

TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST



CRADLE OF TEXAS CHAPTER Chapter News – August 2010 Editor, Mary Helen Israel

President's Message, Dave Brandes

I'm sure glad to see we are coming into the warm season. I won't be shivering now for a couple of months.

Our state organization's funding source has placed some additional requirements on the way we report our time. COT is now reporting to the state our volunteer hours quarterly, instead of just in the annual report. Additionally, they are asking us to submit signed timesheets and store them for 7 years.

Let me explain why these new requirements have become necessary.

Our TMN program is one of our state programs funded through a 1.9 million dollar matching grant. This grant requires TMN to match 25 cents of every funding dollar. That is, every dollar is 75 cents USFWS and 25 cents TMN. USFWS allows our percentage to be "in-kind", and this "in-kind" portion is our volunteer time valued at the current federal rate. TMN is funded this way as is the Urban Wildlife Program, the Texas Wildscapes Program, The Texas Nature Trackers Program, the Hummingbird Roundup Program, to name a few.

TMN has resisted implementing these timekeeping requirements, but USFWS has remained steadfast in demanding this for us due to the way the program's volunteer service hours are used to obtain federal funding for conservation.

The USFWS Federal Aid State Grants program has indicated that for an agency's volunteer's service to be considered valid their record of service must be signed and retained for the term of the funding period (they call it a "grant period") plus an audit period. This total period for our grant is 7 years. This means that signed time sheets (paper and electronic) of our TMN volunteers need to be kept and archived for 7 years from this current calendar year.

Eventually, our state TMN organization plans to implement an on-line database to ease the burden on the local chapters.

Our board of directors has worked up a process to make this easy for us this year and easier next year.

If you submit your time on paper, please give legible copies to our Membership Director with your signature and date at the bottom.

If you are submitting time as text by email, the state organization asks that you sign submissions as follows within the email:

Electronically signed by "your name", "your email address", "the date".

For example: Dave Brandes, djbrandes@comcast.net, 8/5/2010.

For this year, if you submit your time by spreadsheet (much preferred), please add the above electronic signature as your last entry for the year. Beginning next year we will integrate the signature into the spreadsheet and this manual signature will no longer be needed.

I know we all like to be outside, so please be careful in the heat. I hope to see all of you at our general meeting.

Dave

Report from Membership Chairman, Jerry Eppner

Well the summer is over half gone, and members continue to find volunteer opportunities even in this heat. As we enter August, 41 chapter members have submitted time sheets so far this year. Of those, 33 have certified and/or recertified for the year. A total of 5668 volunteer time hours have been reported. We need all chapter members to submit their time for their activities.

We have two recent COT intern graduates that have turned in enough volunteer and advanced training hours to certify as Texas Master Naturalists. They are James and Irama Wesselman. Recognition at the next meeting for recertifying in 2010 will include Georgia Monnerat and John Marshall. Georgia has also earned recognition for 250 cumulative hours of VT. Of special significance is Neal McLain's having amassed 2500 hours of VT. Congratulations to Neal and the others.

One request the membership chairman would like to make is for those people that submit written time sheets to make sure they are legible and have the hours totaled on them. Thanks. Also, be sure to read our President's announcement of the new time sheet signature requirement by the state organization.

Reminder from Chapter Hosts, Jerry Krampota and Justina Dent

The following folks signed up to bring refreshments for the August meeting: Torry Tvedt, James & Irama Wesselman. If for some reason you have a conflict, please call Mary Helen at 979-297-6968 or mh-israel@sbcglobal.net

August Meeting Wednesday, August 11, 2010 Intern Training, and Advanced Training

- 8:30 a.m.** - Coffee and Social Time
- 9:00 a.m.** - Business Meeting
- 9:30 a.m.** - **From the Greater Houston-Galveston Area Council**
Aubin Phillips, AICP, Sr. Environmental Planner,
Topic: San Bernard Watershed Protection Plan
Rachel Powers,
Topic: Parks and BIG (Bacteria Implementation Group)
Kristi Corse,
Topic: Texas Stream Team
Justin Bower,
Topic: Bastrop Bayou Watershed Protection Plan

Training Report, Laura Brandes

As of August 1st, there are five Interns from 2009 completing their program. There are seven Interns for 2010 that started their training in January or later. Individuals who have been unresponsive were contacted a final time; five people were removed from the contact list and five people will begin their training in September.

Two additional Interns have completed their training--James and Irama Wesselman. They will be recognized at the August meeting. This leaves three Interns continuing from 2009.

Mark your calendars--August 16th, Sea Center Texas. Starting at 9:00 am, Connie Stolte will be teaching "Oceans, Jetties and Wetlands". This is an official INTERN class with field activity that will go to approximately 12:30pm. Be prepared with water, lunch-time snacks, notebook and pencil, and camera (optional). You will be in the SCT Conference Room then tour the aquarium exhibits and the hatchery. The more adventuresome can take in the wetlands on your own self-guided tour.

This is a required Intern course, an AT for Members who have not had this topic for at least two years and an opportunity to get most of your training as a Sea Center Volunteer--three for the price of one!

Again, my thanks to everyone who has assisted with the Intern classes this late Spring and Summer. I appreciate each and every one of you.

Don't Underestimate America's Concern

Greg Siekaniec
Assistant Director for the Refuge System
U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service



It was July 14 – Day 87 of the Deepwater Horizon spill -- and the oil had stopped, awaiting the relief well to permanently plug the hole in the Earth. It was a relief for Louisiana and other Gulf States. It was a relief for the nation. It was a relief for wildlife. But it was only a temporary relief. The long-term work continues.

The Deepwater Horizon oil spill response is massive, covering about 460,000 square miles of ocean and 750 miles of shoreline, fought by more than 40,000 people from federal, state, local agencies, industry and even academia. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service alone deployed more than 525 people.

But the fight on behalf of wildlife is not over. What we don't know about the impacts of the oil spill is far more extensive than what we do know.

When will wildlife thrive again? What will be the long term and short term environmental impacts of a spill that pumped millions of gallons into the ocean? What will happen to the next generation of wildlife? Will some species' reproductive function be impaired?

This much we do know: Hundreds of Service employees deployed to the Gulf worked long hours -- through weekends and holidays -- to ensure the best possible environmental outcome. And we know that Refuge Friends found innovative ways to find a silver lining in this nightmare.

The Friends of Balcones Canyonlands NWR in Texas offered a \$10 donation to the National Wildlife Refuge Association's oil spill fund for every new member. The Refuge Association's oil spill fund is helping Friends groups that incurred extra expenses as staff deployed to the spill. The Association's first grant went to the Friends of Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge in Alabama to help them plant native vegetation on newly constructed berms that prevented oil from reaching critical habitat for the endangered Alabama beach mouse.

Our future challenges will be as great as those we've already faced during the 87 days of spewing oil. All of us face one, overarching challenge: to maintain the nation's sky-high interest in wildlife's health. Perhaps one of the most important lessons we've learned is not to underestimate America's concern for its natural resources. Thank you for all you do for national wildlife refuges.

Attachments

There are two attachments included with the newsletter:

August 10-Attach-1-General Meeting Minutes.PDF

August 10-Attach-2-Dow Woods.PDF

CRADLE OF TEXAS CHAPTER OFFICERS

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