

**OPERATING HANDBOOK**  
**Elm Fork Chapter of**  
**Texas Master Naturalist, Inc.**

**A: PURPOSE**

The Elm Fork Chapter of Texas Master Naturalist, Inc. (Elm Fork Chapter) Operating Handbook is intended to provide detail and clarification on Chapter operations not included in the Chapter By-laws.

**B: DUES**

1. Establishment of Dues. The Board of Directors may set the annual dues, if any, payable to the Chapter. The Board of Directors under special circumstances may waive individual membership fees, on a case-by-case basis, by a majority vote of the Board of Directors.

2. Dues Schedule. Dues shall be payable in advance of the last day of January in each calendar year. If dues are not paid by March 31 in each calendar year, then all privileges afforded a certified member are rescinded until dues are paid.

3. Dues Amount. The Board of Directors has set the dues at \$25 per year, if received by January, and \$30 per year if received after January 31.

**C: BOARD MEMBERS**

Elected Officers

1. President
2. Vice President
3. Secretary
4. Treasurer

Other Board Members:

5. Past President
6. Chair - Training Committee (See Note 1)
7. Chair - Publicity Committee (See Note 1)
8. Chair - Projects Coordination Committee (See Note 1)
9. Chair - Communications Committee (See Note 1)
10. Class Representative of most recent class (See Note 2)
11. Member at Large (See Note 3)

NOTES:

1. To be appointed by Officers and Past President

2. To be elected by class members at the last class session each year
3. To be elected by eligible members from a nomination from the floor at the annual election.

## **D: DUTIES OF OFFICERS**

### 1. President

- a. Preside at all meetings of the Chapter.
- b. Serve as Chair of the Board of Directors.
- c. Appoint, subject to the Board's approval, committees, and committee chairs.
- d. Be an ex-officio member of all committees.
- e. Sign all Board-approved documents that may be legally binding on the chapter.
- f. Co-sign checks with another officer in the absence of the Treasurer.
- g. Provide agenda for Board meetings and General meetings.
- h. Become Immediate Past President upon completion of term as President.
- i. Works with the Vice President, and Membership and Projects chairpersons to fulfill and submit the chapter's annual report to the state office annually.
- j. Votes when there is a tie.
- k. Coordinate the review and updating, if necessary, of the Chapter Bylaws and Chapter Operating Handbook at least every odd number year.

### 2. Vice President

- a. Assist the President and act for the President in their absence.
- b. Oversee the Program Committee, Membership Committee and Hospitality Committee.
- c. Co-sign checks in the absence of the President.

### 3. Secretary

- a. Conduct all necessary chapter correspondence.
- b. Record, publish and preserve the Minutes of all meetings of the Board of Directors, General Membership meetings or special meetings.
- c. Furnish the Minutes to all Board members and make them available to other Chapter members when requested.
- d. Keep a record of attendance at each meeting and whether a quorum is present.
- e. Maintain a hard copy file of all Minutes and correspondence.
- f. Bring to each meeting the Minutes book, a copy of the bylaws, rules and policies, a list of all committees and a copy of the parliamentary authority adopted by the Chapter.
- g. Be responsible for the function of the Chapter Historian.

### 4. Treasurer

- a. Maintain budget and accounting records.

- b. Receive all dues and monies for the association and maintain them in a separate chapter bank account.
- c. Keep an account of all income, expenses, disbursements, and other financial matters.
- d. Pay all bills upon receipt of a valid written statement or receipt. Treasurer or President and one other officer shall sign all checks, drafts, or other instruments for payment of money or notes of the Chapter.
- e. Make a monthly report to the membership at the General Chapter Meeting.
- f. Develop an annual budget for approval by the Board of Directors.
- g. Present the financial records for audit on or before the January Board meeting.
- h. Submit all annual financial records and audits as required by law.

## **E: DUTIES OF OTHER BOARD MEMBERS**

### **1. Past President**

- a. Assist the President with functions and actions which advance the Mission of the Elm Fork Chapter.
- b. Provide continuity from prior Board of Directors.
- c. Assume the responsibility as the State Representative for the chapter if that position is not otherwise filled.
- d. In the absence of a past-president, the president will reassign necessary responsibilities.
- e. Serves as chairperson of the Nominating Committee.

### **2. Chair – Training Committee**

- a. Appoint Training Committee Members and Mentor Coordinator.
- b. Work with the Chapter Treasurer to develop a Training Program budget and recommend tuition to the Board.
- c. Coordinate the training of Master Naturalist Interns for the Chapter according to State guidelines:
  - 1) Arrange dates for Round Up and Training Program classes.
  - 2) Arrange classroom space and A/V equipment.
  - 3) Arrange all Speakers and equipment they require.
  - 4) Arrange for Speakers' expense reimbursements, if necessary.
  - 5) Work with Publicity Committee to publicize the Training Program.
  - 6) Arrange posting of Training Program on Chapter and State websites.
  - 7) Prepare the Intern's binders including any additional inserts.
  - 8) Work with the Training Committee Members to ensure success on all levels.
  - 9) Interact with AgriLife office sharing on-going information.
  - 10) Work with other Chapters on member class make-ups.
  - 11) Prepare thank you notes to Speakers following presentations.
  - 12) Prepare final evaluation for AgriLife office.

- 13) Work with the Mentor Coordinator to monitor the Interns through their individual certifications.
3. Chair - Publicity Committee
    - a. The committee shall acquaint the community with the association's functions and projects through the media and will be responsible for external communications promoting the organization.
    - b. The committee shall make educational information available to the public by coordinating booth location.
    - c. The committee will be responsible for all the resources needed for the booths.
    - d. Assist the Training Committee in promoting the chapter and basic training.
  4. Chair - Project Committee (Serves as the liaison between Project Managers and the Board of Directors.)
    - a. Submits project requests to the Board of Directors.
    - b. Maintains/updates chapter project book.
    - c. Coordinates project updates with the chapter webmaster.
    - d. Communicates monthly with Project Managers for event statistics.
    - e. Recommends projects to the Board for MN State Competition.
    - f. Briefs new members on current projects and service locations.
    - g. Briefs new members on procedures for starting a new project.
    - h. Monitors project status updates when applicable.
    - i. Collects end of year reports from Project Managers.
    - j. Works with President and Vice President on Chapter end of year report.

#### Project Managers

- a. Submits a project request form to the Project Committee Chair.
  - b. Prepares a project description for the project book and chapter website.
  - c. Communicates project information to the chapter members including:
    1. Project Manager Phone number/email address
    2. Project Description and service opportunities
    3. Project location, directions and/or map
    4. Service preparation instructions when applicable
    5. Misc. info: tools, availability of restrooms, food, water, etc.
  - d. Provides sign in sheets and submits them with the end of year report.
  - e. Provides status updates (at discretion of Project Committee Chair.)
  - f. Provides end of year project report to Project Committee Chair.
  - g. Notifies Project Committee Chair of changes to email address and/or phone numbers.
5. Chair - Communications Committee

The Communications Committee is comprised of three components; Email Correspondence; Newsletter; and Webmaster. If circumstances warrant, one person may serve in one or more of the designated positions in this section. Each position will be appointed by the Board. One person should be designated as a Chairperson for the Committee. If none of the three are able to be on the Board, another member will be appointed to represent them.

a. Email Correspondence

- 1) Distributes pertinent information within the membership by means of email messaging to include but not limited to Volunteer and Advanced Training opportunities.
- 2) Maintains an active and correct directory of email addresses of the membership.
- 3) Assists Membership Chairperson with compiling and maintaining the membership directory.

b. Webmaster

- 1) Modifies and maintains chapter website.

c. Newsletter

- 1) Prepares a chapter newsletter with the frequency and method of distribution as determined by the Board in coordination with the Communications Chair.

6. Class Representative of most recent class

Represents class as a member of the board. As board member, becomes eligible to vote as soon as initially certified. Serves a one year term only.

7. Member at Large

Is nominated from the floor and elected by membership at the November meeting to represent them on the board during the next year.

## **F. STANDING COMMITTEES**

1. Chair - Membership Committee (Reports to the Vice President)

- a. Maintains a roster of the Chapter's member names including in-training members plus addresses, phone numbers and Internet addresses.

- b. Maintains a record of volunteer and advanced training hours and class training attendance.
  - c. Notifies the Board of members meeting certification and threshold hour achievements.
  - d. Orders and maintains the member certification and recognition awards (e.g. shirts, nametags, certificates, business cards, pins.)
  - e. Ensures members have a current signed liability form on file.
  - f. Maintains a record of high level interests and specific expertise of members.
2. Chair - Program Committee (Reports to the Vice President)
  - a. Develops and maintains the official chapter calendar of activities.
  - b. Schedule chapter programs and field trips for membership meetings.
  - c. Notifies membership of field trip requirements (i.e. water, safety, maps, logistics, etc.)
  - d. Ensures speakers and trip leaders are recognized appropriately.
3. Historian (Reports to the Secretary)
  - a. Maintains the historical records of the chapter.
  - b. Historical records include but not limited to: Training classes, projects, recognitions, events, elections, meetings, scrapbook, photographs, other media, and Chapter Newsletter archives.
4. Chair - Hospitality Committee (Reports to the Vice President)
  - a. Assists Training Chairperson with class host activities – drinks, snacks, catered lunches, making handouts.
  - b. Coordinates General Membership meeting host activities – drinks, snacks, and party activities.
5. Chair - Resources Committee (Reports to the President)
  - a. Acquires and maintains chapter resources, including keeping an accurate inventory and controlling access to material.

**G. AD HOC COMMITTEES.** - Ad Hoc committees are formed for a particular and specific short-term purpose.

1. Audit Committee
  - a. Conducts the annual audit of the financial records of the chapter.
  - b. Consists of 3 (non- Board) Certified Members in good standing.
2. Nomination Committee

- a. Solicits the membership for possible candidates for the four officer positions.
  - b. The committee consists of the Past President, who serves as Chairperson, and a minimum of three additional Certified Members in good standing.
  - c. The committee will present a slate of candidates for officers in accordance with the Chapter Bylaws (Article V.D.2.a.).
3. Other Ad Hoc Committees - May be formed by the Board as needed to address specific tasks or purposes.

#### **H. NON-VOTING BOARD MEMBERS.**

1. State Representative
  - a. Represent the chapter in state level matters of the Texas Master Naturalist Program.
  - b. Attend the semi-annual State Volunteer Representatives Council meetings.

#### **I: MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTIFICATION.**

1. Initial membership (within 15 months of the start of the annual training class.)
  - a. 60 hours basic training class (combine classroom and field experience.)
  - b. 8 hours of approved advanced training.
  - c. 40 hours of approved volunteer service.
  - d. Class fees paid.
2. Re-certification per year
  - a. 8 hours of approved advanced training.
  - b. 40 hours of approved service.
  - c. In good standing (Dues paid for year certifying.)
  - d. Complete, sign, and return any required documentation (conflict-of-interest, insurance, liability waiver, etc.)
  - e.. Must be screened every three years to meet applicable Youth Protection Program standards.
3. All members must agree to and abide by the current Texas Master Naturalist Code of Ethics and Texas Master Naturalist Standards of Conduct.

### **Texas Master Naturalist Code of Ethics**

Each member, in striving to meet the mission, goals, and objectives of the Master Naturalist program, pledges to:

1. Subscribe to the highest standards of integrity and conduct.
2. Promote and support the statewide and local Master Naturalist program
3. Respect the state sponsors of Texas Parks & Wildlife and Texas AgriLife Extension and their roles and expectations.
4. Disseminate appropriate information to promote understanding of, and appreciation for, the values of our natural resources.
5. Strive to increase knowledge and skills to advance as a Master Naturalist volunteer
6. Promote competence as a Master Naturalist volunteer by supporting high standards of education, service, and performance.
7. Encourage the use of sound biological information in education and outreach and in management decisions.
8. Support fair and uniform standards of service and treatment of those engaged in the Master Naturalist program.
9. Know and follow established program guidelines and policies
10. Abide by chapter bylaws
11. Avoid use of the Master Naturalist title, logos, and trademarks for personal endeavors and/or profit and political arenas.
12. Act as trustworthy and ethical stewards of the environment
13. Never inappropriately disturb or harass wildlife, never inappropriately remove anything from its natural state or area.

### **Master Naturalist Standards of Conduct**

Master Naturalist program volunteers shall at all times:

1. Uphold the Commitment made to the program and the required volunteer and advanced training hours required by the program.
2. Uphold the dignity and integrity of the Master Naturalist program. They shall endeavor to avoid even the suspicion of dishonesty, fraud, deceit, misrepresentation, or unprofessional demeanor.
3. Conduct themselves appropriately to context and setting at all times.
4. Be considerate and respect other's points of view.

5. Keep accurate records of volunteer service, training, and research, and regularly notify your local chapter of these records.
6. Avoid performing service when such service is judged contrary to the Code of Ethics or detrimental to the well being of the program and its sponsors.
7. Provide maximum possible effort in the best interest of each client and/or volunteer project regardless of the degree of remuneration.
8. Be mindful of their responsibility to society and the program.
9. Studiously avoid discrimination in any form, or the abuse of program authority, certification, or membership for personal satisfaction. Avoid advocacy, lobbying, or promoting political issues.
10. Cooperate fully with professionals and other Master Naturalist volunteers in the best interest of our natural resources.
11. Refrain from advertising in a self-laudatory manner, beyond statements intended to inform prospective clients or members of qualifications, or in a manner detrimental to the Master Naturalist program and its volunteers.
12. Avoid all use of alcohol and controlled substances while performing service as a Master Naturalist volunteer. Reporting for service while under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance will result in termination from the volunteer program.
13. Accept responsibility for decisions made and actions taken based on these decisions.

#### **J: GUIDELINES FOR TRAINING AND SERVICE HOURS**

1. Responsibility – it is the responsibility of each member to see that their advanced training and service work is approved and to report those hours to the chapter in a timely manner.
  - a. All training and service hours are to be recorded by each member on their individual Training and Service Record form maintained in a binder kept in the Texas AgriLife Extension Service office in Denton.
  - b. Participation forms are kept which track the attendance at each event/project. Each member is required to sign the form for every event attended; these forms do not constitute individual reporting and are for general tracking and auditing purposes only.
  - c. All forms necessary for reporting are available on the chapter website.
2. Advanced Training Hours – Every member must obtain a minimum of eight (8) advanced training hours each calendar year by December 31 to qualify for recertification.
  - a. The Elm Fork Chapter approves of a wide variety of Advanced Training courses. These may be offered by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, other Texas Master Naturalist Chapters, Local

Universities, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Native Plant Society, and other similar organizations and may be offered on-line with appropriate documentation. The approved hours must include presentations with a leader, documentation of attendees, and must pertain to information relevant to the Master Naturalist program or the volunteer programs for Service Projects of the Elm Fork Chapter.

- b. A list of currently known training courses will be posted on the chapter web site.
  - c. Most chapter meetings have an advanced training component. They are generally one hour, and if different, this will be announced at the meeting.
  - d. Advanced Training may be submitted without prior Board approval if it meets one or more of the following requirements:
    - 1) Promotes continued learning and development of naturalist skills.
    - 2) Provides Master Naturalists with knowledge and skills to work in volunteer efforts.
    - 3) Directs members toward specific programs in need of their services.
    - 4) Provides practical information and training for application in volunteer efforts.
    - 5) Provides members an opportunity to focus their interests in one or a few specific topics.
    - 6) Takes advantage of local partnerships.
    - 7) Builds on the core curriculum initially provided by the local chapter.
    - 8) Provides natural resource management issues and information applicable to Texas.
    - 9) Travel time to and from training is not included as training time.
    - 10) The Board reserves the right to revoke training submitted that does not meet these requirements.
    - 11) Questions about what constitutes approved training should be directed to the Board
3. Service Hours – After being certified as a member of the Elm Fork Chapter, a member must complete a minimum of forty (40) service hours each calendar year by December 31 to qualify for recertification.
- a. Volunteer hours credited for the Texas Master Naturalist program may not be credited from or to another volunteer program.
  - b. A list of service opportunities that are approved will be posted on the chapter web site.
  - c. Service hour credit is given for attending chapter meetings. It is up to individual members to keep track of the amount of time you spent at the non-training portion of the meeting and to report that time.
  - d. Questions concerning what constitutes appropriate service may be submitted to the Board for clarification.
  - e. Travel to and from service projects is included as service time.

In accordance with the Chapter Bylaws, Article IV.B.4., persons with dues in good standing but who were unable to complete the required service and/or advanced training hours by December 31<sup>st</sup> to recertify will be classified as members, not certified members.

## **K. YOUTH PROTECTION POLICIES**

1. 5-point strategy to prevent child abuse:
  - a. Educate Master Naturalists to aid in the detection and prevention of child abuse.
  - b. Background checks to prevent offenders from entering the Master Naturalist organization.
  - c. Establish policies that create barriers to child abuse within the program.
  - d. Require improper behavior be reported in order to identify offenders quickly.
  - e. Remove and report alleged offenders swiftly.
  
2. 7 Rules for working with youth - create barriers to abuse and must be distributed to all volunteers when youths are present.
  - a. Never be alone with a youth. Always have another adult volunteer present. Have youths use the buddy system. They never go off alone. (*Announce this at workdays*).
  - b. Always have instructional sessions in view of other adults and/ youth members.
  - c. Always respect their privacy. Youth and unrelated adults should never be in the facility at the same time. (*Bathroom or changing room*).
  - d. Always have safety measures in place for workdays or projects with high risk.
    - 1) Two or more adults at all times
    - 2) No youth is allowed at a workday without parent/guardian or an adult willing to assume responsibility for the youth.
  - e. Always wear appropriate attire.
  - f. Always use constructive discipline. Corporal punishment is never allowed.
  - g. Know the three R's of Youth Protection: Recognize-Resist-Report
    - 1) Recognize situations that might place a youth at risk.
    - 2) Resist-The child needs to know that if he resists, most child molesters will leave him alone.
    - 3) Report-If the child reports attempted or actual molestations he will protect himself as well as other children from further abuse, and he will not be blamed for what occurred. If a child reports to you-You file a report to AgriLife Extension Chapter Advisor at 940-349-2883
  
3. The Child's Bill of Rights - Specific resistance methods are emphasized in the Child's Bill of Rights. When a child is confronted with a situation that he thinks is dangerous, he has the right to:

- a. Trust his own instincts or feelings
  - b. Expect privacy
  - c. Withhold information that could place him in danger
  - d. Refuse gifts
  - e. Say no to unwanted touching or affection
  - f. Say no to inappropriate demands and requests from adults
  - g. Be rude or unhelpful if the situation warrants
  - h. Run, scream, and/or make a scene
  - i. Physically fight off unwanted advances
  - j. Ask for help
4. Disclosure
- a. Don't panic or over react to the information being disclosed.
  - b. Don't criticize the child
  - c. Do respect his privacy-take the child to a private place away from other children, yet still in view.
  - d. Reassure the child you are concerned.
  - e. Do not promise to keep his secret-tell him it is necessary to report it to AgriLife Extension Chapter Advisor.
  - f. Ask if he has talked to his parents about the abuse-if parent is not the alleged abuser.
  - g. Encourage child to tell the appropriate authorities. Tell him he is not to blame. No one should ask him to keep a special secret. It is okay to talk about it with appropriate adults.
  - h. Keep it strictly confidential.
  - i. Report it to AgriLife Extension Chapter Advisor -no state requires proof-only good faith.

#### **L. ADOPTION AND AMENDMENT OF CHAPTER OPERATING HANDBOOK (COH)**

1. Adoption. Initial adoption and ratification of the COH is by a majority vote of those present at a general meeting following written distribution of the proposed COH to the general membership ten days before the meeting with notice that the ratification vote will be held at the general meeting. Written distribution may be via conventional mail, email or other equivalent means.
2. Amendment. Changes and amendments may be made 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 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, email or other equivalent means. Once approved, the President will ensure the amended document is posted on the website.