

Chapter Management and Operations Protocols

5. Advanced Training Requirements

- 5.1 Purpose — Advanced training (AT) provides Texas Master Naturalists an opportunity to focus on specific topics that interest them and to expand their knowledge base and skills in those chosen areas. Requiring at least 8 hours of AT each year for recertification promotes continued learning and development. The knowledge gained allows members to provide more expertise for the chapter's volunteer efforts in specialized areas, and focused learning can help build leaders.
- 5.2 Opportunities Although the TMN Program may provide statewide or regional AT opportunities, it is the responsibility of the local chapter to ensure that there are sufficient AT opportunities offered on a local or regional basis so members can meet their annual 8-hour recertification requirement. AT courses may be made available directly through AgriLife Extension, TPWD, or any number of other natural resource-oriented organizations. A chapter can help members meet their AT requirement by hosting/sponsoring a program. In rare occasions, AT hours can be accepted from workshops, seminars and conferences held outside of the state boundaries, if, and only if, the training material meets the AT criteria provided in this document [See 5.10] and aligns with the mission of the TMN Program. It is mandatory that any training material from outside the state be beneficial to the citizens and the natural resources of Texas and be pre-approved by the chapter with questions and concerns receiving additional advisor and or state program review and approval
- 5.3 Approval —AT hours logged into VMS must be for training that has been approved at the chapter level [See 5.10]. The local chapter's AT coordinator, committee, or equivalent, should pre-approve all AT opportunities, whether inside or outside the chapter boundaries, before members attend. In special circumstances, approval may be sought in retrospect but is not guaranteed. If there is any question as to the worthiness of a resource or validity of the request for AT approval, the chapter advisor(s) and then TMN state program coordinators should be consulted before approval is granted. Except for college courses, AT hours are counted one hour for each hour of training time (logged to the nearest quarter hour). Travel time for AT is not included or otherwise tracked. AT hours are never counted as service hours. Initial Training hours over the state required minimum shall never be converted to AT hours nor VS hours.
- 5.4 College course AT credit - In the event a college course is accepted as AT, each credit hour of the course counts as an AT hour (not each hour spent in class). Courses taken prior to involvement in the TMN Program cannot be counted as AT.
- 5.5 In person and online/virtual - In a live classroom or field-based setting, students can ask questions or request clarification to help enhance learning. Chapters may approve AT that allows an exchange between the member and an instructor as well as online-based training where there may or may not be an opportunity for an exchange. With the advancement of online communication media, new forms of online or virtual training are expanding the scope of AT. Members are encouraged to obtain the bulk of their AT hours in live classroom or field settings or in live online training that includes an opportunity for communication with the instructor.
- 5.6 Videos, DVDs, archived webinars — Use of mission-specific or related videos, DVDs, and archived webinars for AT should be limited in scope. Where possible, a qualified chapter member should be available to introduce the resource and lead a discussion following its conclusion. Before

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approval of these forms of media that would not have live interaction between participants and an instructor or program facilitator, a chapter must consider:

- The educational experience will supplement a chapter's approved AT program because live instructors are not available on a particular subject germane to the ecoregion of the chapter.
- The quality and caliber of the particular media resource is of significant relevance to the TMN mission so as to be recognized by known experts in the field or organizations renowned for their dedication to education.

5.7 Book Clubs — Chapter sponsored book clubs, where the book and the discussion are specifically relevant to the mission of TMN, may allow members to receive AT credit for discussion and presentation time, but not for time spent reading the book.

5.8 Volunteer Management System All AT hours must be recorded in the VMS. Only the actual hours spent in the training session should be logged. Travel and prep time are not included or tracked for attending AT. All hours must be logged into VMS within 45 days of activity,

5.9 Annual Recertification - To retain the title of Certified Texas Master Naturalist (recertify), a member must log 8 hours of chapter-approved AT (plus the required VS hours) in every subsequent calendar year [See 4.4.2.1].

5.10 Criteria for Approval - The chapter AT coordinator and AT committee should evaluate each new AT opportunity for approval using the criteria below.

5.10.1 Required Criteria — Each AT opportunity must meet these criteria:

- Promotes continued learning and development of naturalist skills
- Provides Master Naturalists with practical knowledge and skills to work in volunteer efforts
- Directs trained volunteers toward specific programs in need of their services
- Covers natural resource issues and information applicable to Texas with an emphasis on the chapter's local community and ecoregion

5.10.2 Additional Criteria to Consider

- Addresses the management of natural resources
- Provides special training that can be applied to specific volunteer service projects
- Takes advantage of local partnerships
- Offers an opportunity to focus on a specific topic
- Builds on the core curriculum initially provided by the local chapter Provides access to a recognized authority in the subject matter

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Advanced Training Examples

Unacceptable	Better	Best
A lecture on astronomy and its relationship to astrology (Why: not about natural resources and our mission)	A lecture on astronomy and how the moon and sun affect the habitat of animals and plants	A lecture on how to reduce light pollution and the effects that will have on plants and animals
Attending a class on the habitat of animals in Alaska (Why: not about Texas and our mission)	Attending a workshop regarding Texas ecoregions	Attending a workshop regarding the Texas ecoregion where your chapter exists and volunteers
Watching a National Geographic TV show about southwest U.S. ecology (Why: no interaction with instructor)	Watching a recorded webinar about your chapter's local ecology with an opportunity to email instructor later	Participating in a live webinar with instructor and participant Q&A about local ecology specific to management of the resources
	Attending a session at the TMN Annual Meeting to learn about the events and opportunities occurring throughout Texas	Attending a session at the TMN Annual Meeting that allows you to put what you learned into practice at your local level
Taking a course on ornamentals and vegetable gardening in Texas (Why: not about natural resources and our mission)	Taking a course on pollinator plants of Texas and their benefits for the garden	Taking a course on native pollinator plants for your ecosystem and how to plant them and what wildlife they benefit
Traveling to a fellow member's private property to observe, learn or identify plant species (native or ornamental)	Attending a guided tour of a local pollinator gardens highlighting native plant species	Attending a local prairie walk hosted by a partner organization at a public/private facility (i.e. nature center, conservancy property)