seminars and conferences held 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 Hidalgo, Starr, and Cameron Counties 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 Director, 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.

F. Addendum for 501 (c) 3 Chapters.

The South Texas Border Chapter Texas Master Naturalist is organized as a 501 (c) 3 entity exclusively for charitable, scientific, and educational purposes, more specifically to develop a group of knowledgeable volunteers to provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the study and conservation of natural resources and natural areas within the Rio Grande Valley of Texas.

G. FAQs.

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

Answer: Local Chapter documents are found on the Chapter website at: www.stbctmn.org. 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 the STBCTMN Chapter?
Answer: Yes. The dues are set by the Chapter Board.
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 forty (40) hours (minimum) classroom and field experiences; complete an additional forty (40) hours of volunteer service and eight (8) hours of Advanced Training and abide by the Code of Ethics and Standards 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 Chapter Board.
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 five elected Officers (President, First Vice-President, Second 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 the Director positions filled?
Answer: Director Candidates are nominated by the Chapter President and 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: Twelve months, or 24 months. The Secretary, Treasurer and Directors are eligible for re-election or re-appointment, as provided in the Chapter Operating Handbook.

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://www.tamus.edu/business/risk/> .
16. Why is a Code of Ethics and Standard of Conduct 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, and to establish a uniform policy that ensures the ultimate trust, dignity, and integrity of the STBCTMN program and its members.
17. 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. The Texas Parks & Wildlife Department also requires volunteer screening for its programs’ participants for these same reasons as well.
18. Can I make a Federal tax deductible donation to STBCTMN?
Answer: Yes, because STBCTMN is a 501 (c) 3 organization.
19. 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 the public, to attend and to engage in the proceedings as monitored by the Chapter President.