CHAPTER OPERATING HANDBOOK

East Texas Chapter
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Texas Master Naturalist Program

The Texas Master Naturalist Program's mission is to develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the state of Texas.

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CHAPTER OPERATING HANDBOOK
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Texas Master Naturalist Program

1. CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

Governing documents

- The documents governing this chapter are our *Bylaws*, the Texas Master Naturalist™ Program's *Chapter Management and Operations Protocols (CMOP),* this *East Texas Chapter Operating Handbook* (*COH*) and *Chapters Records Retention Policy (CRRP).*
- A chapter's COH must comply with the *Bylaws*, the *CMOP and CRRP*. [Reference *CMOP* at https://txmn.tamu.edu/chapter-resources/chapter-documents/]
- The chapter is structured for governance as described in this *COH*.

2. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

2.1 Makeup of the board – The board consists of the officers, the directors, the state representative, the immediate past president, and the chapter advisor(s). All are voting members of the board.

2.1.1 **Officers -** The only elected positions are those of the officers. Officers are elected by the membership at the last general membership meeting of the calendar year prior to assuming their office. [Reference *Bylaws* Article V, A. and D.] They are:

- President
- Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer

It is allowable to combine the duties of officers with the approval of the board of directors. For example, one person may act as Secretary and Treasurer; however, officer titles may not be changed.

2.1.2 Directors are appointed and approved according to *Bylaws* Article V, E., F. and G. They are:

- Advanced Training (AT) Director
- Chapter State Representative
- Communication Director
- Membership Director
- Training Class Director (term begins when training class ends)
- Training Class Representative (term may be shorter than other directors)
- Volunteer Service (VS) Projects Director

More director positions may be added, or positions may be combined with the approval of the board of directors. [Reference *Bylaws* Article V, E.]

2.2 Term of office - For officers and directors, the term of office is 24 months, and they are eligible for re-election or re-appointment.

2.3 Executive committee - The elected officers comprise the executive committee. Functions of the committee are outlined in Section 5.1.1 of this document.

3. DUTIES OF BOARD

3.1 Duties of all board members

a. Communicate effectively with the Texas Master Naturalist (TMN) state office about any questions or issues that arise and keep it informed of what the chapter is doing.
b. Maintain confidentiality when dealing with individual member issues.
c. Whenever possible, maintain the privacy of members' personal information.
d. Strive to further the TMN mission in everything that one does.
e. Adhere to the *TMN Code of Ethics* and *Standards of Conduct* [Reference at https://txmn.tamu.edu/chapter-resources/chapter-documents/].
f. Remember that every chapter and every member represent the public face of the TMN Program and its sponsoring agencies.
g. Serve as a model of leadership and recruit and develop new leaders for the chapter.
h. Serve as a model to membership by attendance to board and chapter meetings and active participation in AT and VS opportunities.

3.2 Duties of officers

The chapter may add to, shift to other positions, or modify duties assigned to each position while adhering to the requirements of the Bylaws, and the CMOP. Changes to duties of officers are determined by the executive board and approved by the board of directors. However, every duty assigned in the state COH template must be performed by some position. Officer titles must not be changed.

3.2.1 President

a. See 3.1 - Duties of all board members
b. Serve as chair of the board of directors
c. Prepare an agenda for board and chapter meetings
d. Preside at board and chapter meetings
e. Sign all board-approved documents that may be legally binding on the chapter
f. Ensure that the president is one of the three authorized signatories on the chapter bank account
g. Authorize in writing in advance any payments to be made of $1,000 or greater from the chapter bank account
h. Communicate with board and chapter members as needed
i. Present a summary of the chapter's accomplishments each year
j. Conduct votes by manual or electronic means as required by responsibilities of the board [see 4.4]
k. Present a slate of candidates for all director positions for review and approval by a majority vote of the executive committee, immediate past president, and chapter advisor
l. Appoint all committee chairs and serve as an ex-officio member of all committees, assisting as appropriate
m. Ensure all officers and directors perform their duties and responsibilities as stated in this *COH* and are familiar with program guiding documents (i.e., *Bylaws, CMOP*)
n. 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, the Chapter's Advisor(s) and the TMN state program coordinator's review is obtained
o. Communicate with the TMN state office, other chapters, and state agencies as appropriate
p. Be the chapter's state representative or appoint an alternate to serve [see 3.3.2]
q. If there is no immediate past president, reassign the duties of that position [see 3.4.1]
r. Serve as immediate past president upon completion of term as president
s. Facilitate the retreat of all newly elected officers and directors with the outgoing board members to help in the transition of responsibilities and to chart the chapter's new year
t. Write donor-appreciation letters

u. Present recognition awards to out-going officers and board members

3.2.2 Vice president

a. See 3.1 - Duties of all board members
b. Assist the president and act for the president in the president's absence
c. Meet with the president to recommend chapter and board meeting dates and locations for approval by the board
d. Arrange for programs for the chapter meetings
e. Select and secure the venue for upcoming chapter meetings
f. Participate as a member of the annual financial examination committee [see 5.2.1]
g. Coordinate chapter field trips

3.2.3 Secretary

a. See 3.1 - Duties of all board members
b. Conduct necessary chapter correspondence as assigned by the president
c. Record, publish, and preserve the minutes of all meetings of the board, executive committee, general membership, and any special meetings [see 8.4]
d. Keep a record of attendance at each meeting and whether a quorum is present
e. Maintain a paper copy or a secure digital record of all minutes and correspondence according to the chapter records retention policy [Reference at https://txmn.tamu.edu/chapter-resources/chapter-documents/]
f. At board and chapter meetings, have access to electronic or paper copies of past minutes, the *Bylaws*, *CMOP, COH*, and the *Simplified Parliamentary Procedures of the League of Women Voters.*
g. Ensure that a method is in place for maintaining the chapter's paper and/or electronic files [see 4.6]
h. Facilitate chapter members' compliance with the chapter records retention policy.
i. For 501(c)(3) chapters, ensure that all board members sign the required Conflict of Interest form each year [Reference form at https://txmn.tamu.edu/chapter-resources/chapter-documents/]
j. Maintain a secure list of all websites, social media platforms, email distribution lists, apps, data storage sites, financial accounts, and any other tools the chapter uses to conduct its business (include username and password if appropriate)

3.2.4 Treasurer

a. See 3.1 - Duties of all board members
b. Receive all monies for the chapter and maintain them in a chapter bank account
c. Develop and maintain an annual budget for the chapter with input and approval by the board. The proposed budget should be finalized and submitted for approval as soon as possible after the start of the new calendar year.
d. Pay all bills promptly upon receipt of a written statement, invoice, or receipt and any other required documentation for approved expenses
e. Make all financial reports and documents available to any chapter member or advisor upon request
f. Ensure that the required two or three signers are on the chapter bank account
g. In the event that other financial tools (e.g. PayPal, Square) were approved for use by the chapter, ensure that at least two other board members have access.
h. Sign all checks, drafts, or other instruments for payment or notes of the chapter. In the absence of the treasurer, the president or another designated officer may sign any instruments under $1,000 for payment or notes of the chapter.

i. For any unbudgeted payments of $1,000.00 or greater, the president must provide written authorization in advance (and filed with the chapter), and/or must co-sign the payment instrument with the treasurer or other designated officer.
j. Present a financial report at all board and chapter meetings that includes the status of all financial transactions and bank statement reconciliations
k. Prepare and submit all annual financial records, reports and audits as required by law and sponsoring agencies
l. Present the financial records to the financial examination committee [see 5.2.1] annually as requested
m. Maintain the financial records of the chapter in such a way that quality financial reports can be produced that are easily understood by any chapter member or advisor. Financial management systems can be a detailed spreadsheet or commercially available programs such as QuickBooks or Quicken
n. For 501(c)(3) chapters, file the 990N or other tax form with the IRS annually
o. For 501(c)(3) chapters, use a financial management system that meets Generally Accepted Accounting Principles
p. Retain a detailed account of all income, expenses, disbursements, and other financial matters (including a paper copy of such documentation) for seven years plus the current calendar year, according to the chapter records retention policy [Reference the *TMN Chapters Records Retention Policy* at https://txmn.tamu.edu/chapter-resources/chapter-documents/]
q. Serve as a member of the chapter's *ad-hoc* committee for grants, contracts, and donations.

3.3 Duties of directors

The chapter may add more director positions or combine/consolidate these listed with the approval of the board of directors as long as all duties are fulfilled. Director titles listed in this section correspond to the director list in VMS and must not be changed.
[Reference https://texasmasternaturalist.freshdesk.com/support/home/]

3.3.1 Advanced Training Director

a. See 3.1 - Duties of all board members
b. Chair the advanced training (AT) committee [see 5.1.2]
c. Ensure a current copy of the Advanced Training Request for members to request that a program be considered for AT credit is available on the website
d. Working with the AT committee, review and recommend for approval or disapproval of all AT requests and events [Reference *CMOP* 5.10]
e. Coordinate with the membership director to set up and manage AT opportunities in the chapter's Volunteer Management System (VMS)
f. Ensure that a complete description of generally approved AT opportunities is accessible to all chapter members through the chapter website, event calendar, email announcements and/or any other communication methods used by the chapter. Ensure that membership is notified about additional, approved AT opportunities not found in the generally approved list.

3.3.2 Chapter State Representative

This position is assumed by the president, or the president may appoint a board member to assume these responsibilities.
a. See 3.1 – Duties of all board members
b. Work as a chapter liaison with the TMN state program coordinators
c. Represent the chapter in state level matters of the TMN Program
d. Enhance the communication between the state and the chapter
e. With the immediate past president, help guide and educate the chapter's new officers and directors using the state governing documents

f. Participate in meetings as requested by TMN state program coordinators
g. Review draft state documents as requested
h. Help with planning and coordination of activities for the TMN statewide annual meeting
i. Attend the TMN annual meeting or delegate an alternate

3.3.3 **Communication Director**

a. See 3.1 – Duties of all board members
b. Coordinate volunteers or committees to handle these various aspects of chapter communications:
   - community education/outreach
   - history/archives/photography
   - marketing/public relations
   - newsletter
   - social media
   - speaker's bureau
   - website
c. Work closely with the board and directors to ensure a coordinated approach to communication with internal members and external groups
d. Ensure the development and distribution of publicity press releases for print and electronic media covering training class application, chapter meetings and special events, working with the above-listed communication committees
e. Ensure the communication of approved AT and VSH opportunities is accessible to chapter members through the chapter website, event calendar, email announcements and any other communication methods used by the chapter in coordination with the AT director and VS director
f. Work with the training class director and membership director to develop recruiting materials
g. Arrange for printing and distribution of recruiting or promotional materials
h. Coordinate social media platforms and content developed for chapter members. Social media complies with the *TMN Brand Guide* [Reference at https://txmn.tamu.edu/chapter-resources/tmn-brand-marketing/] and with policies of the TMN sponsoring agencies: Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension (AgriLife Extension)

3.3.4 **Membership Director**

a. See 3.1 – Duties of all board members
b. Chair the membership committee [see 5.1.3]
c. Maintain a roster of all chapter members with pertinent contact information
d. Manage the chapter's use of the TMN Volunteer Management System for reporting VS and AT hours [Reference *CMOP,* 5. and 6.]
e. Supervise the chapter VMS administrator's process for reviewing and approving hours logged by members
f. Ensure all members are trained in the use of the VMS
g. Ensure all member VMS profiles are up to date to allow for an annual criminal background check
h. Publish names of members achieving certification and milestone awards
i. Present awards at chapter meetings
j. Coordinate with training class director to manage training class application process
k. Coordinate with communication director and training class director to develop recruiting materials
l. Coordinate with communication director and officers to manage electronic communications to all chapter members
m. Manage the chapter's mentor program in coordination with the training class director [Reference *CMOP*, Appendix 3.]
n. Ensure that rosters with member contact information are not shared on public sites such as the chapter website or social media platform

3.3.5 **Training Class Director**

Note about term of office: The term of the new training director begins upon the conclusion of the current training class or at a reasonable time thereafter.

a. See 3.1 – Duties of all board members
b. Chair the training class committee [see 5.1.4]
c. Develop a budget for the class and submit it to the board for approval
d. Recommend class tuition fees to the board for approval
e. Work with membership and communication directors to develop recruiting materials
f. Work with the membership director to manage the training class application process
g. Coordinate with membership director to review applicants and share with the board as appropriate
h. Present to the board for approval a proposed class syllabus that covers the state-approved curriculum for Initial Training [Reference *CMOP* 2.4]
i. Serve as manager for the training class, including planning, curriculum development, calendar, instructors, venues, attendance tracking, etc.
j. Coordinate all communications with trainees
~~k.~~ Ensure that a mentoring program is in place for trainees [Reference *CMOP Appendix 3*]
l. Ensure each trainee receives appropriate instruction to use VMS

3.3.6 **Training Class Representative**

Class representative serves from the beginning of a training course for 12 months, or until the beginning of the next training course.

a. See 3.1 – Duties of all board members
b. Represent the current training class as a member of the board, attending board and chapter meetings
c. Participate as a member of the training committee [see 5.1.4] planning for the subsequent class
d. Participate as a member of the annual financial examination committee [see 5.2.1]
e. Report back to the current training class to provide trainees with information about chapter business
f. Talk to the subsequent training class about selecting a training class representative

3.3.7 **Volunteer Service Projects Director**

a. See 3.1 – Duties of all board members
b. Chair the volunteer service (VS) projects committee [see 5.1.5]
c. Ensure a current copy of the Member Volunteer Project Approval Form for members to request that a program be considered for VS credit is available on the website, using as a guideline the information required for setting up a new opportunity in VMS [Reference https://texasmasternaturalist.freshdesk.com/support/home/]
d. With the VS projects committee, review and recommend for approval or disapproval all chapter VS project requests [Reference *CMOP,* 6.8 Appendix 2]
e. Coordinate with the membership director/VMS administrator to add or modify volunteer opportunities in VMS
f. Coordinate with project leaders to ensure their responsibilities are met [see 6.3]
g. Ensure that a complete description of every volunteer service project is accessible to all chapter members through the chapter website, event calendar, email announcements and any other communication methods used by the chapter

3.4 Duties of other board members

3.4.1 **Immediate Past President**

In the absence of an immediate past president, the president assigns these responsibilities to a previous past president or another board member

a. See 3.1 – Duties of all board members
b. Provide continuity from prior board to ensure local policies and procedures are being followed
c. Provide counsel to officers and directors on fulfilling duties and responsibilities
d. Assist the president as requested
e. Lead an annual review of the chapter's *COH* and update if necessary to reflect actual chapter policies and procedures as well as to ensure compliance with all TMN state governing documents [Reference https://txmn.tamu.edu/chapter-resources/chapter-documents/]
f. Chair the nomination committee [see 5.2.2] [Reference *Bylaws*, Article V, D.2]

3.4.2 **Advisor**

The duties and responsibilities of the chapter advisor are described in detail in Appendix 1 of the *CMOP* and in Article V, B of the *Bylaws*. Also see 3.1 – Duties of all board members

4. RESPONSIBILITIES OF BOARD

4.1 Authority – 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 *Bylaws.* [Reference *Bylaws* Article VI, A. 2-3]

4.2 Committee oversight – All committees and their activities are subject to review and approval by the board.

4.3 Expenditure limits – The board will honor any expenditure limits set by the chapter.

4.4 Voting – All business before the board requires approval by majority vote of board members in attendance (either in person or via electronic method) at a board meeting where a quorum is present. All official board votes shall be recorded in the minutes.

4.5 Setting dues - The board may set annual membership dues payable to the chapter, with approval of a majority of members present at a duly called and convened general membership meeting.

a. The board must notify voting members at least 30 days prior to the general meeting that the subject of dues or their increase will be brought before the convened general membership for action.
b. The board, under special circumstances, may waive part or all of an individual's annual membership dues on a case-by-case basis, if approved by a majority vote of the board.
c. Dues shall be payable on or before January 31 each calendar year. If dues are not paid by January 31 each calendar year, then all privileges afforded a TMN member are rescinded until dues are paid. A TMN member who is not current in the payment of dues will be considered inactive and categorized as such in VMS.

4.6 Records retention - The board must conduct chapter business in compliance with the chapter records retention policy, that in turn must meet requirements as outlined in the state policy. [Reference *TMN Chapters Records Retention Policy* at https://txmn.tamu.edu/chapter-resources/chapter-documents/]

a. Ensure the chapter has a records retention policy in place (See Section 9)
b. Establish and maintain a remote data storage system (e.g., Dropbox) that gives appropriate access to chapter members responsible for retaining records of their positions
c. Train all chapter members who are in leadership positions (officers, board members, committee chairs, project leaders) in the requirements of the records retention policy and the proper use of the chapter's designated data storage system

5. COMMITTEES

All committees serve subject to the oversight and approval of the board. The president appoints committee chairs. The chair recruits assistants if needed and is responsible for seeing that the committee fulfills its responsibilities and meets its objectives. Committees may meet remotely.

5.1 Standing Committees

The chapter may add more standing committees or combine/consolidate these listed with the approval of the board of directors as long as all the responsibilities are fulfilled.

5.1.1 Executive committee

a. The executive committee is composed of the elected officers of the chapter [Reference *Bylaws*, Article VI, B.1]
b. With the immediate past president and the advisor, approve proposed directors to fill vacancies in a position
c. In matters of discipline or removal of a member from TMN, review allegations and supporting documentation to make a recommendation to the TMN state program coordinator [Reference *Process for Disciplining or Removing Members* at https://txmn.tamu.edu/chapter-resources/chapter-documents/]
d. In matters of serious incidences of malfeasance or behavior inconsistent with the principles of the chapter (of a board member other than an elected officer), review the issues and vote to remove that board member from position if necessary [Reference *Bylaws* Article V, H.22]

5.1.2 Advanced training committee

a. Support AT director in reviewing and approving AT opportunities for chapter members
b. Assist in drafting a complete description of those project activities for which advanced training hours may be accumulated
c. Assist in publicizing approved AT opportunities to chapter members in a timely fashion through the chapter website, event calendar, email announcements and any other communication methods used by the chapter
d. Assist in managing the chapter's AT opportunities in VMS

5.1.3 Membership committee

a. Assist the membership director in managing the chapter's records and reports within VMS. The membership director may designate an assistant VMS administrator to assume some of these responsibilities.
b. Support the membership director in ensuring the accuracy of hours and activities logged into VMS. The membership director may designate an assistant VMS administrator to assume some of these responsibilities.
c. Assist in maintaining the current roster of members
d. Assist the membership director in tracking and reporting the names of members who have completed the Initial Training course, achieved initial certification, achieved re-certification, and earned milestone awards
e. Help publicize and celebrate member achievements e.g., at chapter meetings, on the chapter website, in newsletters, at volunteer recognition events.

5.1.4 Training class committee

a. Serve under the leadership of the training class director
b. Help plan, implement, and evaluate the chapter training curriculum and develop the calendar for Initial Training course.
c. Acquire the class book, *TMN State Curriculum*, for each class member and prepare additional class materials

d. Help select presenters and make arrangements for their class/presentation including materials, handouts, and audio-visual equipment needed
e. Help arrange for speaker gifts, travel, lodging needs, confirmation, and thank you letters
f. Help arrange for publicity, e.g., newspaper articles, flyers, brochures, electronic media
g. Help arrange for training venue and required facilities equipment for all class periods
h. Assist with class field trips
i. Ensure there is a method in place for tracking attendance of trainees and monitoring their progress toward completion of Initial Training course
j. Host training class orientation and course completion events
k. Arrange for refreshments/amenities during class periods

5.1.5 Volunteer service projects committee
a. Support VS projects director in reviewing and approving volunteer opportunities for chapter members.
b. Assist in drafting a complete description of those project activities for which volunteer service hours may be accumulated
c. Assist in publicizing approved volunteer project opportunities to chapter members in a timely fashion through the chapter website, event calendar, email announcements and any other communication methods used by the chapter
d. Assist in organizing and hosting volunteer project fairs or similar events for chapter members, and in particular, for members-in-training enrolled in the chapter's Initial Training course.
e. Assist in managing project opportunities in the chapter's VMS
f. Assist project leaders in fulfilling their responsibilities [see 6.2]

5.1.6 Hospitality Committee
a. Serve under direction of the chapter president
b. Help plan and provide refreshments for chapter meetings, training classes, chapter holiday party and special events
c. Coordinate with directors and committees needing hospitality
d. Maintain and organize supplies, paper goods, coffee, etc.
e. Present receipts to treasurer for reimbursement

5.2 Ad hoc committees

Ad hoc committees are formed for a particular and specific short-term purpose. Additional committees or a task force can be formed by the board as needed to address specific tasks or purposes.

5.2.1 Financial examination committee
a. Conduct the annual examination of chapter financial records [Reference *Bylaws* Article IX]
b. Members include vice-president, secretary, training class representative, and chapter advisor
c. President appoints the chair
d. Treasurer provides financial records for review
e. Results of financial examination will be reported and recorded in the minutes at the board meeting following the completion of the audit with signed attestations from each committee member

5.2.2 Nomination committee

This committee must be used for the selection of officer candidates. It may be used for recommending director candidates.
a. For elected officers, proceed in accordance with *Bylaws* [Reference *Bylaws* Article V, D.2]
b. For director positions, proceed in accordance with *Bylaws* [Reference *Bylaws* Article V, E. 2 & 3]

c. President appoints members to the committee, chaired by the immediate past president.
d. Committee must review the required skills, duties, and responsibilities of each 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
e. Committee presents a slate of candidates to the president, considering the following attributes. Selection of candidates based on these attributes would maintain experience and continuity for the board while recruiting new members to serve.
    1) Officer candidates must be Certified Texas Master Naturalists and members in good standing.
    2) The committee shall endeavor to select candidates from the chapter membership who demonstrate appropriate skills for managing the position for which they are being nominated. Candidates should not be selected only on length of time in a certain position, length of time in the chapter, or on amount of service hours attained.
f. Election procedure:
    1) President must publish the slate of officer candidates to the chapter membership in writing at least 15 days prior to the last general membership meeting of the calendar year.
        a. Officers serve a term of 24 months.
        b. President and Vice-President should be elected in alternate years
        c. Not all officers should be on the same 24-month track
        d. Officers are eligible to serve a second term
    2) Nomination committee will conduct the election at the last general membership meeting of the calendar year.
g. TMN state program coordinators may provide oversight to a chapter's nomination process.

5.2.3 *Ad hoc* Grants, donations, and contracts committee

a. Any grants or donations solicited for the chapter must be approved by the chapter board
b. Membership on the grants and donations committee should at least include the chapter treasurer and the project leader of a project that has grant funding or receives donations
c. Any chapter that receives a grant or donation of $5,000.00 or more must notify the TMN state office. Chapters are encouraged to share with the state office any news of grants or donations received.
d. The term of service for the committee or any subcommittees is based on the specific functions performed by the committee or on the required reporting period of a Memorandum of Understanding/Agreement (MOU/MOA), grant, donation, or project
e. Volunteer service hours cannot be used as match for any grant, contract, or MOU/MOA
f. Chapters cannot enter into any contract, MOU, or MOA without prior review by the TMN state office.
g. Functions of this committee may include:
    1) Review grant opportunities for the chapter
    2) Coordinate grant application process
    3) Track progress of grants
    4) Ensure that reports are made to grantors as to the progress on grant spending
    5) Monitor MOUs and MOAs. Form ad hoc subcommittees as necessary for monitoring each MOU/MOA. The project leader of projects that fall under the MOU or MOA should chair the subcommittee and must report regularly to the Executive Committee.

6. CHAPTER PROJECTS

6.1 New projects – A new or expanded volunteer service project may be proposed by any active chapter member, following the instructions provided by the VS projects director and completing the Member Volunteer Project Approval Form. TMN guidelines required for setting up a new opportunity in VMS must be followed. [Reference https://texasmasternaturalist.freshdesk.com/support/home/

6.2 Travel time – Members may include a reasonable, typical amount of travel time when recording volunteer service hours. Travel time should not include side trips for personal activities. Travel within the chapter catchment area is generally acceptable

- Travel to service projects outside of the chapter's initially trained ecoregion that have been approved by VS committee is acceptable.
- Travel outside of the chapter's trained ecoregion needs to be critically reviewed and approved at a board level and following criteria for service project approval.
- Travel time claimed cannot exceed the amount of time contributed to volunteer service.

6.3 Responsibilities of project leaders

6.3.1 Keep the chapter membership informed of events concerning your project, including information about location, date, time, and equipment needed for workdays

6.3.2 Provide contact information for the leader at each workday

6.3.3 Ensure that the president and website editor or calendar keeper are informed of details so event listings can be kept up to date

6.3.4 Record impact data in VMS about each workday or appoint one of the volunteers to do it

6.3.5 Report on your project periodically via the newsletter, email blasts, newspaper articles, or at a chapter meeting.

6.3.6 Submit a budget request for expenses associated with your project. Expenditure above $100 require executive board approval.

6.3.7 Work with the chapter board and *ad hoc* Grants, Donations, and Contracts Committee to solicit grants or donations if appropriate [See 5.2.3]. The TMN state office must be notified of any grants of $5,000 or more received by the chapter. Regular reporting on the status of such monies is included in the project leader responsibilities.

6.3.8 Maintain contact with partners at the event venue or worksite for your project. Partners may include cities, counties, schools, parks, non-profit organizations, or site supervisors. **The event coordinator's contact information is vital to a safe and successful event.**

6.3.9 Maintain an updated file for your project on the chapter's data storage system, working with the committees under the Communication Director. Include pictures, reports on workdays, and partner and volunteer contact information.

7. MEMBERSHIP

Membership is governed by rules established in *Bylaws,* Article IV

7.1 Non-discrimination and inclusion - Membership in the chapter is open to individuals aged 18 or over, based on the equal opportunity policies of the state sponsoring agencies, TPWD and AgriLife Extension.

7.2 Member categories

- Texas Master Naturalist-in-Training (Member-in-Training) – a member enrolled in a chapter's Initial Training course

- Texas Master Naturalist – an active member who has completed Initial Training course requirements
- Certified Texas Master Naturalist – an active member who has met all the requirements of initial certification and thereafter, attains annual recertification

7.3 Membership status

7.3.1 Criminal background check - All persons who are chapter members in any category must submit to and pass the required annual criminal background check

7.3.2 Dues - Members must be current in the payment of any dues set by the chapter

7.3.3 Transfers - Members may transfer between chapters within the state of Texas [Reference *CMOP,* 3.2]

7.3.4 Reinstatement - Members who have been moved to inactive status may petition a local chapter for reinstatement, providing all chapter membership requirements are met

8. MEETINGS

The state requires that chapters meet at least every 2 months and boards meet at least quarterly. [Reference Bylaws Article VII]

8.1. Chapter meetings - Our chapter typically has regularly scheduled membership meetings at a minimum of 10 times per year on the fourth Thursday of every month at 6:30 pm except November and December. There is no meeting in November, and the December meeting is held in conjunction with a holiday party on an available Saturday. Any number of members present at a meeting, in person or remotely/virtually, constitutes a quorum.

8.2 Board meetings - Our board has regularly scheduled board meetings quarterly, typically in January, April, July and October, on the fourth Thursday of the same month as a chapter meeting at 5:30pm. A majority of the members of the board must be present in person or remotely/virtually to constitute a quorum.

8.3 Meeting remotely - All meetings may be conducted by remote communication technology if the following requirements are met:

a. Reasonable notice is given to persons entitled to participate in the meeting and includes relevant information to be discussed
b. The system provides access to the meeting in a manner or using a method by which all meeting participants can communicate with each other
c. Minutes include documentation that the requirements in a. and b. above were met

8.4 Minutes – Minutes are the legal record of a meeting and are never destroyed. They include actions considered by the board or general membership and business topics discussed. These items should always be included:

a. Date and place of meeting. If held by remote communication technology or with a combination of remote and in-person attendees, that must be stated. [see 8.3]
b. The person who presided at the meeting and the person who recorded minutes
c. Time of call to order and of adjournment.
d. The number of members in attendance (to establish a quorum). May include the titles of officers and directors in attendance.
e. Whether previous minutes were approved, as published or as corrected

f. Summary of the treasurer's report to include the beginning balance, totals of income and expenses, and ending balance. Entire report will be attached to the minutes.
g. Motions made and votes taken. Include names of those making motions; names of seconders are not necessary. Discussion on motions is not usually included, but may be signified by a phrase such as, "After much discussion, the motion carried."
h. The fact that a report from a committee was given, but not usually the details of the report unless it involves a recommendation or requires a vote.
i. Name of presenter of a program and the topic, but no summary of the program.

9. RECORD RETENTION

Chartered chapters must maintain complete and authentic records which are retained in a secure manner and are made accessible when required. This chapter follows the records retention policy established by TMN found on the state website [Reference https://txmn.tamu.edu/chapter-resources/chapter-documents/]

10. ADOPTION AND AMENDMENT OF HANDBOOK

10.1 Initial Adoption - The Chapter Operating Handbook is operationally effective at the state level on January 1, 2026.

10.2 Amendment or revision

10.2.1 Board approval - Amendments or revisions to this *COH* must be approved by a two-thirds vote of the board members in attendance, either in person or remotely/virtually, at a regular board meeting

10.2.2 Notification requirements - The general membership must be notified in writing (conventional mail, email, or other equivalent means) of the proposed amendments or revisions at least 15 days before the next chapter meeting, with notice that the ratification vote will be held at that meeting.

10.2.3 Membership approval - The general membership will have the opportunity to discuss the changes at the meeting. Approval requires a majority vote of those in attendance, either in person or remotely/virtually.

10.3 State office notification **-** Once a chapter has adopted, revised, or amended the *COH*, an electronic copy must be sent to the TMN state office within 30 days.

11. REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

11.1 **TMN state website**: https://txmn.tamu.edu/

11.2 **State documents:** All referenced state documents (or guides to creating chapter-specific documents) can be found on the state website at https://txmn.tamu.edu/chapter-resources/chapter-documents/ .

11.3 **Volunteer Management System (VMS) help desk**: https://texasmasternaturalist.freshdesk.com/support/home/

11.4 **Chapter website:** https://txmn.tamu.edu; select ETCMN from chapter map; select documents.

11.5 **Records Retention:** https://txmn.tamu.edu/chapter-resources/chapter-documents/ .