New Project Opportunities -- Volunteer service project opportunities can be presented by various entities ranging from state program sponsors, the chapter, local chapter partners, an individual volunteer, nature centers, schools, or city, county, state, and federal agencies. Often chapters institute a "new class project" where students in the Initial Training course find/develop and mutually agree to volunteer for the project as a group and receive their required volunteer service hours at the same time. A project or service must be approved by the chapter before volunteers can log their hours.

Criteria for Project Approval - The following are points for the chapter's VS coordinator and the committee to consider in approving a project opportunity:

- The proposed service project is representative of the goals, practices, and teachings of the TMN Program.
- The project addresses a pressing naturalist or natural resource management issue need.
- The scope of the project is described in terms of when it will be conducted, where, estimated time needed to complete or maintain per month, how many members would be needed, etc.
- The project is within the chapter's defined service area or ecological area. Consideration by the chapter may be given to projects outside the chapter's service area and ecological zone if the project's service is compatible with the mission, goals, and training of the chapter and the TMN Program.
- The project allows the chapter to create visibility, identity, or recruitment opportunities for the chapter.
- The project describes how its impact on the community and our natural resources can be measured.
- The opportunity identifies why/how it is beneficial for the chapter and for the program to be associated with it.
- The opportunity **does not** include fundraising for an organization other than the chapter or the state TMN Program.
- The opportunity **does not** include lobbying, which is not acceptable under the TMN mission.

Volunteer Service Examples:

Unacceptable	Better	Best
Being "on call" as a wildlife rescuer for a non-partner organization (Why: no actual service time)	Transporting injured, native wildlife to licensed wildlife rehabilitation service	Providing outreach on the prevention of unnecessary wildlife captures or 'rescues' (e.g., knowledge to answer questions on "abandoned" wildlife)
Planting exotic plants or a vegetable garden (Why: not within our mission)	Planting native plants or a wildscape at a local school	Leading 5th graders and school staff in implementing a native plant garden or wildscape at a local school
Monarch monitoring in Colorado (Why: opportunity is not within Texas)	Monarch monitoring in Texas	Monarch monitoring within your local chapter's area
Cleaning the elephant cage at a zoo (Why: not a native species and does not fall within our mission)	Caring for the prairie chicken area at a local zoo that is in partnership with the local chapter	Leading interpretive programs about prairie chickens at a local zoo that is in partnership with the local chapter
Maintenance at a private native plant nursery (Why: is a private business)	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.

Unacceptable	Better	Best
Identifying flora and fauna on your property and uploading it to citizen science website that is not part of a chapter-approved project. (Why: Private benefit and activity does not contribute to an approved project following the program's iNaturalist and eBird community science guidelines)	Uploading imperiled species observations into iNaturalist on public land with permissions set to "public."	Organizing a public or private land "bio-blitz" for citizen scientists and experts to learn from each other and upload data to eBird and iNaturalist
Conducting wildlife management activities on your own land (Why: Private benefit)	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 their classroom (Why: the individual is employed and receiving pay to conduct this work already)	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 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 (Why: the individual is employed and receiving pay to conduct this work already)	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 coordinating a stream clean-up for the local community to participate in.
The unplanned altering of species habitat, advocating for bike and hike access trails in sensitive nature areas (Why: not serving TMN Mission)	Conducting endangered species surveys; developing nature trails or habitat brush piles at a local park/nature center that 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 or hold chapter meetings in this same space.
Manning a "store" or native plant sale that raises funds for a State Park Friends Group or other non-TMN organization. (Why: not part of TMN mission)	Answering phones/emails and doing basic office work for your local County Natural Resources Agent	Serving as an information docent by giving programs, leading tours, or organizing outreach events on native wildlife and habitats

Unacceptable	Better	Best
Receiving service credit for time spent as a Board member or committee member for a 'for profit' organization or one whose mission is contrary to that of the TMN Program. Time spent fundraising for other than TMN organizations. (Why: not acting in the interest of the TMN Program)	With annual review and approval from your chapter, 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. Time spent representing your local TMN chapter's interest to a Board/organization that has developed a designated "Master Naturalist Representative" spot on their leadership team. (Such as liaison positions)	Serving on a TMN Board or as a committee member at any level within the TMN program. Training other organizations how to conduct natural resource management activities. Providing natural resource technical guidance expert advice on/to a municipal advisory committee or land trust council. Serving on a local government advisory committee making natural resource recommendations.
Preparing food items for social activities of the chapter (Why: Preparation of food for an activity that is purely social does not meet the mission of the TMN)	Serving on the hospitality committee for chapter meetings or training classes.	Planning and organizing logistics for a chapter volunteer recognition event.

BAT Project with Texas Nature Trackers: TMN Hourly Reporting (Draft 5-2024)

Texas Nature Trackers is undertaking a long-term project to collect stationary acoustic bat data across the state of Texas in Spring 2024. To accomplish this effort, the program has recruited more than 400 Texas Master Naturalists from across the state to participate in this significant citizen science effort to gather long-term data regarding the distribution of bats across Texas through the deployment of acoustic monitors following NABat protocols.

Below is a summary of descriptions of volunteer roles with this project and hourly reporting opportunities.

BAT Project Chapter Coordinator(s):

This position includes a primary point-of-contact between the chapter and TNT staff, as well as co-coordinators to help with details of the project within that chapter.

Specific responsibilities in which hours may be tracked include:

- Email or phone communications between TNT staff and/or participating chapter volunteers (**reported as regular volunteer time in 15-minute increments**).
- Attending virtual or in-person meetings with TNT staff for project coordination/training (**AT hours reported for duration of meetings**).
- Host meetings with BAT Project team members as needed (**report as regular volunteer time**).
- Work with monitoring equipment deployment volunteers to identify and document locations for deployment through individual or group meetings (**regular volunteer time in 15-minute increments for individual conversations, AT time for coordination/training meetings**).
- Attend necessary trainings that help them do their coordination efforts ranging from TNT staff-led training to trainings offered through Wildlife Acoustics (**AT in 2-hour blocks) or other organizations as identified by TNT staff (AT hours reported for duration of trainings**).
- Schedule and coordinate deployment pathways, ensuring that detectors get from one location to the next over the nine-week sampling period (**regular volunteer time in 15-minute increments**)
- Collect equipment for storage at end of sampling period (**regular volunteer time in 15-minute increments**).
- Coordinate getting SD cards to volunteer analysts for uploading to TPWD server (**regular volunteer time in 15-minute increments).**

BAT Project Chapter Field Deployment Volunteers:

- Attend necessary trainings by TNT staff and meetings called by chapter coordinator(s) (**AT in real time hours**).
- Work with chapter coordinator for determination of monitor property locations as well as specific location of the monitor (**regular volunteer time in 15-minute increments**).
- Identify specific monitor location placement, secure monitor, and deploy acoustic monitors from Monday-Friday at designated locations (**regular volunteer time in 15-minute increments).**
- Complete NABat Stationary Acoustic Monitoring Data Sheet for their designated location(s) (**report in 30-minute increments**).
- Work with chapter coordinators to get monitor from their location to the next (**report in 15-minute increments**).

BAT Project Data Review/Analysis Volunteers:

- Attend free on-line training opportunities through Wildlife Acoustics specifically on use of Kaleidoscope software for acoustic analysis (**AT actual training time, typically 2-hours, plus additional regular volunteer time in real time for review of recordings as needed**).
- Attend TNT-led trainings/meetings for acoustic analysis including participation in review of any exercises provided by TNT staff (**AT for attending trainings/completing exercises; report in 30-minute increments).**
- Gathering SD cards, labelling, storing, and then exporting them through Kite Works to TPWD server at end of season (**regular volunteer hours in 30-minute increments**).
- Manual analysis of resulting Auto ID results processed by TPWD, once they are sent back to volunteer data analysts (**regular volunteers hours reported on hourly basis),** including filing their analysis results in pre-determined folders, and sending data back to server.

Michelle M. Haggerty