

Good Water Chapter Texas Master Naturalists

Chapter Documents

T E X A S

Master
Naturalist™



Revised November 2015

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Good Water Chapter Texas Master Naturalists Chapter Operating Handbook



Revised November 2015

GOOD WATER CHAPTER OPERATING HANDBOOK

Texas Master Naturalist Program™

THE GOAL

The Goal of the Good Water Chapter is to preserve, restore, and develop our local environmental natural resources and natural areas and to educate our community regarding the value of such dedication.

I: CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

The documents governing the Good Water Chapter will be this Chapter's Bylaws and the guiding practices found in the Chapter Management and Operations Protocols and the Chapter's Operating Handbook. In case of conflicting language, first the Chapter's Bylaws, second the Chapter Management and Operations Protocols shall govern the Chapter's Operating Handbook. The Chapter is structured for governance as follows.

A. BOARD

1. Parliamentary Procedure:

The current edition of Robert's Rules of Order governs the Good Water Master Naturalist Board meetings and the General Membership meetings.

2. Officers

The duly elected Officers shall consist of:

- President
- Vice President
- Treasurer
- Secretary

The terms and limits of office: All elected Officers shall serve for a period of 12 months, and are eligible for re-election.

3. Duties of Officers

The duties of Officers are defined in the following:

President

- a. Serve as Chair of the Board of Directors
- b. Prepare and distribute the agenda for Board meetings
- c. Preside over Board and Chapter meetings
- d. Sign all Board-approved documents that may be legally binding on the Chapter
- e. Co-sign checks with the Treasurer for amounts over \$500.00
- f. Present a summary of the Chapter's accomplishments at the Chapter's first general meeting of the new year

- g. Prepare correspondence between the Chapter and the State Office, other Chapters and State agencies as appropriate
- h. Review Chapter's completed annual report before submission to State Office
- i. Communicate with Board and Chapter Members as needed
- j. Conduct email votes on issues between meetings
- k. Prior to the January meeting of the Board, present a slate of appointees for all new Director positions including standing committee chair positions for review and approval by a majority vote of the elected Officers, Past-President and Advisor(s)
- l. Encourage all Officers and Directors to read and be familiar with their duties, responsibilities according to our chapter documents
- m. Be an ex-officio member of all committees, assisting as appropriate
- n. Become Immediate Past President upon completion of term as President

Vice President

- a. Assist the President and act for the President in his absence
- b. Prior to the September Board meeting, meet with the President to establish Chapter and Board meeting dates for the following year, to be presented for review and approval at the September Board meeting
- c. Participate as a member of the Annual Financial Examination Committee
- d. Chair the Program Committee scheduling Chapter programs for membership meetings, field trips and other events for membership

Treasurer

- a. Receive all dues and monies for the Chapter and maintain them in a Chapter bank account
- b. Develop for presentation at the November Board meeting an annual budget for the Chapter for input and approval by the Board of Directors
- c. Maintain the annual budget
- d. Pay all bills upon receipt of a written statement or receipt. Treasurer or President shall sign all checks, drafts or other instruments for payment of money or notes of the Chapter
- e. Submit all annual financial records, reports and audits as required by law (and/or sponsoring agencies)
- f. Make a financial report at all Board meetings
- g. Make a financial report to the membership at the annual meeting of the chapter
- h. Present the financial records to the annual Financial Examination Committee before the November Board Meeting
- i. Keep an account of all income, expenses, disbursements and other financial matters including a hard copy file of such documentation for seven years plus the current calendar year
- j. Make available all financial reports and documents to any Chapter member and/or Advisors as may be requested

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. Record, publish and preserve all votes via electronic means
- d. Furnish the minutes to all Board members and make them available to other Chapter members when requested
- e. Keep a record of attendance at each meeting and whether a quorum is present
- f. Maintain a hard copy file of all minutes and correspondence
- g. Bring to each Board meeting the minute book, a copy of the Bylaws, Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, the Chapter Operating Handbook, a list of all committee membership and a copy of the parliamentary authority adopted by the Chapter
- h. Serve on the Annual Financial Examination Committee

4. Directors

The duly Appointed Directors shall consist of, but not limited to, the following:

- Immediate Past President
- Membership Director
- New Class Director
- Communications Director
- Advanced Training Director
- Volunteer Service Projects Director
- Outreach and Publicity Director
- Historian/Archivist Director
- Host Director
- Youth Development Director
- New Class Director
- 2 At Large Directors
- Advisor(s)

All Director positions are by appointment and approved according to the Chapter Bylaws ARTICLE V, F and G.

The terms and limits of office: All appointed Directors shall serve for a period of 12 months and are eligible for re-election.

5. Duties of Directors

The duties of Directors shall be to assist the Officers in their respective responsibilities. In addition, their specific duties are listed under their title in the local Chapter Operating Handbook as required for the operation of the Chapter. All Directors are voting members of the Board.

a. Immediate Past President

- 1) Provide continuity from prior Board of Directors with counsel for undocumented procedures and works to document those procedures
- 2) Leads an annual review and update if necessary of the Chapter's Chapter Operating Handbook document
- 3) Assist the President
- 4) Assume the responsibility as the State Representative for the Chapter if that position is not otherwise filled
- 5) Chair the Nominating Committee...Ref. Chapter Bylaws, Article V, E, 2
- 6) In the absence of an Immediate Past President, the President will reassign above responsibilities as needed

b. Membership Director

- 1) Maintain a roster of all Chapter members with pertinent contact information
- 2) Oversee Chapter position of Data Manager
- 3) Monthly maintain and publish names of members achieving certification and milestone awards
- 4) Present awards frequently at Chapter meetings
- 5) Ensure members have a current criminal background check and current signed Texas Master Naturalist Volunteer Policy form on file
- 6) Manage the Chapter's use of the TMN Volunteer Management System (VMS), (Ref. State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Article VI, Volunteer Service Requirements) for reporting volunteer service hours and Advanced Training
- 7) Ensure new members/trainees receive appropriate training to use the TMN VMS
- 8) Compile the State Annual Report with the support of the preceding year's President and Data Manager

c. New Class Director

- 1) Form the Training Committee
- 2) Serve as Manager for the New Class, planning, curriculum development, calendar, instructors, venue, reception, etc., through graduation
- 3) Recommend the class tuition to the Board of Directors
- 4) Work with the Communications Directors to develop and publicize the New Class recruiting brochure
- 5) Manage the Mentor Program and the new class application process.
- 6) Work with the Membership Director to ensure new members/trainees receive appropriate training to use the TMN VMS

d. Communications Director

- 1) Oversee positions of:
 - Newsletter Editor
 - Social Media
 - Webmaster
- 2) Write publicity press releases for print and electronic media covering New Class application, Chapter meetings and special events
- 3) Work with the New Class Director to arrange for printing and distribution of New Class recruiting brochure and updating training class material

e. Advanced Training Director

- 1) Develop a form for members to request that a program be considered for an Advanced Training Code
- 2) Review and recommend for approval or disapproval all Advanced Training requests and events
- 3) Assign Advanced Training Codes and Advanced Training Titles to qualifying events and notify Chapter membership of approved Advanced Training opportunities
- 4) Set up and manage Advanced Training opportunities in the Chapter's TMN VMS
- 5) Use State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Article VI. Advanced Training Requirements, including VMS, as a guide to review and approve Advanced Training Codes

f. Volunteer Service Projects Director

- 1) Develop a form for members to request a Volunteer Service Project Code
- 2) Review and recommend for approval or disapproval all Chapter volunteer service project opportunity requests using the State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Article VII Volunteer Service Requirements as a guide to review and approve
- 3) Use State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Article VI. Volunteer Service Requirements, including VMS, as a guide to review and approve Volunteer Service Project Codes
- 4) Assign Volunteer Service Project Codes to qualifying projects and publicize to Chapter members

g. Outreach and Publicity Director

- 1) Oversee Chapter outreach activities
- 2) Staff outreach booths
- 3) Create and maintain Chapter brochure(s)
- 4) Acquire and maintain a Chapter display board
- 5) Assist the Training Committee in promoting the Chapter
- 6) Distribute information about the Chapter through newspapers and other media
- 7) Develop and post signs acknowledging participation of the Good Water Chapter in volunteer activities

h. Historian/Archivist Director

- 1) Maintains the historical records of the chapter
- 2) The historical records include, but are not limited to: training classes, projects, recognitions, events, elections, meetings, and Chapter Newsletter archives
- 3) Creates a Yearly Scrapbook

i. Host Director

- 1) Assist New Class Director with class host activities – drinks, snacks, catered lunches, making handouts
- 2) Coordinate General Membership meeting host activities – drinks, snacks, party activities

j. Youth Development Director

- 1) Oversees all of the Youth Development Programs for the Good Water Chapter
- 2) Responsible for adherence to Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Youth Protection Policies

k. At Large Directors

- 1) Serve as voting members on the Board
- 2) Serve in additional capacities as needed

l. New Class Representative Director

- 1) Represent the New Class as a member on the Board
- 2) The new class representative serves from the end of the training class until the appointment of a member from the next training class

m. Advisor(s)

(Reference State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Appendix I, Advisor Guidelines)

The Chapter-Advisor relationship is not a one-way street, in that the Chapter and its leaders also have responsibilities. These responsibilities include an appropriate level of communication, providing opportunities for Advisor interaction and a commitment to the success of the organization as a whole.

B. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD

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 Chapter Bylaws, approved by the membership. Board approval requires either a majority vote of Board members in attendance at a Board meeting where a quorum is present, or a majority vote of Board members via electronic media.

All official Board communications, i.e., voting, etc., via electronic media, shall be recorded and contained in the Chapter Secretary's records.

- 1) Committee Oversight. All committees and their activities are subject to review and approval by the Board.
- 2) Expenditure Limits. The Board will honor expenditure limits as set forth in the local Chapter Operating Handbook.
- 3) Chapter Business. The Board shall conduct the business functions of the Chapter as may be stated in the Chapter Bylaws, Chapter Management and Operations Protocols and the local Chapter Operating Handbook.
- 4) Establishment of Dues. The Good Water Chapter charges annual dues. The Board of Directors shall, with approval of a majority of members present at a duly called and convened general membership meeting, set and change the amount of annual dues payable to the Chapter. The Board of Directors must notify all voting members 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. The Board of Directors, under special circumstances, may waive—in part or in whole-- individual membership fees on a case-by-case basis, if approved by a majority vote of the Board of Directors. Dues shall be payable on or before the first day of

January for each fiscal year. If dues are not paid by January 31 in each fiscal year, then all privileges afforded a member are rescinded until dues are paid.

C. COMMITTEES

All committees serve subject to the oversight and approval of the Board. The President appoints the Chair of the Standing Committees. The Chair is responsible for seeing that the Committee fulfills the responsibilities and objectives for which it was formed.

Standing Committees

- Executive Committee
- Program Committee
- New Class Training Committee
- Membership Committee
- Volunteer Service Committee
- Advanced Training Committee
- Outreach and Publicity Committee
- Communication Committee
- Historian/Archivist Committee
- Host Committee
- Youth Development Committee
- **Executive Committee**
 - a. The Executive Committee shall be comprised of the Officers of the Chapter, the Past President and Advisors
 - b. Authority: Reference Chapter Bylaws, Article VI, B. 2. Authority
- **Program Committee**
 - a. Serves in support of the Program duties and responsibilities of the Vice President
- **New Class Training Committee**
 - a. Serves under the leadership of the New Class Director for the Chapter's training program
 - b. Plans, implements and evaluates the Chapter training curriculum and develops training calendar
 - c. Acquires the TMN State Curriculum for new class trainees and prepares additional class materials
 - d. Select all presenters and make arrangements for their class/presentation including materials, handouts and audio-visual equipment needed for the class/presentation
 - e. Arranges for speaker gifts, travel, lodging needs, confirmation, and thank you letters
 - f. Arranges for publicity – newspapers, flyers, brochures, electronic media
 - g. Arranges for training venue, and required facilities equipment for all class periods
 - h. Facilitates class field outings/trips
 - i. Hosts initial New Class social and presentation reception
 - j. Arranges for refreshment amenities during class periods

- **Membership Committee**
 - a. Serves under the leadership of the Membership Director
 - b. Manages and/or assists in managing the Chapter's records and reports within the TMN VSMS
 - c. Maintains a roster of the Chapter member names, including in-training members, plus pertinent contact information within the TMN VMS
 - d. Maintains a record of volunteer and advanced training hours within the TMN VMS
 - e. Supports Membership Director with compilation of the State Annual Report
 - f. Reports members achieving Certification and Milestone awards regularly
- **Volunteer Service Projects Committee**
 - a. Supports Volunteer Service Projects Director to review, organize, assign codes and notify Chapter members of approved Volunteer Service opportunities and projects
 - b. Assists in managing volunteer service project opportunities with the Chapter's TMN VMS
- **Advanced Training Committee**
 - a. Supports Advanced Training Director to review, organize, assign codes and notify Chapter members of approved Advanced Training opportunities
 - b. Assist with managing the Chapter's Advanced Training Opportunities within the TMN VMS
- **Outreach/Publicity Committee**
 - a. Responsible for the Chapter outreach activities
 - b. Staffs outreach booths
 - c. Acquires and maintains a Chapter display board
 - d. Coordinates activities with the Communications Director and the Chapter Webmaster
 - e. Assists the Training Committee in promoting the Chapter
 - f. May assist Chapter Communications Director, Communications Committee, New Class Director and/or Membership Director
- **Communications Committee**
 - a. Facilitates communication within the chapter
 - b. Manages Google email groups
 - c. Manages and updates website
 - d. Produces and distributes chapter newsletter
 - e. Manages social media posts for the chapter: Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, etc
 - f. Write publicity press releases for print and electronic media covering New Class application, Chapter meetings and special events
 - g. Work with the New Class Director to arrange for printing and distribution of New Class recruiting brochure and updating training class material
- **Historian/Archivist Committee**
 - a. Maintains the historical records of the Chapter under the direction of the Communications Director
 - b. Historical records include but not limited to: Training classes, projects, recognitions, events, elections, meetings, Chapter scrapbook and Chapter Newsletter archives
 - c. May assist the Chapter Secretary

- **Host Committee**
 - a. Assist New Class Training Director with class host activities
 - b. Coordinates General Membership meeting host activities
 - c. Assist other chapter events with host activities
- **Youth Development Committee**
 - a. Develops, oversees, coordinates, and implements chapter activities involving young people under the age of 18
 - b. Develops curriculum for educating youth
 - c. Plans and runs Junior Master Naturalist Programs
 - d. Schedules Youth Activities
 - e. Coordinate, plans and manages nature and outdoor educational opportunities for children under the age of 18
 - f. Creates topical educational kits
 - g. Develop reusable PowerPoint Presentations

AD HOC Committees

Ad Hoc committees are formed for a particular and specific short term purpose.

- **Annual Financial Examination Committee.** Responsible for conducting the annual examination of the financial records of the Chapter. Members will include the Vice-President, New Class Representative, Secretary and/or Advisor. The President appoints the Chair person. The Treasurer provides the financial records for review.
- **Officer Nomination Committee.** Proceed in accordance with Chapter Bylaws, Article V, E. 2. Election Process.

The Past President will chair the Officer Nomination Committee formed by Chapter Members who are appointed by the Chapter President. The committee will present their slate of Officer candidates to the President, taking into account the following attributes.

The Officer Nomination Committee shall endeavor to select candidates from the Chapter Membership who demonstrate appropriate skills for managing the office of President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer; and where possible, with an eye to increasing diversity. Diversity being not limited to sex, race, creed, or national origin, but including attributes such as age, formal education, and background experience. Preference may be given to candidates whose total time in any Board capacity and total time of service in a single Board position is less than other candidates for the same position. Selection of candidates based on these additional diversity attributes would maintain experience and continuity for the Board while recruiting new members to serve. Officer candidates must be Certified Members of the Chapter, except for Chapters in their first year of operation.

The Officer Nomination Committee must review the required skills, duties, and responsibilities of each Officer position with the proposed candidate to assess the candidate's understanding and willingness to perform the functions of the office prior to nominating the candidate for any position.

The President must publish the slate of candidates to the Chapter membership in writing, 15 days prior to the last general membership meeting before the end of the calendar year.

The Officer Nomination Committee will present a slate of candidates and conduct the election process at the last general membership meeting of the calendar year.

This committee will also serve when an Officer or Board vacancy occurs which requires candidates. The committee may serve at the request of the incoming President upon his/her election to present a slate of Director Candidates.

The State Master Naturalist Coordinator may provide oversight to a Chapter's nomination process.

- **Director Nomination Committee**. Proceed in accordance with Chapter Bylaws, Article V, F. 3. Appointment Process for Board Members Other Than New Class Director. The Director Nomination Committee may be created at the discretion of the incoming President.

The incoming President will chair the Director Nomination Committee formed by Chapter Members who are appointed by the incoming Chapter President. The committee will present their slate of Director candidates to the incoming President, taking into account the following attributes.

The Director Nomination Committee shall endeavor to select candidates from the Chapter Membership who demonstrate appropriate skills and where possible, with an eye to increasing diversity. Diversity being not limited to sex, race, creed, or national origin, but including attributes such as age, formal education, background experience, and county of residence. Preference may be given to candidates whose total time in any Board capacity and total time of service in a single Board position is less than other candidates for the same position. Selection of candidates based on these additional diversity attributes would maintain experience and continuity for the Board while recruiting new members to serve.

The Director Nomination Committee must review the required skills, duties and responsibilities of each Director 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.

The incoming President will present a slate of Director appointees to the newly elected Officers, Past President and Advisor(s) for confirmation by a majority vote of this Executive Committee prior to the end of the calendar year in which they are elected.

The State Master Naturalist Coordinator may provide oversight to a Chapter's nomination process.

- **Other Ad Hoc Committees.** May be formed by the Board as needed to address specific tasks or purposes

II: MEMBERSHIP

Membership in a Chapter is open to qualifying individuals regardless of race, age (must be 18 years of age or older), sex, religion, disability or national origin.

MEMBER CATEGORIES

(Reference Chapter Bylaws, Article IV, Membership)

- Texas Master Naturalist in Training
 - Texas Master Naturalist Pledge
 - Certified Texas Master Naturalist
 - Texas Master Naturalist Member
 - Honorary Texas Master Naturalist
1. A qualifying member must be current in the payment of dues.
 2. Members may readily transfer between Chapters within the State of Texas, but must meet all requirements of membership for the Chapter into which they are transferring.
 3. Members who may have been ‘inactive’ for some reason, may petition a local Chapter for reinstatement, providing all Chapter membership requirements are met.
 4. Honorary Texas Master Naturalists must have a current background check and have a current signed Texas Master Naturalist Volunteer Policy Form in order to volunteer.

III: ADOPTION AND AMENDMENT OF THE CHAPTER OPERATING HANDBOOK

A. Adoption.

1. Initial adoption and ratification of the COH and Appendices will be by a majority vote of those present at the next scheduled general membership meeting following written distribution of the proposed COH to the general membership ten (10) days before the meeting, with notice that the ratification vote will be held at the next general membership meeting.
2. Written distribution may be via conventional mail, email or other equivalent means.

B. Amendment.

1. Changes and amendments may be proposed by the Board of Directors at a regular Board meeting with a two-thirds vote of the Board members in attendance.
2. The general membership must be notified in written form of the proposed changes or amendments ten (10) days before the next Board meeting and be given an opportunity at that Board meeting to voice any concerns about the changes or amendments.

C. State Office Notification

Once a Chapter has adopted a revised and/or amended Chapter Operating Handbook, an electronic copy must be sent to the State Office for its files.

Texas Master Naturalist Code of Ethics

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

1. Subscribe to the highest standards of integrity and conduct.
2. Promote and support the statewide and local Texas Master Naturalist Program.
3. Respect the state sponsors of Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, their roles and expectations. ,
4. Disseminate 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 Texas Master Naturalist volunteer.
6. Promote competence as a Texas 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 Texas Master Naturalist Program.
9. Know and follow established Texas Master Naturalist Program protocols and policies.
10. Abide by the local Texas Master Naturalist Chapter Bylaws.
11. Avoid use of the Texas Master Naturalist title, logos and trademarks for personal endeavors and/or profit.
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.

Texas Master Naturalist Standards of Conduct

Texas 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 Texas Master Naturalist Program and the Local Chapter.
2. Uphold the dignity and integrity of the Texas Master Naturalist Program. Volunteers 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 monthly (at a minimum) report these records to your local Chapter.
6. Avoid performing service when such service is judged to be contrary to the Code of Ethics or detrimental to the well-being of the Texas Master Naturalist Program and its sponsors, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.
7. Provide maximum possible effort in the best interest of each client and/or volunteer project.
8. Be mindful of their responsibility to society and the Texas Master Naturalist Program.
9. Studiously avoid discrimination in any form, or the abuse of Texas Master Naturalist Program authority, Certification, or Membership for personal satisfaction. Advocacy, lobbying or promoting political issues while performing as a TMN volunteer is strictly prohibited.
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 Texas Master Naturalist Program and its volunteers.
12. Avoid all use of alcohol and controlled substances while on duty as a Texas Master Naturalist volunteer. Reporting for service while under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance will result in termination from volunteer service.
13. Accept responsibility for decisions made and actions taken based on these decisions.

Good Water Chapter Texas Master Naturalists BYLAWS

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December 11, 2014

Bylaws

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Good Water Chapter Texas Master Naturalist Program™

ARTICLE I CHAPTER RELATION TO STATE PROGRAM/ORGANIZATION

Parent Organization. The parent organization is the Texas Master Naturalist Program™ or “State Program”.

State Program Sponsors. Sponsors for the statewide Texas Master Naturalist volunteer program are the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. Sponsors in the Texas Master Naturalist program are those agencies or organizations taking responsibility for the state and local Chapter.

State Committee Role. The State Committee is comprised of Certified Texas Master Naturalist volunteers and employees of the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. The State Committee sets the minimum standards and curriculum requirements of the statewide program. The Committee also reviews and approves new Chapter development and educational curriculum.

Texas Master Naturalist State Coordinator Role. The Texas Master Naturalist State Coordinator manages the day to day activities of the State Program and provides guidance to all chapters and assists new chapters to become operational. The Coordinator has oversight authority to oversee and audit any Texas Master Naturalist Chapters' practices and procedures for compliance to State Documents and may exercise appropriate remedial action as required up to and including disbanding the offending Chapter.

Commitment to Texas Master Naturalist State Program Requirements. In return for the general supervision, guidance, supplies, resources, and cooperative helpfulness afforded by the statewide Texas Master Naturalist Program a Chapter of the Master Naturalist Program agrees to comply with all requirements, guidelines, and standards and to produce and submit an annual report conforming to the standards set forth by the TMN State Committee.

Bylaws Compliance. All Texas Master Naturalist Chapters must adopt Chapter Bylaws using only the language specified in the State Bylaws Template selecting two Chapter specific options, 1) concerning the ‘Term of Officers’ (see Bylaws, Article V, G.) and 2) the Addendum for 501 (c) (3) Chapters. Chapter Bylaws adoptions and amendments must meet the procedures stated in Article X, Adoption and Amendment of Bylaws.

Revocation Compliance. In the event this chapter ceases to follow Master Naturalist state program guidelines the Chapter agrees to abide by revocation of the chapter’s Charter along with the right to use the Texas Master Naturalist name, title and trademarks.

ARTICLE II CHAPTER SPONSORS, PARTNERS AND DONORS

Chapter Sponsors. Chapter Sponsors for a Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist program are permanent and committed to a long-term relationship with the Chapter. Chapter sponsors provide advisors to the chapter. Local Chapter sponsors have been identified through the Chapter's Charter Application.

Partners. Partners for a Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist program are providers of resources in exchange for volunteer service. Partners and the resources provided for a Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist program are outlined in the Chapter's Annual Report to the State Program Office and the State Committee. Partners for the local Chapter may change on a regular basis depending on the project needs of the community and the resource needs of the Chapter.

Donors. Donors of a Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist program are those businesses, organizations or persons giving, donating or presenting money or supplies for Chapter activities for no return compensation from the Chapter. Donors and their donations are reported through the Chapter's annual report to the State Program Office and the TMN State Committee.

ARTICLE III PURPOSE

Overall Purpose. A Chapter is not organized for profit, nor shall any of its net earnings inure in whole or in part to members, employees, or other individuals. In support of the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, this Chapter shall be an educational, non-profit, volunteer organization dedicated to fulfilling the state program's mission 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 with objectives of the following:

Natural Resource Service. To provide, promote and fulfill volunteer service while recognizing and utilizing sound natural resource management, enhancement and conservation practices in accordance with the partners' and program's mission.

Public Understanding. To improve public understanding of natural resource ecology and management by developing a pool of local knowledge about natural resource ecology that can be used to enhance education efforts within local communities.

Enhance Education and Outreach. To enhance existing natural resources education and outreach activities by providing natural resources training at the local level, thereby developing a supply of dedicated and informed volunteers.

Volunteer Network. To develop a Texas Master Naturalist volunteer network that can be self-sufficient.

Advocacy Prohibition. No part of the activities of the Chapter shall be devoted to advocacy, lobbying, politically or privately promoting issues, agendas or businesses and personal endeavors, by propaganda or otherwise, using the Master Naturalist name or themselves as a Texas Master Naturalist.

ARTICLE IV MEMBERSHIP

Membership Requirements

Minimum Statewide Requirements. Membership in the Chapter shall be achieved by completing the Texas Master Naturalist State minimum requirements of 40 hours of combined classroom and field experiences, 8 hours of Advanced Training and 40 hours of volunteer service. (Reference ‘Master Naturalist™ Program’, Chapter Management Guidelines, Requirements section)

Membership in the Chapter is open to qualifying individuals regardless of race, age (must be 18 years of age or older), sex, religion, disability, or national origin.

Member Categories

Texas Master Naturalist Member-in-Training. Volunteer Participant of an official class from the first day of class to the end of the training period continuing until the Trainee has completed the Chapter Training requirements.

Texas Master Naturalist Pledge. Volunteer Participant who has completed the Chapter Training requirements and has yet to complete the State or Chapter minimum Certification requirements for advanced training and volunteer service to become 'Certified' within the calendar year following the end of the training period.

Certified Texas Master Naturalist. Volunteer or previously Certified Texas Master Naturalist who has completed the State or Chapter minimum Certification requirements (Reference ‘Master Naturalist™ Program’, Chapter Management Guidelines, Certification section) for advanced training and volunteer service hours for the year.

Texas Master Naturalist Member. Volunteer who has previously been a Certified Texas Master Naturalist but has not yet to complete the required volunteer service of 40 hours, and an additional 8 hours of Advanced Training toward re-certification requirements for more than one year.

Voting Membership. Voting membership in the Chapter shall be extended to Texas Master Naturalist Member-in-Training, Texas Master Naturalist Pledge, Certified Texas Master Naturalists, and Texas Master Naturalist Members in “Good Standing” for the current fiscal year. “Good Standing” is defined as current in dues, if required, and in compliance with Master Naturalist Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct.

Honorary Membership. An Honorary Texas Master Naturalist is a person who has made a substantial contribution to the furtherance of the activities of the Chapter. The candidate typically is not a Texas Master Naturalist. Honorary Members shall be entitled to all of the privileges as a Texas Master Naturalist Member of the Chapter without payment of dues, including the right to vote as a Member of the Chapter.

The names of candidates for Honorary Membership may be submitted, by any Chapter Member, to the Chapter Board for approval. With Board approval, the candidate for Honorary Membership will be placed before the general membership for a vote. Honorary members shall be selected by the affirmative two-thirds voice vote of the membership present at any General Membership Meeting.

Disciplinary Action or Termination

Voluntary Termination. A member may voluntarily terminate membership in the Master Naturalist program by written communication to the Chapter Board of Directors.

Disciplinary Action or Removal. Removal of a member from the membership roll or disciplinary action of a member shall follow the Master Naturalist program Chapter Management Guidelines section on Policy and Procedures for the Disciplining and/or Removal of Members.

Membership Transfer. Transfer to or from the Chapter should follow the Master Naturalist program Chapter Management Guidelines section of Membership Transfer.

Multiple Chapter Membership. Membership in Multiple Chapters is not permitted.

ARTICLE V OFFICERS AND OTHER BOARD MEMBERS

Officers.

The Officers of the Chapter shall be the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The Officers shall be elected by the Chapter membership at the last General Membership Meeting of the calendar year.

Chapter Advisors.

Home Base. Advisors are typically staff members of the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and/or Texas A&M AgriLife Extension.

Board Membership and Vacancies. Chapter Advisors are permanent members of the Board. When a vacancy arises in an Advisor position, the replacement is selected collaboratively between the TMN state coordinator, the Chapter President and the exiting Advisor.

Duties.

Assists the Chapter in upholding the missions, goals, objectives, operational framework and activities of their respective agency/organization and the Master Naturalist statewide program. Ensures that the Chapter operates under the mission, goals and objectives of the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and/or Texas A&M AgriLife Extension.

State Representative.

Duties.

Represent the Chapter in State level matters of the Texas Master Naturalist program
Attend the semi-annual State Volunteer Representatives Council meetings.

Other Board Members.

Other Board Members must include the Past-President position and other Board Members as required in the Chapter Operating Handbook.

Election of Officers.

Officers Elected. The only elected positions are those of the Officers.

Election Process.

Nomination. The Officer Nominating Committee, chaired by the Past-President with a minimum of two additional ad-hoc members who are selected by the President with Board approval, shall submit a slate of candidates for Officers to the President. The President must publish the slate to the Chapter membership in writing 15 days prior to the last General Membership Meeting before the end of each calendar year.

State Coordination. The State Master Naturalist Coordinator(s) may provide oversight and additional input to an individual Chapter's nomination process.

Nominations from the Floor. Nominations for all positions will be accepted from the floor prior to a vote at the last General Membership Meeting of the calendar year.

Election. The election shall take place by secret ballot, or as stated in the local Chapter Operating Handbook, at the last General Membership Meeting of the calendar year and winners determined by a simple majority.

Single Candidate. If only one candidate is nominated for an office, that candidate may be elected by voice vote.

Assumption of Office. The newly elected Officers shall assume their duties within the month of January of the following calendar year.

Appointment of Board Members

Appointed Positions. All positions other than the Officers, Past-President and Advisors are appointed positions.

New Class Director Appointment. The Officer Nominating Committee or an ad-hoc committee selected by the sitting President shall recommend candidate(s) for the New Class Director position to the sitting Board for confirmation following the last formal training class session of each year. The New Class Director shall assume his/her duties following appointment and confirmation by the sitting Board.

Appointment Process for Board Members other than New Class Director

Recommendation of Candidates. The incoming President must recommend candidates for the appointed positions to the newly elected Officers following the last General Membership Meeting. The President may use the Officer Nominating Committee or may appoint a separate ad hoc committee to recommend candidates for his/her consideration.

Selection. All appointed positions must be confirmed by a majority vote of the newly elected Officers, Past-President and Advisor(s) prior to the end of the calendar year in which they are elected.

Assumption of Office. The newly appointed Board Members shall assume their duties within the month of January of the following calendar year.

Terms and Limits. All members of the Board of Directors shall serve for a period of 12 months or a period of 24 months , and are eligible for re-election or re-appointment.

Vacancies. If any Officer or other member(s) of the Board of Directors resigns or is unable to fulfill their duties of the office, the President shall select a slate of candidates qualified to fill the vacancy and be approved by a majority vote of the remaining Board members for the remaining unexpired term of the vacancy.

Removal of Officers and Board Members

Attendance. Any Officer absent from three consecutive Board of Directors meetings without notice and/or excused absence shall be subject to removal by a simple majority vote of the Board of Directors. Any Board member other than an Officer absent from three consecutive Board of Directors meetings without notice and/or excused absence shall be subject to removal by a simple majority vote of the Officers of the Chapter.

For Cause. Any Officer in serious malfeasance of their responsibilities or behavior inconsistent with the principles of the Texas Master Naturalist Chapter may be removed from office by a two-thirds vote of the remaining Board of Directors. Any Board member other than an Officer in serious malfeasance of their responsibilities or behavior inconsistent with the principles of the Texas Master Naturalist Chapter may be removed from office by a two-thirds vote of the Officers of the Chapter.

ARTICLE VI BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Composition, Rights and Responsibilities

Board Composition. The Board of Directors shall include the Officers, the State Representative, the Advisors and other Board members as shown in the local Chapter Operating Handbook.

Authority. The Board of Directors shall have the power to conduct the business of the Chapter as defined in these Bylaws with the approval of the membership.

Authority Boundaries. All resolutions and actions that do not fall within the assigned duties of the Board of Directors or are not assigned by these Bylaws will be presented to, and voted upon by a quorum of the general membership at a duly called and convened general membership meeting.

Nomenclature. The term "Board" when used in these Bylaws in relation to any power or duty requiring collective action, means "Board of Directors."

Eligibility. All Board members must be Texas Master Naturalist Members or Certified Texas Master Naturalists in "Good Standing" at the time of election. The only exception is that the Advisor(s) does not have to be a Texas Master Naturalist. "Good Standing" is defined as current in dues and in compliance with Master Naturalist Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct.

Voting. All members of the Board have full voting privileges. Resolutions or actions of the Board of Directors shall be effective if passed by the majority vote (or 2/3rd if applicable) of those Board members present at a duly called and convened meeting of the Board of Directors, subject, however, to the quorum requirements listed in Article VII - "Meetings".

Compensation. Board members will receive no compensation for serving on the Board other than expenses that are approved by the Board.

Executive Committee

Composition. The Executive Committee shall include the Officers of the Chapter.

Authority. In the event that Board action is required before a Board meeting can be called or the matter does not warrant calling a special meeting, the Executive Committee may take action with the same authority and boundaries as the Board. Such action must be reported to the entire Board within one day of taking the action.

ARTICLE VII MEETINGS

Board Meetings

Frequency. The Board of Directors may meet as often as required but shall meet at least quarterly.

Time and Location. Meetings shall be conducted at a time and location designated by the Board of Directors.

Notification. The Chapter membership shall be notified of all Board meetings at least ten days prior to the meeting.

Open meeting. Attendance at the meeting shall be open to the public as well as all Chapter members.

Quorum. A majority of the Board members shall constitute a quorum.

Alternate Format. Meetings may be held by teleconference or other remote electronic means, so long as a quorum is present and the electronic media permits the democratic participation of all Directors.

General Membership Meetings

Frequency. General Membership meetings or other Chapter-sponsored activities will be held at least once every two months. Special meetings may be called at the discretion of the President.

Time and Location. Meetings shall be conducted at a time and location designated by the Board of Directors.

Notification. Notification of each meeting shall be published in written form via conventional mail, email or other equivalent means to all members at least ten days prior to the meeting.

Quorum. Those voting members present at each duly called and convened meeting shall constitute a quorum.

Governance. The acts of the majority of the voting members present at each duly called and convened meeting shall be the acts of the general membership.

Last General Membership Meeting (Election of Officers)

Scheduling. The last general Chapter meeting of the calendar year will be known as the last General Membership Meeting.

Election of Officers. Election of Officers will be held at the last General Membership Meeting.

Quorum. Those voting members present at a duly called and convened last General Membership Meeting shall constitute a quorum.

Special Meetings

Calling a Special Meeting. A special meeting may be called at the discretion of the Board of Directors.

Notification. Special meetings shall be announced to members by phone, mail, e-mail or other equivalent means at least two days before the meeting date.

Quorum. A quorum is 25% of the voting members.

Board Action Without a Meeting.

Rationale. In the event that Board action is required before a meeting can be called or the matter does not warrant calling a special meeting, Board action may be taken without a meeting.

Voting. Action may be taken by phone or e-mail by an affirmative vote of a simple majority of the voting members of the Board. Such action must be reported to the entire Board within one day of taking the action.

ARTICLE VIII COMPLIANCE WITH MASTER NATURALIST CODE OF ETHICS AND STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Compliance. All members of the Chapter will adhere to the Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct as established by the Texas Master Naturalist Program.

Violation. Violation of either the Code of Ethics or the Standards of Conduct is a serious matter that reflects unfavorably on the entire Chapter. A formal process to investigate a charge of misconduct against a Member of any status, as well as disciplinary actions for those found in violation of the Code of Ethics or Standards of Conduct has been established by the Texas Master Naturalist Program and will be used to deal with these violations.

ARTICLE IX FINANCIAL CONTROLS

Fiscal Year. The fiscal year shall be from January 1 through December 31.

Chapter Funds

Signature Authority. The Treasurer or President shall sign all checks, drafts or other instruments for payment of Chapter money or notes up to \$1000.00 for the Chapter. The Treasurer and President or the Treasurer and one other Officer approved by the Board shall sign all checks, drafts or other instruments for payment of money or notes of \$1000.00 or greater for the Chapter. Writing multiple checks, drafts or other instruments for payment of Chapter money or notes to the same entity for the same purpose to avoid the two signature requirement is prohibited.

Expenditure Limits. Expenditure limits will be established and approved by the Board of Directors as set forth in the Chapter Operating Handbook.

Financial Examination. The Chapter will conduct an examination of the financial records of the Chapter prior to the last scheduled Board meeting of the calendar year to review the Chapter's financial activities since the prior examination. The Treasurer will present the Chapter Financial Books to an ad hoc Financial Examination Committee. Results of the financial examination will be reported to the Board of Directors for approval at the last scheduled Board meeting of the calendar year. The report or a summary thereof may also be presented to the membership at the first general membership meeting of the new calendar year.

Gifts and donations

Authority. The Chapter is authorized to accept and receive contributions, donations, and grants from any and all sources.

Endorsement. Acceptance of any grant or gift - restricted or unrestricted - does not imply any form of endorsement by the Chapter for the source, services, products, or policies. Nor does it imply any benefit - past, present, or future - to be granted by the Chapter. Acceptance of any contract will not imply any endorsement, benefit or product beyond the deliverable services and products expressly contained in the contract.

Right of Refusal. It will be the general policy of the Chapter to accept contributions from any source. However, the Chapter retains the right to refuse any gift where, in the judgment of the Board of Directors, the reputation or perceived image of the grantor may be deemed injurious to the Chapter.

ARTICLE X ADOPTION AND AMENDMENT OF BYLAWS

State Bylaws Template. The Texas Master Naturalist Program provides a template for all Chapters to use to adopt and amend individual Chapter Bylaws. All Chapter Bylaws must be uniform across all Chapters and are to be adopted verbatim by each Chapter selecting an option for the 'Term of Officers' and an option for an Addendum for 501 (c) (3) Chapters. Chapters that desire to meet additional requirements to be recognized as a tax-exempt organization may or may not adopt the Addendum for 501 (c) (3) Chapters.

Approval Before Vote. In order to ensure consistency, continuity and adherence of statewide guidelines, the initial Chapter Bylaws and any subsequent proposed amendments to Chapter Bylaws must be submitted in writing for approval by the Chapter Advisors and then the Director of the Texas Master Naturalist Program as a representative of the TMN State Committee before being submitted to the Chapter's general membership for a vote.

Notification. Notice of the proposed adoption of Chapter Bylaws and all proposed amendments to the Chapter Bylaws with the date, time and place of consideration shall be presented in written form via conventional mail, email or other equivalent means to members at least 30 days prior to consideration by the membership.

Membership Vote. These Bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of members constituting a quorum after the proposed amendment has been approved by the Chapter's Advisors and the Director of the Texas Master Naturalist Program acting on behalf of the TMN State Committee.

ARTICLE XI DISSOLUTION

Dissolution Procedures. The Chapter may be dissolved via either of the following procedures:

By The Membership.

Prior to a vote on dissolution, the State Director of the Texas Master Naturalist Program must approve the proposed dissolution.

The proposal for dissolution must be presented at a regular or special meeting with 30 days announcement to the membership prior to the vote.

A vote of 2/3 of the certified members present at the regular or special meeting is required for dissolution.

A letter must be submitted to the State Committee stating the results of the vote and why the Chapter chose to dissolve.

By The TMN State Committee.

This action shall be taken for reasons of gross malfeasance or serious violation of the ethics and standards of conduct of the Texas Master Naturalist organization by the Chapter and the belief that the situation is endemic and irreconcilable within the Chapter.

The Program Coordinator and State Committee will follow the procedures defined in the Chapter Management Guidelines.

The Program Coordinator will give notice of this action to the Chapter President and Board of Directors.

Merger With Another Chapter.

As an alternative, a Chapter may petition the State Program Coordinator to dissolve the Chapter and to merge with an adjoining Chapter. The acquiring Chapter's membership and Board of Directors must be in agreement with the merger and formally approve the acquisition. The 'dissolving' Chapter's request must follow the guidelines of ARTICLE XI ,paragraph 'A' 1.

Distribution of Remaining Assets.

Dissolution Via ARTICLE XI , 'A' 1 & 2. Upon the dissolution of the Chapter, its net remaining assets shall be distributed to the State Program Coordinator to continue support and resources for the Chapters and Statewide Program or to other non-profit or charitable organizations involved in our Master Naturalist program activities as approved by the Chapter's Advisors and the State Program Coordinator.

Dissolution Via ARTICLE XI , 'A' 3. The Chapter requesting dissolution may petition the State Program Coordinator to transfer their remaining assets to the acquiring Chapter, to be held in trust for a nominal period of time, to be utilized by the acquiring Chapter to support activities in counties of the dissolving Chapter to support activities consistent with the mission of the Texas Master Naturalist program. At the end of that nominal period, the remaining funds would become the assets of the acquiring Chapter.

ADDENDUM FOR 501 (C) (3) CHAPTERS

ARTICLE I – PURPOSE

The purpose of the conflict of interest policy is to protect this tax-exempt organization interests when it is contemplating entering into a transaction or arrangement that might benefit the private interest of an officer or director of the Organization or might result in a possible excess benefit transaction. This policy is intended to supplement but not replace any applicable state and federal laws governing conflict of interest applicable to nonprofit and charitable organizations.

ARTICLE II – DEFINITIONS

Interested Person

Any director, principal officer, or member of a committee with governing Board-delegated powers, who has a direct or indirect financial interest, as defined below, is an interested person.

Financial Interest

A person has a financial interest if the person has, directly or indirectly, through business, investment, or family: a. An ownership or investment interest in any entity with which the Organization has a transaction or arrangement, b. A compensation arrangement with the Organization or with any entity or individual with which the Organization has a transaction or arrangement, or c. A potential ownership or investment interest in, or compensation arrangement with, any entity or individual with which the Organization is negotiating a transaction or arrangement.

Compensation includes direct and indirect remuneration as well as gifts or favors that are not insubstantial.

A financial interest is not necessarily a conflict of interest. Under Article III, Section 2, a person who has a financial interest may have conflict of interest only if the appropriate governing Board or committee decides that a conflict of interest exists.

ARTICLE III – PROCEDURES

Duty to Disclose

In connection with any actual or possible conflict of interest, an interested person must disclose the existence of the financial interest and be given the opportunity to disclose all material facts to the directors and members of committees with governing Board delegated powers considering the proposed transaction or arrangement.

Determining Whether a Conflict of Interest Exists

After disclosure of the financial interest and all material facts, and after any discussion with the interested person, he/she shall leave the governing Board or committee meeting while the determination of a conflict of interest is discussed and voted upon. The remaining Board or committee members shall decide if a conflict of interest exists.

Procedures for Addressing the Conflict of Interest

An interested person may make a presentation at the governing Board or committee meeting, but after the presentation, he/she shall leave the meeting during the discussion of, and the vote on, the transaction or arrangement involving the possible conflict of interest

The chairperson of the governing Board or committee shall, if appropriate, appoint a disinterested person or committee to investigate alternatives to the proposed transaction or arrangement.

After exercising due diligence, the governing Board or committee shall determine whether the Organization can obtain with reasonable efforts a more advantageous transaction or arrangement from a person or entity that would not give rise to a conflict of interest.

If a more advantageous transaction or arrangement is not reasonably possible under circumstances not producing a conflict of interest, the governing Board or committee shall determine by a majority vote of the disinterested directors whether the transaction or arrangement is in the Organization's best interest, for its own benefit, and whether it is fair and reasonable. In conformity with the above determination it shall make its decision as to whether to enter into the transaction or arrangement.

Violations of the Conflict of Interest Policy

If the governing Board or committee has reasonable cause to believe a member has failed to disclose actual or possible conflict of interest, it shall inform the member of the basis for such belief and afford the member an opportunity to explain the alleged failure to disclose.

If, after hearing the member's response and after making further investigation as warranted by the circumstances, the governing Board or committee determines the member has failed to disclose an actual or possible conflict of interest, it shall take appropriate disciplinary and corrective action.

ARTICLE IV – RECORDS OF PROCEEDINGS

The minutes of the governing Board and all committees with Board-delegated power shall contain:

The names of the persons who disclosed or otherwise were found to have a financial interest in connection with an actual or possible conflict of interest, the nature of the financial interest, any action taken to determine whether a conflict of interest was present, and the governing Board's or committee's decision as to whether a conflict of interest in fact existed.

The names of the persons who were present for the discussions and votes relating to the transaction or arrangement, the content of the discussion, including any alternatives to the proposed transaction or arrangement, and a record of any votes taken in connection with the proceedings.

ARTICLE V – COMPENSATION

A voting member of the governing Board who receives compensation, directly or indirectly, from the Organization for services is precluded from voting on matters pertaining to that member's compensation.

A voting member of any committee whose jurisdiction includes compensation matters and who receives compensation, directly or indirectly, from the Organization for services is precluded from voting on matters pertaining to that member's compensation. No voting member of the governing Board or any committee whose jurisdiction includes compensation matters and who receives compensation, directly or indirectly, from the Organization, either individually or collectively, is prohibited from providing information to any committee regarding compensation.

ARTICLE VI – ANNUAL STATEMENTS

Each director, principal officer and member of a committee with governing Board-delegated powers shall annually sign a statement which affirms such person:

Has received a copy of the conflicts of interest policy,
Has read and understands the policy,
Has agreed to comply with policy, and
Understands the Organization is charitable and in order to maintain its federal tax exemption it must engage primarily in activities which accomplish one or more of its tax-exempt purposes.

ARTICLE VII – PERIODIC REVIEWS

To ensure the Organization operates in a manner consistent with charitable purposes and does not engage in activities that could jeopardize its tax-exempt status, periodic reviews shall be conducted. The periodic reviews shall, at a minimum, include the following subjects:

Whether compensation arrangements and benefits are reasonable, based on competent survey information and the result of arm's-length bargaining.
Whether partnerships, joint ventures, and arrangements with management organizations conform to the Organization's written policies, are properly recorded, reflect reasonable investment or payments for goods and services, further charitable purposes and do not result in inurement, impermissible private benefit or in an excess benefit transaction.

ARTICLE VIII – USE OF OUTSIDE EXPERTS

When conducting the periodic reviews as provided for in Article VII, the Organization may, but need not, use outside advisors. If outside experts are used, their use shall not relieve the governing Board of its responsibility for ensuring periodic reviews are conducted.

Chapter Management and Operations Protocols

Texas Master Naturalist Program™

Good Water Chapter



Revised November 2015

Chapter Management and Operations Protocols

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ARTICLE I. TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST

A. MISSION.

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.

B. BYLAWS.

Reference State Bylaws, Article I, E. Bylaws Compliance.

All Texas Master Naturalist™ Chapters must adopt Chapter Bylaws using only the language specified in the State Bylaws Template selecting two Chapter specific options, 1) concerning the ‘Term of Officers’ (see Bylaws, Article V, G.) and 2) the Addendum for 501 (c) (3) Chapters. Chapter Bylaws adoptions and amendments must meet the procedures in Article X, Adoption and Amendment of Bylaws. In case of any conflict between the Chapter Management and Operations Protocols and the Bylaws, the Bylaws shall prevail.

C. SPONSORSHIP.

At the state level, the Texas Master Naturalist Program™ is sponsored jointly by the *Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service* and the *Texas Parks & Wildlife Department* (TPWD). Partnerships at the local level are necessary, encouraged and may include other public agencies, as well as private organizations whose interests are within the boundaries of the program. At the state level, the Texas Master Naturalist Program™ is supported financially by Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service along with grants from other outside sources.

D. OBJECTIVES

1. Improve public understanding of natural resource ecology and management by developing a pool of local knowledge about natural resource ecology that can be used to enhance education and conservation efforts within local communities.
2. Enhance existing natural resources education and outreach activities by providing natural resources training at the local level, thereby developing a supply of dedicated and informed volunteers.
3. Develop a Texas Master Naturalist coordinated volunteer network.

ARTICLE II. PROGRAM

A. OVERVIEW

The Texas Master Naturalist Program™ exists as a collection of local programs that adhere to a set of objectives, procedures, and minimum requirements set at the state level. The program, at the state level, is guided by the Texas Master Naturalist Statewide Committee (TMN Statewide Committee) made up of Certified Texas Master Naturalist Volunteers, as well as statewide sponsor representatives from Texas Parks &

Wildlife Department and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and support from program advisors. The TMN Statewide Committee sets the minimum standards and curriculum requirements, as well as reviews and approves each local Chapter's development, curriculum and maintenance.

Texas Master Naturalist volunteers are trained and certified at the local level through their respective Chapters. When feasible, each local Chapter should have at least a local Coordinating Committee participation by local Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and/or Texas Parks & Wildlife Department personnel – these individuals form the administrative and advisory connection to the statewide coordinators for the respective sponsoring agencies. It is highly recommended that each local Chapter should engage advisors from each sponsoring organization. It is required that each Chapter have at least one of the sponsoring organizations involved and supporting their Chapter.

It is important for Texas Master Naturalist Chapters to capitalize on local resources and expertise through partnerships. Representatives of these local partners may serve on a planning committee. This committee may include natural resources personnel, the leaders of local natural resources groups, interested landowners, and other interested individuals. When Chapters are in their early stages (i.e., during the planning of their first training sessions) the local Planning Committee may be led by Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and/or Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service personnel or in some cases, a volunteer or other organization. As a Chapter matures, trained Texas Master Naturalist volunteers should assume a larger role in the administration of the program. Once the Chapter has attained a trained cadre of volunteers, these volunteers should take on larger roles in the coordination of the Chapter by developing and maintaining a Chapter Board and committee chairs. At this time, the original local Chapter Planning Committee begins serving in an advisory capacity to the Chapter and its Board. (Appendix I lists guidelines for these Advisors).

There are many ways for Chapters to conduct training sessions. Many Chapters conduct training programs at different times of day and at different times of year to meet the demand and needs of the community and clientele in a Chapter's service area. Some Chapters alternate a daytime versus evening training programs. Some Chapters alternate spring versus fall. Other Chapters hold two training programs a year.

Overall, Chapters that hold training classes once a week for 12 to 15 weeks (vs. once a month over the course of a year) have better training class retention, certification rates and long term member retention rates.

Many Chapter training programs include hours above the minimum 40 hours of state required training to adequately cover the local issues and topics of their service area.

B. CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Because Texas has such a diversity of climate, population and land types, the natural resources (and their uses) in each area of the state are unique. Therefore, each local

Chapter should consider customizing their training program based on the TMN Statewide Program Curriculum to focus on their local ecosystems.

The TMN State Office will periodically review the Chapter's curriculum and training agenda to ensure the minimum requirements are being met and delivered. It is required the Chapter have its training agenda reviewed if any curriculum item changes from the last time it was reviewed by the TMN State Office. Each Trainee of the Texas Master Naturalist Program™ shall receive an official TMN Program Statewide Curriculum. The Curriculum is the assurance that every TMN Member has the same basic knowledge statewide and it allows a Chapter to add more training detail to cover the ecoregion they serve. Curriculum can be ordered by the Chapter at bulk prices by contacting the Texas AgriLife Bookstore at: www.agrilifebookstore.org.

When planning the training schedule, the local Training Coordinating Committee (New Class Training Committee) should try to use expertise from local universities, nature centers, and research centers, as well as local landowners and managers. The local coordinators should plan and facilitate the training sessions so that class and field sessions adequately cover the following suggested categories of topics:

Roles, responsibilities, and benefits of being a Texas Master Naturalist™.

Trainees should understand the purpose and mission of the program – and they must commit to participate as a volunteer. This should be briefly discussed during the first meeting of the class; the Mission of the program should be continually reinforced throughout subsequent training sessions. It shall also be the responsibility of the Training Coordinating Committee or other appropriate Chapter representatives for informing and enforcing appropriate adherence to the content of this Chapter Management and Operations Protocols document to the new Texas Master Naturalist trainees of each class.

Historical perspectives of naturalists in Texas and elsewhere.

Naturalists were frontiersmen, pioneers, observers, interpreters, and teachers. They were important in the history of our state. Texas Master Naturalist training should include programs designed to create an appreciation for the role that these early naturalists played in Texas and US history. Because many of the early naturalists kept accurate records of what they observed, this study can provide an interesting way for people to realize the changes in our landscapes over time. Also, studying those early “master naturalists” creates a sense of appreciation that goes along with the title of Texas Master Naturalist.

Traditional disciplines of a naturalist.

The original naturalists were *botanists, entomologists, ornithologists, mammalogists, herpetologists, paleontologists, and geologists*. Professionals within these disciplines are available at universities, nature centers, and research centers. These natural scientists are generally eager to share their disciplines and may be excellent teachers. An effective way to incorporate these disciplines into a training session is in a field trip situation. Inviting natural scientists along as “Master Naturalist faculty” on field sessions is an effective way for Master Naturalist’s

trainees to be exposed to these disciplines first hand. Many of those enrolled in Texas Master Naturalist training may also have some formal training in these disciplines.

Ecological concepts.

Ecological concepts may be discussed in a classroom situation – but when combined with case studies and/or field demonstrations, these concepts take on more relevant meaning. Texas Master Naturalist trainees should come away from their training sessions with an accurate baseline understanding of what is meant by some of the ecological concepts and ideas that need to be understood in order to manage natural resources. These include the functional definitions of ecosystems, landscapes, communities, species assemblages, and populations. They should be exposed to concepts of biodiversity and species diversity. Training sessions should provide instruction on the dynamics of natural systems – including succession; natural and human disturbances; recovery and restoration.

Eco-regions of Texas.

Texas Master Naturalists should be trained to understand the basic differences among the various eco-regions of the State. In addition, they should be trained to understand the unique characteristics and interactions among the geology, climate, water, soils, flora, fauna, and major land uses in their local eco-region(s). Chapters need to include at least one field session in each of the ecoregion(s) occurring within their Chapter's territory as part of the Chapter's training class.

Management of natural systems.

Texas Master Naturalists should be exposed to the management of natural systems, including forest ecology & management, rangeland ecology & management, wetland ecology & management, urban ecology & management, and aquatic ecology & management as they apply to your Chapter's ecoregion(s). These applied fields are each represented by natural resource professionals to lead these sessions. Because not all parts of the State have land types suitable for these managed systems, training sessions should focus on those managed systems that are a dominant feature in the local area.

Interpretation and communications.

The Master Naturalists you are training will represent Chapter efforts to the public. Through their training, trainees should be given an opportunity to develop presentation skills and active learning techniques. The Texas Master Naturalist Chapter should function as a reservoir of teaching resources and materials for use by Chapter members. The availability and effective use of these resources should be reviewed as part of the initial training.

Natural Resource Stewardship, Laws, Regulations, Ethics and Citizen Science

The Texas Master Naturalist Program curriculum should include an introduction to the history of land conservation, stewardship and land management ethics, focusing

on the local regions and habitats of the Chapter. New member training should promote a discussion of ethics, with each trainee being encouraged through the use of best practices, to develop their own conservation ethic. Emphasis should be placed on the interconnected relationship between good land management practices, habitat and all wildlife survival. Appropriate local, State and national laws and regulations pertaining to conservation and the protection of natural resources should be emphasized. Citizen Science and its role in the Master Naturalist volunteer program, as a means to contribute to natural resource research, better management practices and conservation efforts in Texas, should also be presented.

C. MENTOR PROGRAM

Where formal Mentor Programs have been developed, there is a distinct correlation to the number of new trainee certifications and ultimate Chapter retention of new members. The role and responsibility of the Mentor cannot be over emphasized in the success of a trainee's interest, involvement and completion of the required curriculum and certification requirements. The Mentor must be fully informed of their responsibilities and the governing documents of the Chapter in order to provide the most beneficial and accurate counsel to the trainee. See Appendix II, Mentor Program for more information.

D. CLASS ATTENDANCE

In anticipating the need to set standards for maintaining class attendance, the TMN State Committee has set the following policy:

Each Chapter may set a local standard for the maximum number of class hours that may be missed during a given training cycle. Chapters are required to keep the use of this standard to a minimum, but in any case the minimum of 40 hours of training must be maintained. Regardless of the number of classes that can be missed, a participant must make up the class(s) by attending the appropriate class(s) within 12 months.

'Appropriate' means the Chapter can allow an advanced training class to count as make-up or the Chapter may require that it be the same subject class presented during the next training cycle. If an advanced training class is used as make-up, then for that individual, it does not also count as reported advanced training hours. In this case the session must account for only one type of training, initial training OR advanced training. A participant may also attend the same subject class of a neighboring Chapter within the same ecoregion given adequate prior notification and space availability of the neighboring Chapter. If a participant must miss more classes than the local standard allows, then the respective Chapter may consider an exception to their rule in special circumstances, such as medical problems, family illness, accidents, etc. However this should be the exception, not the rule. Until these classes are made up, a volunteer cannot become a 'Certified' Texas Master Naturalist, but may earn volunteer service hours or advanced training hours towards certification.

E. TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST TITLE

The title, Texas Master Naturalist™ or Master Naturalist (in Texas) is a trademark of the Texas Master Naturalist Program and is to be used **only** by individuals defined by one of the Member Categories, Bylaws Article IV B. This membership includes all approved programs that are officially affiliated with, and operating under the certification, training, and curriculum policies established by the TMN State Committee. The Texas Master Naturalist title **may not** be used for advertising or other business, personal or professional purposes. The Texas Master Naturalist Program is a public service program operated by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to provide accurate, unbiased natural resources information. The Texas Master Naturalist title **may not** be identified with any particular political viewpoint and **may not** be used by groups or individuals as they participate in political advocacy. The title is to be used **only** when doing unpaid volunteer work associated and approved by the program. When Texas Master Naturalists speak before groups on natural resource subjects they may accept unsolicited expense reimbursements or gifts. *Violation of the policy concerning the use of the title of Texas Master Naturalist is grounds for removing the certification of a member and/or possible grounds for revoking the charter of a Chapter.*

Administrators of the Texas Master Naturalist Program, the TMN State Committee members and members of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department who are in a direct supporting role may show or wear the Texas Master Naturalist logo thus supporting, promoting and/or advertising the program. However, they may not promote themselves as a Master Naturalist, Texas Master Naturalist or Certified Master Naturalist unless they have completed their training and all certification requirements.

A Chapter may, and is encouraged to provide shirts, nametags and other wearable items for their volunteers with the expectation that the Chapter include at least a Texas Master Naturalist logo and the "Texas Master Naturalist" text with the Trade mark (™) symbol. The volunteer's name and Chapter identifier text should be similar to the "Texas Master Naturalist" text (See the Texas Master Naturalist Marketing and Identity Guide, MKT-3342 for further information). Texas Master Naturalist shirts, hats, patches, back packs and other items are available at: www.agrilifebookstore.org. In the event a Chapter sets up their own shirts with a local vendor, the design must meet the TMN Program Marketing and Identity Guidelines. The TMN logos are trademarked, and vendors will need permission from the State office to reproduce the logo.

ARTICLE III. MEMBERSHIP

A. Membership Categories - Reference Article IV, State Bylaws A-D.

Texas Master Naturalist volunteers in any given year are either 'Certified', or working towards certification for that given year.

B. Active/Inactive Membership

For the purpose of fulfilling a Chapter's State Annual Report, a database must be maintained to reflect both active and inactive Chapter members, applying the following tests.

1. Active

A Texas Master Naturalist on the roll of a viable Chapter of the state, current in dues, if required, but may not have reported volunteer hours. For example, these would be members who are engaged in the Chapter's programs but cannot submit hours due to the activities being part of their jobs.

2. Inactive

- a. A Texas Master Naturalist member on the roll of a viable Chapter of the state who has not reported volunteer service hours or advanced training hours within the period of a calendar year for which the State Annual Report is submitted.
- b. A Texas Master Naturalist member on the roll of a viable Chapter of the state who is not current in the payment of dues, if required, by the end of the calendar year for which the State Annual Report is submitted.
- c. A Texas Master Naturalist member on the roll of a viable Chapter of the state who has submitted a request to the Chapter to become 'inactive', or is known to be deceased.
- d. Inactive Members who in the past were Certified Master Naturalists may contact the Chapter in which they were active in the past and request to be reinstated. The applicant must pay dues for the current year, if applicable and begin Volunteering with the Chapter. Inactive Members may also apply at a new Chapter of their current residence using the Member Transfer process below.

3. Not Reportable/Not Eligible

This would be a category of support people for the Chapter who have TMN Volunteer Management System (VMS) 'system log-ins' to assist with running agency Reports, but do not have a need to report service in the system such as Chapter Advisors.

C. Member Transfer

When a member moves to a different part of the state or wishes to become active in an alternative Chapter, that member may join the nearest Chapter of choice. The transfer can be affected under the following conditions:

1. The transferee brings written documentation (a letter or email) from the old Chapter certifying that the transferee is a member in good standing, which includes paid dues if applicable. In addition, the letter should state the number of volunteer service hours and advanced training hours that have been accrued during the current year and whether the transferee has received annual certification and any due milestone awards. Cumulative volunteer hours during the exiting Chapter membership should also be stated.

2. It is *strongly* recommended that a transferee complete additional training that is specific to the new area, Chapter and/or ecoregion during the new Chapter's next class training period.
3. The transferee must agree to adhere to all the rules and policies of the new Chapter even if they are more stringent than those of the old Chapter.
4. The new Chapter should accept all volunteer service and advanced training hours certified in the transfer letter from the old Chapter. This includes, but is not limited to dues, volunteer service, initial training and advanced training requirements.
5. Transferees from other US State programs: Due to the significant differences among other Master Naturalist programs in other US States in regards to training, program requirements and certification standards accepting transferees from other US States is not recommended. However, they should be given preference as an applicant for your next training class. A simple transfer from US State program to Texas State program will not be able to take place in this case in the same manner as a transfer within the state of Texas.

D. Multiple Chapter Membership

Membership in multiple Chapters is not allowed. (Reference TMN State Bylaws, Article IV, G.)

ARTICLE IV. REQUIREMENTS

The *minimum* training requirements include 40 hours of combined classroom and field experiences. These educational sessions should be designed to expose volunteers to a wide variety of natural resources disciplines, providing them with a high-quality learning experience. The sessions should be designed not only to teach the volunteers, but also to provide them with access to the resources that they need in order to teach this information to others in an interesting, useful and meaningful way.

Texas Master Naturalist Volunteers are required to have a criminal background check when working on projects that have youth 17 years of age or younger are present, using TPWD and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension facilities, resources and equipment, or involve handling money or Chapter financial administrative functions. The Good Water Chapter requires all members to have a current criminal background check.

To become a Certified Texas Master Naturalist, a trainee must complete the following:

- The state committee approved curriculum with a *minimum* of 40 hours of combined field and classroom instruction.
- Obtain a *minimum* of 8 contact hours of approved advanced training.

- Complete a *minimum* of 40 hours of approved volunteer service. (Volunteer service hours are those direct contact hours spent on Texas Master Naturalist projects approved by the local Chapter.)

Volunteers who have completed the required field and classroom training must complete the required State and Chapter minimum Certification requirements for advanced training and volunteer service to become ‘Certified’ within the calendar year following the start of the training period. A special ‘Recertification’ (AKA “Double Certification”) is allowed if an **additional** 8 (total 16) hours of Advanced Training and an **additional** 40 (total 80) hours of volunteer service are completed within the year following the start of the original class.

To retain the Certified Texas Master Naturalist™ title during each subsequent year, volunteers must complete a minimum of 8 hours of advanced training and provide a minimum of 40 hours of volunteer service through approved Chapter project opportunities within the calendar year.

A Chapter is to allow participants to begin earning volunteer service hours once they begin the Texas Master Naturalist training program. Once the volunteer has completed all the training requirements, they will receive a certificate indicating completion of the training requirements.

A. Certification

When a volunteer has completed the required 40 hours of Texas Master Naturalist training; the 40 hours of volunteer service; and 8 hours of advanced training, the volunteer shall be considered ‘Certified’. Certification must be completed within the calendar year following the start of field and classroom training. The volunteer shall be awarded a Texas Master Naturalist Certificate, a Good Water nametag and the initial dragonfly Certification pin. Volunteers are encouraged to begin service and training at the same time. Training periods for Chapters may vary throughout the state over different periods of time. Some volunteers completing the required field and classroom training will have more time to ‘Certify’ by the end of the following year, but none will have less than one (1) full year. Once a Member has been initially ‘Certified’, the certification years thereafter follow each calendar year.

The Texas Master Naturalist Program will have a specially designed pin for each year a volunteer maintains their certification by obtaining the required service and advanced training hours annually within the calendar year. Volunteer service hours may **not** be carried forward from one year to the next, with the exception of a Master Naturalist Trainee or Pledge working toward certification. There will be a new pin design each year and this design will only be available during that given year. Each volunteer, given that they have attained the requirements, should only receive one of these pins during the given year.

Interruption of course of training:

If a **member in training** must interrupt their training course because of an event that seriously impairs their ability to complete the training with their class, and they are a student in good

standing, and they wish to finish the course, the situation should be explained to the chapter president. The President will then form a 3-member committee to formulate options for the member in training. This process will require documentation of the request, the options developed, and the choice made by the member in training. This documentation will be kept in the chapter's files. Confidentiality shall be maintained if desired by the applicant.

Interruption of acquisition of required volunteer service hours and advanced training hours for initial certification:

Should a **member** during the 12 months following successful completion of the TMN training course be unable to acquire the hours necessary for certification, the member should contact the chapter President as soon as they are aware of the situation. The President shall document the situation and inform the member of the requirements for obtaining certification in a future year.

When the **member** is ready to resume becoming a Certified Master Naturalist the member (with current dues paid) must complete 40 volunteer service hours plus 8 advanced training hours within that current calendar year. Any volunteer service hours or advanced training hours accrued before interruption will not be counted toward certification, but will be counted toward TMN milestone awards.

B. Milestone Pins

The Texas Master Naturalist Program offers a series of pins commemorating different milestone achievements within the program. Please see: www.txmn.org . The milestone pins honor those volunteers that have given:

- 250 hours - bronze dragonfly pin
- 500 hours - brushed silver dragonfly pin
- 1,000 hours - brushed gold dragonfly pin
- 2,500 hours - polished [shiny] silver dragonfly
- 4,000 hours - polished [shiny] gold dragonfly w/ ruby and US Presidential Volunteer Service Award
- 5,000 hours - polished [shiny] gold dragonfly w/ diamond and letter of achievement from State Program Director
- 10,000 hours - polished [shiny] gold dragonfly w/ emerald. The recipient also receives a letter of achievement from State Program Director, special recognition at the TMN Annual Meeting, and other recognition through social media. Many Chapters also provide a plaque and additional special recognition locally for this grand achievement.

The State Program may develop other official milestone pins beyond 10,000 hours as needed.

A volunteer may reach these milestones within one year or over the course of several years. Volunteers should only receive one of each of these pins during their involvement in the program once they meet these Milestones. It is important that a Chapter and a volunteer continue to report service hours above and beyond the 40-hour minimum as volunteer service hours are cumulative year-to-year for the purpose of awarding milestone pins.

Chapter leaders may obtain pins by contacting Mark Klym, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, Mark.Klym@tpwd.texas.gov, 512-985-5163. Please be aware that we are not able to expedite shipment of pins when there is short notice. All pin designs may be viewed on the State website <http://txmn.org>.

A Chapter may also establish local awards as it may desire. An example of such an award might include "the most hours served" or "Chapter Texas Master Naturalist of the Year" or milestones in between those recognized by the state program.

Hours submitted late, after the annual deadline, cannot be reported for the State Annual Report.

ARTICLE V. ADVANCED TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

The purpose of Advanced Training (AT) is to provide Texas Master Naturalists an opportunity to focus their interests on one, or a few, specific topics that interest them. Also, advanced training on an annual basis promotes continued learning and development. Advanced training is a benefit in itself, providing the experienced Texas Master Naturalist with tools to work in more advanced volunteer efforts. Although the State Texas Master Naturalist Program may occasionally provide statewide or regional advanced training opportunities, it is generally the responsibility of the local Chapter to insure that there are sufficient advanced training opportunities offered on the local natural ecosystems, so that members can attain their 8-hour minimum requirement. In addition, the local Chapter should be a clearinghouse for notifying members of approved advanced training opportunities. Advanced training can be accepted from, workshops, seminars and conferences held outside of the state boundaries, if, and only if, the training material meets the AT guidelines, the program guidelines and the mission of the Texas Master Naturalist 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 Chapter and/or State Program approved.

Advanced training courses may be made available directly through the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, or any number of short-courses provided by universities or nature centers. One way for a Chapter's Members to meet their advanced training requirements is by actually sponsoring the advanced training sessions. The local Chapter's Advanced Training Coordinator, Committee, or equivalent, should pre-approve all advanced training opportunities before the volunteer attends. In special circumstances, approval may be sought in retrospect. With the exception of college courses, advanced training hours are counted one hour for each hour of advanced training. Travel time is **not** included for advanced training hours. Pre-approval must be obtained for an advanced training session that is outside the Chapter boundaries.

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). This is not retroactive to cover courses taken prior to involvement in the TMN program.

Training by its nature assumes there is an instructor as well as a student. To be effective, training must allow for an exchange between the two. If material is complex or confusing and the student

cannot ask questions or request clarification, then no learning can occur. With the advancement of online communication media, new forms of online-based training can be accepted for Advanced Training hours.

Online-based training will only be accepted for a maximum of 4 hours of the required 8 hours of advanced training hours. Educational television shows, videos, DVDs, **may not** be approved. And, it should be kept in mind that nothing can substitute for being able to learn about our natural resources by being out on the land.

Chapter sponsored Book Clubs related to the mission of TMN may receive advanced training credit for the club discussion and presentation, but time spent reading the book does not receive credit.

The Chapter Advanced Training Coordinator and/or Chapter Advanced Training Committee should use the following criteria or ask the following questions of the opportunity when reviewing and approving Advanced Training Opportunities:

Does the Advanced Training opportunity:

1. Promote continued learning and development of naturalist skills?
2. Provide Master Naturalists with knowledge and skills to work in volunteer efforts?
3. Direct trained volunteers toward specific programs in need of their services?
4. Provide practical information and training for application in volunteer efforts?
5. Take advantage of local partnerships?
6. Provide Master Naturalists an opportunity to focus their interests in one or a few specific topics?
7. Build on the core curriculum initially provided by the local Chapter?
8. Provide natural resource management issues and information applicable to Texas?

Advanced Training opportunities must meet the criteria of: 1, 2, 6, 7, and 8 above. It is suggested that the remaining criteria also be a part of the approval consideration.

To obtain approval for new Advanced Training opportunities:

Online Form: <http://txmn.org/goodwater/gwmn-online-advanced-training-approval-form/>

Written Form: http://txmn.org/goodwater/files/2015/11/Advanced-Training-Approval-Form_November2015.pdf

Advanced Training hours are reported online using the VMS system: <http://tinyurl.com/VMS-Reporting> within a 45 day time limit.

ARTICLE VI. VOLUNTEER SERVICE REQUIREMENTS

In order to attain certification, a Texas Master Naturalist ‘Trainee’ and ‘Pledge’ must complete a minimum of 40 volunteer service hours on pre-approved projects. In order to retain the title of Certified Texas Master Naturalist, a volunteer must complete another 40 service hours on pre-approved projects in every subsequent year. Volunteer hours credited for the TMN program may not be credited from or to another TMN volunteer or other volunteer program or location. Travel and prep time for specific project opportunities may be counted as service time as determined by the local Chapter. Service activities relating to the development and management of a local Chapter, such as serving as a Board member, receives volunteer service credit hours.

Volunteer service project opportunities can be presented by various entities ranging from the state program sponsors, the Chapter, local Chapter partners, an individual volunteer, nature centers, schools, city, county, state and federal agencies. Often Chapters institute a “class project” where the current training class of the Chapter finds/develops and mutually agrees to volunteer for the project as a group and receive their required volunteer service hours at the same time.

Volunteer projects may be a series of short experiences or they may involve the long-term efforts of a volunteer team. The opportunity to do meaningful and interesting work is the reward of the Texas Master Naturalist volunteer. There are few constraints for Texas Master Naturalist volunteer projects whether Chapter initiated or individually initiated, except that volunteer service must meet the TMN Program Mission by being dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their local communities for the State of Texas and approved by the Chapter.

The pre-approval of volunteer service projects and opportunities is important to:

- Ensure that volunteers are covered by the available State Program accident and liability insurance (see FAQs)
- Provide a list of service projects for volunteers of the Chapter
- Ensure the mission and goals of the organization and the partners are met

The following are points for the Chapter’s Volunteer Service Coordinator and/or the Volunteer Service Committee to consider in approving and issuing a code or title for a project opportunity:

- A. Is the proposed service project representative of the goals, practices and teachings of the Texas Master Naturalist Program?
- B. How does the project address a pressing naturalist, natural resource management, Chapter and/or partner need for meaningful service or resources?
- C. What is the scope of the project in terms of when it would need to be conducted, where, estimated time needed to complete or maintain per month, how many volunteers would be needed, etc.?
- D. Is the project within the Chapter’s service area and ecological training?

- E. How does the project allow the Chapter to focus and/or create visibility, identity and/or recruitment for the Chapter?
- F. How can the project's impact on the community and our natural resources be measured?

To obtain approval for new Volunteer Service Projects:

Online Form: <http://txmn.org/goodwater/gwmn-online-volunteer-service-project-approval-form/>

Written Form: http://txmn.org/goodwater/files/2015/11/Volunteer-Service-Project-Approval-Form_November2015.pdf

Volunteer service hours are reported online using the VMS system: <http://tinyurl.com/VMS-Reporting> within a 45 day time limit.

Actual Volunteer Service Examples:

Bad/Unacceptable	Better	Best
Being “on call” as a wildlife rescuer for a non-partner organization	Performing licensed wildlife transport service	Performing licensed wildlife rescue service in cooperation with a partnering rehabilitation and public education non-profit organization
Planting exotic plants or a vegetable garden	Planting native plants or a Wildscape at a local school	Leading 5 th graders and staff in implementing a native plant garden or Wildscape at a local school
Monarch monitoring in Colorado	Monarch monitoring in Texas	Monarch monitoring within your local Chapter’s area
Cleaning the elephant cage at a zoo	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	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.
Conducting wildlife management activities on your own land	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	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 education 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	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 Master Naturalist volunteers coordinating a stream clean-up for the local community to participate in.
Receiving service credit for time spent as a Board member or Committee member for an organization whose mission is NOT involved with natural resources or the environment,	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.	Receiving service credit for the time spent serving as a Board or Committee member at any level within the TMN program.
	Conducting endangered species surveys; developing nature trails or habitat brush piles at a local park/nature center which 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 and/or hold Chapter meetings in this same space.

Texas Master Naturalist Service Project Activity Categories

To assist the TMN State Program in its administrative functions, Chapters are required to use the following Service Activity codes when reporting hours to the state.

Service Activity	Code	Description	Examples
Training & Educating Others (Direct)	TR	Leading, organizing, instructing or staffing an educational activity where participants have a planned learning objective and generally stay for the full event (e.g., planned start and end times with a single agenda).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom instruction • Workshops • Presentations • Conducting/Leading Webinars • Chapter MN trainees/interns class • AT you prepare and present as a TMN member
Advanced Training	AT	Advanced Training you attend as a participant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AT sessions at TMN Statewide Annual Meeting • Rainwater Harvesting Steward Program Training • Project WILD Instructor/Facilitator Training
Public Outreach (Indirect)	PO	Leading, organizing, or staffing an educational activity where participants come and go and are able to inquire on a broad set of topics. <or> Writing an educational article or brochure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manning booth or visitor center • Writing articles or brochures/ newsletters • Wildlife Hotline
Technical Guidance	TG	Any work that provides natural resource or program related business, land management, and other expertise consultation and/or written management recommendations to cooperators, Chapters, partners, land owners and/or land managers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site visits for and writing ecosystem management plans • Land Management Assistance Program (LMAP) • City/Community/Regional Habitat Conservation Plan Committee

Natural Resource Management (including Natural Resource Stewardship and Conservation)	RM	Activities that improve the health of a public natural area or resource. Natural resource management, restoration rescue and rehabilitation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invasive species or trash removal • Plant and/or /endangered species rescue (not rehab) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ E.g.: Turtle Patrol • Restoring or improving natural habitat • Wildlife houses, towers, chimneys • Developing an eco-system plan • Tree planting
Nature/Public Access	NPA	Field-based activities that improve and manage the public's access to natural areas or resources. Creating and/or maintaining nature trails, Wildscapes and/or interpretive areas	<p>Developing new or maintaining and/or improving existing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiking trails • Interpretive gardens • Wildlife viewing blinds • Wildscapes/native plant gardens • Interpretive hikes
Field Research (Including Surveys and Citizen Science)	FR	Planning, leading or participating in data collection and/or analysis of natural resources where the results are intended to further scientific understanding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field surveys • Banding and tagging • Species watch • Texas Nature Trackers Programs • CoCoRaHs • Stream Watch/Stream Team/ Water Quality Monitoring
Chapter & Program Support, Business and Administration	CB	Activities related to managing and running a Texas Master Naturalist Chapter and its committees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of Director or committee duties • Chapter Newsletter or website management • Management of Chapter records • Hours reporting • Chapter reporting • Representing Chapter at multi-Chapter events • Other Chapter administration • Assistance to State Program and State Program Office
Other	OT	Any activity approved by a Chapter that is not defined above. In general a Chapter should only have a small percentage of hours in this activity (< 5%). When this activity code is used, a Chapter should investigate the reason.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time spent serving as a Board or committee member for a natural resource/environmental organization in partnership with the local Chapter • Time spent supporting partnering organization activities, i.e., NPSOT, Friends organizations

ARTICLE VII. CHAPTER DONATIONS

The State's recommendation is that Chapters donate member's time and expertise to outside natural resource conservation, education and management versus donating money to outside organizations. The Texas Master Naturalist program and Chapters are to be service organizations first and foremost versus donors of monetary funds.

If a Chapter insists on donations to other organizations, then it should be understood that this is on a very limited basis lest the requests become overwhelming and further removes the focus of the Chapter from the heart of the program.

Chapters wishing to donate to an outside organization need to consider the guidelines which follow, to insure the organization is in keeping with the Texas Master Naturalist mission, goals and principals. Exceptions to this would be donations to the State Texas Master Naturalist Program, or program sponsoring agencies, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

All other organizations (including Chapter partners) should be vetted with these points in mind:

- It should be a non-profit organization.
- The organization should state clearly what the monies would be used for. (For example: is it paying for native plants, or someone's salary? Chapters should learn the specifics of what their donations would be buying/supporting, and it should be in keeping with the mission and spirit of the Texas Master Naturalist Program)
- How does the organization conduct fundraising otherwise? Is it in keeping with the goals and ideals of the Texas Master Naturalist Program?
- Can the organization guarantee that none of its funds are used in any way for lobbying, political interests or campaigning?
- How will the Chapter's Master Naturalist organization's name (and logo) be advertised as a result of the donation? (Would it be done in such a way you would want the Chapter (and TMN Program) advertised?)

ARTICLE VIII. DISCIPLINING AND/OR REMOVAL OF MEMBERS

1. **General Policy.** As a policy, in all efforts, the Texas Master Naturalist Program remains fair, objective, accurate and comprehensive. When it becomes obvious that an individual or group of individuals participating in any capacity of the program is misrepresenting the program and its written objectives, then that individual or group of individuals may be asked to step down by the Chapter Board, Chapter Advisor(s), The State Program Coordinator, the TMN Statewide Committee, or the State Program sponsors from positions of leadership and/or participation in the program. Such an action could result in the revoking of a Texas Master Naturalist's participation, certification and/or the Chapter Charter.

2. **Background.** It is important to review the founding principles of the Texas Master Naturalist Program before addressing inappropriate behavior. The **Mission** statement and the Texas Master Naturalist Chapter Management and Operations Protocols (this document) contain the primary tenets of the program.
- a. **Mission.** 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.
- b. **Key Elements of the Chapter Management and Operations Protocols**
- Maintain the program as an unbiased public service.
 - Recognize ones responsibilities as a Texas Master Naturalist.
 - Recognize the autonomy of the various partners when coordinating or implementing projects and other Chapter events.
 - Keep accurate records.
 - Present a positive public image that speaks well of the Texas Master Naturalist Program.
 - Actively participates as a team member with other individuals of the Texas Master Naturalist Program.

Local Chapters should be instrumental in making members aware of these key elements through their Bylaws and Chapter Operating Handbook. Chapters shall be vigilant and responsible for ensuring members and affiliates are following policy.

3. **Applicability.** All Volunteers, Coordinating Committee Members, Chapter Advisory Committee Members, Local Chapter Executive Board Members (Officers), and Chapter Committee Chairpersons are subject to the same level of conduct.
4. **Procedures for disciplining and/or dismissal.** The subsequent procedures are to be followed on the occasion of disciplining and/or dismissing an applicable member of the Texas Master Naturalist Program.
- a. **Informal Initial Step.** When any member of the Texas Master Naturalist Program and/or public thinks an infraction of the tenets, policies, written rules, guidelines or protocols of the State or Chapter has occurred, that person, should weigh, with good judgment, whether or not to speak with the offending party directly, or to defer to the Chapter President or Advisor with the matter (see b. Formal Process). Not all members are fully aware of the guidelines and protocols of the program and may just be acting out of a lack of knowledge or understanding and not malice. A congenial approach to bring the misunderstanding to that person's attention often precludes future problems for the organization. It is important for individuals, Officers, Directors and Committee chairman to know that their actions are being noted with regard to the other tenets of the program. If an informal approach is unsuccessful in resolving the problem then proceed to the formalized procedure.

b. Formal Process

1. In order to demonstrate grounds for this action, the case must be presented in writing. If the case involves a volunteer, committee member, or committee, then the written case must be submitted to the Chapter Executive Board. If the infraction involves a member of the Chapter Advisory/Coordinating Committee {Advisor(s) and Executive Board}, then the written case must be submitted to the State Program Coordinator.
2. A case may be brought to the attention of the local Chapter by:
 - a. general public, non-affiliates of the Texas Master Naturalist Program
 - b. partnering organizations of the Chapter or State Program
 - c. member(s) of the Chapter
 - d. member(s) of the Chapter Executive Board
 - e. member(s) of the Chapter Advisory/Coordinating Committee
 - f. member(s) of the TMN State Committee
3. The offending individual(s) shall be notified of the allegations within 7 days after the written case has been submitted. The individual(s) shall have 30 days to respond in writing to the case details before suggestions toward disciplinary action are made.
4. The Chapter Advisory/Coordinating Committee shall review the documented case, make recommendations toward disciplinary action and submit this information in writing to the State Program Coordinator. The submitted documentation must include a statement(s) from the offending person(s) and the original written case submitted to the Chapter Advisory/Coordinating Committee. The State Program Coordinator, in consultation with the Chapter Advisory/Coordinating Committee, may contact all involved parties regarding the case prior to taking the case to the TMN State Committee. The State Program Coordinator will notify (in writing) to the petitioners with the acceptance or non-acceptance of the outlined grounds and recommendations on the further process of disciplinary action.
5. The person(s) affected by the documented allegations and resulting disciplinary action shall be notified by the State Program Coordinator of the case and the final disciplinary action.

c. Appeal Process.

The individual(s) have 30 days to respond or appeal to the Chapter Advisory/Coordinating Committee. No response indicates an acceptance of the case recommendation and disciplinary action unless otherwise stated within the disciplinary course of action. In the case of an appeal, the Chapter Advisory/Coordinating Committee shall make a recommendation and resubmit the case to the State Program Coordinator for final resolution. Circumstances that may warrant reconsideration requests may include substantive error or omission of information that was submitted to the State Program Coordinator.

ARTICLE IX. DISSOLUTION OF A CHAPTER

Reference State Bylaws, Article XI, Dissolution

ARTICLE X. 501 (C) (3) CHAPTERS

Reference State Bylaws, Addendum for 501 (C) (3) Chapters

ARTICLE XI. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For any point not yet addressed by this document, Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, or for any issue that arises that may need development of formalized procedures, please inform the State Texas Master Naturalist Program Coordinator (see Appendix I, B Contacts). Issues will be brought forth and reviewed by the TMN State Committee. When possible and appropriate, guidelines and protocols will be developed and amended to the current statewide Chapter Management and Operations Protocols document. It is the responsibility of the local Chapter representatives to inform the State Coordinator of such issues.

Available Documents for Download: <http://txmn.org/>

- Texas Master Naturalist Program State Bylaws Template
- Texas Master Naturalist Program Operating Handbook Template
- Texas Master Naturalist Program Code of Ethics and Conduct
- Texas Master Naturalist Volunteer Background Check
- Texas Master Naturalist Program Marketing and Identity Guide (MKT-3342)

APPENDIX I. ADVISOR GUIDELINES

A. The Advisor's Role:

1. Give advice, make recommendations, inform and notify the Chapter on appropriate business in a professional way.
2. The Advisor should not be the manager of the Chapter business or activities. They are to be a Chapter supporter and available to advise, recommend, inform and notify the Chapter and/or its members on and of appropriate and professional matters.
3. Be familiar with the goals, activities and mission of the organization.
4. Be willing to meet with the Officers of the organization to discuss expectations for roles and responsibilities.
5. Assist the organization in maintaining the original goals, mission, vision, and operational framework set forth by the organizers of the Chapter as well as assist in further developing realistic goals with the Chapter's Executive Board that are within the parameters of the statewide Texas Master Naturalist Program.
6. Facilitate opportunities for Texas Master Naturalist volunteers to exercise initiative and judgment within proper measure of autonomy when coordinating Chapter events and activities. In keeping with this approach, Advisors should participate in event planning and attend events when possible or when identified as necessary through the planning process.
7. Be aware of the Chapter's financial status via review of financial statements and approval of expenditures.
8. Be aware of the Texas Master Naturalist State policies and guidelines, protocols and other agency or organization guidelines and protocols that establish expectations for volunteer requirements, behavior and activities. Ensure that the group and its Officers know where these policies, guidelines and protocols are published, what the rules are, why they exist, and the consequences for choosing to operate outside their parameters. You are expected to report violations or potential violations to the appropriate Texas Master Naturalist Program and/or agency officials.
9. The Advisor should be ready to assist the Texas Master Naturalist State Program and TMN State Committee as needed as they may be called upon to implement regulations or policies from time to time.
10. The Advisor is responsible for notifying the Chapter Officers and the State Program Office and Committee regarding Chapter concerns. The Chapter Officers are responsible for notifying the State Program Office and TMN State Committee regarding Advisor problems or concerns.

The Chapter Advisor relationship is not a one-way street, in that the Chapters and their leaders also have responsibilities. These responsibilities include an appropriate level of communication, providing opportunities for Advisor interaction and a commitment to the success of the organization as a whole.

B. Contacts

Texas Master Naturalist Program Office

Michelle Haggerty
Texas Master Naturalist State Program Coordinator
Texas Parks & Wildlife Department
309 Sidney Baker South Kerrville, TX 78028
Phone: (830) 896-2504, Fax: (830) 792-6167
E-mail: mhaggerty@ag.tamu.edu

Mary Pearl Meuth
Texas Master Naturalist Assistant Program Coordinator
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
102 Nagle Hall, 2258 TAMU College Station, TX 77843-2258
Phone: (979) 845-7294, Fax: (979) 845-7103
E-mail: mpmeuth@tamu.edu , State Program Website: <http://txmn.org>

Texas Master Naturalist State Committee Members

Certified Texas Master Naturalist Volunteers

Tom Hynes	Certified Texas Master Naturalist Volunteer
Floyd Trefny	Certified Texas Master Naturalist Volunteer
Vern Crawford	Certified Texas Master Naturalist Volunteer

Committee Chairs

Michelle Haggerty - TX Master Naturalist State Program Coordinator (TPWD)
Mary Pearl Meuth - Asst. TX Master Naturalist Program Coordinator (Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service)

Administrative, Resource and Ex-Officio Members

John Davis	TPWD--Wildlife Diversity Program
Dr. Barron Rector	AgriLife Extension--Rangeland Ecology & Management
Dr. Jim Cathey	AgriLife Extension--Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries Sciences
Richard Heilbrun	TPWD- Wildlife Diversity Program, Conservation Outreach
Marsha May	TPWD- Wildlife Diversity Program, Texas Nature Trackers and TMN Program
Mark Klym	TPWD- Wildlife Diversity Program, Texas Nature Trackers and TMN Program
Cullen Hanks	TPWD-Wildlife Diversity Program, Texas Nature Trackers and TMN Program

Contract and Program Support Staff

Jennifer Buratti, TMN Social Media Coordinator
Ashley Steinbach, TMN Student Worker
Cheryl Foster, TMN Volunteer Management System Implementation Team
Dale Hughling, TMN Volunteer Management System Implementation Team
Brad James, TMN Volunteer Management System Implementation Team

APPENDIX II. COMMUNICATION

Good Water Chapter-related information can be communicated to members in a variety of ways. The following are the most common:

Chapter Website: <http://txmn.org/goodwater/>

- Contact Board members: <http://txmn.org/goodwater/contact-us>
- Monthly blog: <http://txmn.org/goodwater/category/good-water-blog>
- Bimonthly newsletter- Good Water Ripples: <http://txmn.org/goodwater/good-water-ripples-news>

Good Water Google groups for email communication:

- All chapter members: gwmn-chapter@googlegroups.com
- All member of the GWMN board of directors: gwmn-board@googlegroups.com
- Members of the Youth Education Committee: gwmn-youth-education-committee@googlegroups.com
- Members of the current training class: gwmn-training-class@googlegroups.com

Social Media for education, promotion and communication with the public:

- Facebook ---- Good Water Master Naturalists
- Twitter ----- GoodWaterMN

Letters or postcards.

Note that any internet based communications sites or addresses may be changed by the Board of Directors at any time. All changes will be communicated to the members.

For help in utilizing these communication methods, please contact the appropriate Communications Committee member.

APPENDIX III. MENTOR PROGRAM

The New Class Director should begin to solicit and vet Mentor candidates for the New Class applicants when the application process is opened for new members.

The New Class Director will convene a meeting of Mentors as soon as possible following the Board approval of New Class applicants to conduct the following business:

- Distribute the Class Curriculum, New Class Manuals, and other materials, including a copy of the Mentor Guidelines for Mentors
- Review Mentor Guidelines (Ref. Mentor Guidelines below) stressing timing of material delivery to the applicant, New Class Reception/Orientation date and location (if applicable), responsibilities and their review of Chapter governance documents and where they can be found
- Stress that a mentor's responsibility to his/her trainee never expires

- Be familiar with Chapter governance documents to enable answering all questions thoroughly, particularly regarding when Advanced Training and Volunteer Service hours may begin being accumulated and reported by the new trainee
- Mentors should be informed of the Chapter's Volunteer Service Project Opportunity Code to report their hours associated with all mentoring activity

Mentor Guidelines

Mentors will attend a meeting of Mentors scheduled and convened by the Membership and Training Directors at a location of the Class Director's choice. Each Mentor may receive for distribution to New Class trainees; the Class Curriculum, New Class Manuals, and other appropriate materials. Alternatively, the Membership Director may use experienced Mentors to lead a welcome meeting for all Mentors and give out the TMN Statewide Curriculum, New Class Manual and materials.

These Mentor Guidelines have been established to help provide a positive mentoring experience, and must also be distributed and reviewed with each Mentor. Each Mentor may have been assigned one or more New Class applicants, generally within their geographical area, and will have been provided a copy of the Application of each of their assigned applicant(s) to provide the Mentor biographical information.

Good Water Chapter Mentor Guidelines

These guidelines are for the members of the Good Water Master Naturalist Chapter. Members are encouraged to volunteer to be mentors for the new class trainees to guide them through the class and offer your expertise and experience to them.

1. Exchange personal contact information. Find out if they prefer phone calls, texts or email. Let them know which one you prefer.
2. Talk to the trainee about your experience as a Master Naturalist and the projects you are involved in. Invite them to attend either one of your projects or an advanced training with you.
3. Inform the trainee of other programs to attend: the chapter meetings, advanced trainings, the state meetings.
4. Meet with trainee before Chapter meeting.
5. Plan to attend one or more classes with your trainee.
6. Mentors should meet with trainee often, including phone calls, text, and emails, through and following the class. Meeting with your trainee will help to keep them involved and give you a chance to answer any questions they may have.
7. You should only have a positive interaction with the trainee. If there is a problem, let the class facilitator handle it.
8. The sooner you get them involved in a project the better.
9. Mentors should develop a lasting relationship with their new trainee that continues after the class and continues to provide guidance and assistance as needed.
10. Encourage trainee to have a variety of experience.
11. HAVE FUN DOING THIS!

FAQS

1. Where do I find documentation governing the Texas Master Naturalist (TMN) Program?

Answer: Local Chapter documents are found on the local Chapter's website. State documents are found on the State website at: <http://txmn.org> .

2. Can I hold membership in more than one TMN Chapter at the same time?

Answer: No.

3. Who are the state sponsors of the TMN Program?

Answer: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

4. Can a Chapter lose its Charter?

Answer: Yes.

5. Are dues required to be a member of a TMN Chapter?

Answer: Yes and no. This depends on the chapter. Dues are a local option for each Chapter to determine as a requirement for membership.

6. Is TMN strictly a volunteer organization?

Answer: Yes. A Member of a TMN Chapter may not receive compensation for their volunteer service.

7. How do I become a Member of a TMN Chapter?

Answer: Submit an application to attend an approved training class of 40 hours (minimum) classroom and field experiences; complete an additional 40 hours of volunteer service and 8 hours of Advanced Training and abide by the Code of Ethics, Code of Conduct, and submit to a Texas Master Naturalist Volunteer Background Check.

8. Is there a fee required to attend the training class toward membership?

Answer: Yes. The fee is set by the local Chapter.

9. Can I transfer from one Chapter to another?

Answer: Yes. You must meet the requirements of the local Chapter to which you wish to transfer.

10. How is a local Chapter managed?

Answer: There is a governing Board made up of four elected Officers (President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer) and a number of appointed Directors determined by the local Chapter Operating Handbook. There also are Chapter Advisors.

11. How are the Chapter Officers chosen?

Answer: A Chapter Nominating Committee presents candidates from the membership to be voted upon by the membership at the Last General Membership meeting of the year.

12. How are Director positions filled?

Answer: Director Candidates are selected by a committee appointed by the Chapter President and presented to the elected Officers for confirmation.

13. When do Officers and Directors assume office?

Answer: In the month of January as determined by the Local Chapter Operating Handbook. The exception being the New Class Director. The New Class Director assumes office following confirmation by the Chapter Board of Directors usually immediately following the completion of a class.

14. How long may Officers and Directors serve?

Answer: Good Water Officers serve 12 month terms, stated in their Bylaws, with eligibility for re-election or re-appointment.

15. Is there an insurance ‘umbrella’ for TMN in a volunteer capacity?

Answer: There is coverage by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department as well as Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service for **approved** volunteer activity. However, it is vitally important for each Chapter to perform due diligence and to understand the limits of all aspects of insurance coverage. Further, to understand personal liability, volunteer event property liability and Chapter Directors & Officers (D&O) Insurance as pertains to the local Chapter. Resources for this subject can be found at: The State Office of Risk Management (SORM) - <http://www.sorm.state.tx.us> and Texas A&M University System Office of Risk Management – <http://www2.tamus.edu/offices/risk/>.

16. Why is a Code of Ethics important for TMN?

Answer: To establish on a personal level the highest standard of conduct in fulfilling the mission, goals and objectives of the Texas Master Naturalist Program as a TMN member. (Ref: Article XI. A. Additional Information)

17. Why is a Code of Conduct important for TMN?

Answer: To establish a uniform policy that insures the ultimate trust, dignity and integrity of the TMN Program and its members. (Ref: Article XI. A. Additional Information)

18. Why is a Volunteer Screening policy important for TMN?

Answer: The Youth Protection Standards Program (YPS) volunteer screening was developed by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service to provide a safe and secure environment for both youth and volunteers, and to manage volunteer service risk and integrity of associated organizations. (Ref: Article XI. A. Additional Information). The Texas Parks & Wildlife Department also requires volunteer screening for its programs’ participants for these same reasons as well.

19. Can I make a Federal tax deductible donation to my local Chapter?

Answer: Donations to a Chapter are not restricted. However, as a minimum for it to be tax deductible, the Chapter must be incorporated as a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization.

20. May any Chapter member attend a Chapter Board meeting without invitation?

Answer: Yes. Every Chapter Board meeting is open to every member of the Chapter, and public, to attend, and to engage in the proceedings as monitored by the Chapter President.

Youth Protection Standards

Rules, Guidelines and Procedure Handbook

2015-2016

**Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
Youth Protection Standards
Rules and Guidelines**

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What's New/Important Reminders 2015-2016

All Youth Protection Standards Information and Forms are available at the following site:

Texas 4-H Web Site: http://texas4-h.tamu.edu/agent_resources

Training

Several trainings have been scheduled to review the volunteer screening process for both 4-H and non-4-H volunteers. New agents and support staff members are encouraged to participate. However, the trainings are open to anyone. All trainings will be conducted online via WebEx. Training dates are:

- Wednesday, September 2nd @ 2:00 pm
- Thursday, December 3rd @ 10:00 am
- Tuesday, May 10th @ 1:30 pm

4-H Volunteer Application Fee

4-H volunteers will be assessed a volunteer application fee in the amount of \$5. This fee is assessed annually when a 4-H volunteer creates or reactivates his/her profile in 4-H CONNECT (whether or not screening is needed).

Credit Card Payment Option Available for 4-H Volunteers

4-H volunteers have the opportunity to pay the annual volunteer application fee by credit card or check. Please note that counties can select the payment options available in 4-H CONNECT. Therefore, counties can choose *not* to offer volunteers the option to pay by credit card. If so, the County Extension Office will continue with the current process of submitting volunteers with a check payment for the annual \$5 volunteer application fee. Please note that the processing time for volunteer application fees paid by check is much greater than those paid by credit card.

Volunteer Cards

Any county needing volunteer cards for new volunteers may request them by contacting Courtney Dodd or Meridith Wilde at the State 4-H Office.

Final Approval of 4-H Volunteer Applications

Please note that screening of volunteers is conducted after the volunteer has submitted his/her application. The county Extension office gives final approval on volunteer applications. If paying by credit card, the card will be charged when the volunteer profile is approved at the county level. When paying by check, the county cannot approve the volunteer profile until the check payment has been received by the 4-H Foundation and payment has been indicated in 4-H CONNECT.

Re-activating 4-H CONNECT Profiles

When volunteers enroll for the new 4-H year, it is important they re-activate their profile on 4-H CONNECT and *not* create a new profile. If a new profile is created, the volunteer screening information will not transfer to the new profile. Therefore, the system will indicate the volunteer needs to be screened.

Extension Employee Profiles

The following applies to Extension employees - agents, specialists, associates, assistants, and district/state administrative assistants. It does *not* apply to county employees, such as program assistants and/or support staff.

Since Extension employees are screened through AgriLife Extension Human Resources, they do *not* have to be screened through YPS. When Extension employees create or re-activate a profile, there is an option on the personal information page to indicate whether or not one is an Extension employee. Selecting this option will bypass the employee around the screening and training requirements, as well as the volunteer application fee. Once an employee's profile is approved at the state level, it will then be ready for approval at the county level.

I. Screening Overview

A. Who is screened?

1. All direct volunteers who work with youth and adults should be screened through the Youth Protection Standards Program. See Attachment A.
2. Initial screening of a volunteer is conducted when he/she applies for a volunteer role with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Volunteers must be screened prior to fulfilling any volunteer roles.
3. Re-screening of all Extension volunteers is conducted every three years from the volunteer's most recent screening.

Note: 4-H Volunteers - The need for re-screening is determined on a 4-H year basis. For example, a volunteer screened any time prior to or during the 2012-2013 4-H year (between September 1, 2012 and August 31, 2013, also considered "4-H Year 2013") needs to be re-screened at the beginning of 4-H Year 2015 (9-1-15 thru 8-31-16).

B. Who is a direct volunteer?

1. A direct volunteer is any adult who meets the following criteria:
 - a. Provides unpaid support for Extension through face-to-face contact;
 - b. Provides a learning experience for adults or youth within Extension;
 - c. Has an individual volunteer application on file with the appropriate program area;
 - d. Has a position description on file; and
 - e. Has passed a criminal background check within the past three years.
2. Master volunteers are also considered to be direct volunteers.

C. Are overnight or driving chaperones screened?

Yes! Individuals who are driving youth or chaperoning youth for overnight events are considered direct volunteers and must be screened and cleared through the Youth Protection Standards Program prior to serving as a volunteer.

Examples: Texas 4-H Roundup Chaperone, a driver to Texas Teen Retreat, helping lead a workshop at Texas 4-H SpecTra, 4-H Club Manager, Livestock Mentor, 4-H project leader, Master Volunteer, or Shooting Sports Leader, etc.

D. What kind of criminal background check is conducted?

1. A national criminal background check is conducted through the Volunteer Center of North Texas. This is a nonprofit group designated through legislation that all state agencies with volunteers must use to conduct background searches.
2. The criminal background check consists of a Texas DPS records search, a national search of forty-eight (48) jurisdictions and state and national sex offender lists.

E. What information is required for screening?

1. Full, legal name (first, middle and last)
2. Address
3. Date of Birth (***Be sure to put the correct year!***)
4. Gender
5. Race/Ethnicity (Although optional, this helps affirm the volunteer's identity.)
6. First five digits of social security number
7. Driver's License number

Note:

- All information is a determining factor that helps confirm the volunteer's identity when a background check is completed.
- For all volunteer applications (whether a Master Volunteer paper application or online form), it is imperative that all requested information is provided to avoid any delays in the screening process.

F. When is screening conducted?

1. Initial screening of a volunteer is conducted when he/she applies for a volunteer role with Extension.

Note: Volunteers must be screened prior to fulfilling any volunteer roles.

2. Re-screening through the YPS program is conducted every three years from the volunteer's most recent screening.
3. No grand fathering of volunteers is allowed in the YPS program.
4. Volunteer applications are processed for screening on a bi-weekly basis in the Texas 4-H YPS Office.

G. Is screening conducted by other entities accepted by Extension?

1. Volunteers may document a prior criminal background check from another entity on the volunteer application or when enrolling in 4-H CONNECT.
2. Extension will only accept screenings performed by entities on the approved list. See Attachment B. The minimum requirement is a criminal background check conducted through DPS or a national criminal search entity.
3. Documentation of screening by other entities is required.

a. Documentation may include a letter of acceptance from the employer or volunteer group, a letter written from the screening entity to Extension stating the volunteer has been screened and passed, or a copy of the volunteer card or credentials.

Note: A volunteer will not be approved to serve as a volunteer until documentation of a previous screening by another entity has been provided, reviewed, and accepted by the Texas 4-H YPS Office.

- b. A copy of the letter stating the volunteer has been screened by another approved entity should be forwarded to the Texas 4-H YPS Office, with a copy also maintained in the county office. These files will be permanently maintained in the Texas 4-H YPS Office.
 - c. A volunteer who completes a volunteer application, or enrolls online, and submits a letter of screening from an approved entity and, therefore, does not need to be screened through YPS, does not need to submit \$10.
 - d. If a volunteer claims prior screening, but it is not from an approved entity, he/she must be screened through the Youth Protection Standards Program.
4. Although volunteers may have been screened and passed a criminal background check through an approved entity, it is Extension's policy that volunteers be screened every three years, no matter the entity.

Example: A volunteer who passed a criminal background check when he/she began volunteering with a church in 2009, but has not been re-screened since the initial screening, must be re-screened through the YPS Program.

H. How are volunteer applications processed?

1. Volunteer applications and information are reviewed and processed by two employees who oversee the YPS program and complete the data entry.
2. These individuals have been screened for security sensitive purposes and to handle confidential information.
3. Only individuals who have been trained and certified through the Volunteer Center of North Texas may review the criminal history results. Copies of the results cannot be shared with anyone including the volunteer being screened.
4. County Extension Agents are not informed of the details of the criminal history record. Information obtained through the volunteer application and screening is held in the highest confidence.
5. All forms are kept under double lock and key. All electronic files are password protected at multiple levels.

I. How are screening results reviewed?

1. Criminal records are reviewed for “red flags.” A red flag is a charge or conviction on a criminal history record.
2. All official criminal history records are shredded and not kept on file, unless the volunteer is pending due to a request for more information.

J. How is the status of volunteers determined?

1. A volunteer’s status is based on the charge or conviction, frequency of offense, and the amount of time passed since the occurrence of the offense.
2. All volunteer records are reviewed and handled on an individual basis.
3. Although criminal records are comprehensive over an individual’s lifetime, the YPS program focuses on the most recent ten (10) years of the summary. Convictions in the dismissed section below are the exception to the 10-year focus.
4. Volunteer applicants are identified with one of the following status categories:
 - a. Cleared: Approved to fulfill all duties of the volunteer role for which the volunteer is applying.
 - b. Restricted: Restrictions may be imposed based on the charges or conviction records.

Example: A conviction of numerous hot checks would result in a restriction of not handling or managing any group funds.

Example: A DWI conviction in the last ten years would result in a restriction of not driving youth other than the volunteer’s own legal children.
 - c. Pending: This determination is based on an incomplete criminal history report, no disposition of a case or a question related to a charge. Additional information may be requested from a volunteer. Any follow-up information is sent by the volunteer to the Texas 4-H YPS Office. Details regarding records are not shared with county or other program faculty.
 - d. Dismissed/Denied: A volunteer is dismissed/denied based on certain convictions of the Texas Penal Code. Automatic dismissals result from indecency with a child, injury to a child, sexual assault, murder or felony drug convictions. A volunteer may also be denied if he/she does not respond to requests for more information on a charge(s).

Examples: A conviction of embezzlement or mishandling Extension group funds would result in dismissal. A registered sex offender would result in a denial.

5. No person may serve with youth or children who has ever been convicted of any disqualifying offense, been on probation or received deferred adjudication for any disqualifying offense, or has presently pending any criminal charges of any disqualifying offense before a determination of guilt is made including any person who is presently on deferred adjudication. Disqualifying offenses include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - A felony or misdemeanor classified as an offense against a person or family.
 - A felony or misdemeanor classified as an offense against public order or indecency.
 - A felony or misdemeanor violation of any law intended to control the possession or distribution of any substance included as a controlled substance in the Texas Controlled Substances Act.

K. What warrants a volunteer to be re-screened or his/her status reviewed?

1. The following conditions may warrant review of a volunteer's status or re-screening:
 - Questionable situation
 - A written complaint against a volunteer
 - Knowledge of a volunteer being charged or arrested
 - Knowledge of a volunteer making an improper advancement toward a youth
2. County Extension Agents should communicate with their respective District Extension Administrator immediately upon learning of an incident or questionable situation.
3. Copies of correspondence sent to the volunteer (i.e. dismissal letter) should be sent to the Texas 4-H YPS Office and the Texas 4-H Program Director so it may be filed with the volunteer's record.

L. Grievance Procedure

The following is the procedure if a volunteer chooses to dispute a decision made during the application process or at any time during the volunteer's appointment with Extension.

1. Volunteer submits concern in writing to the Texas 4-H YPS Office, with a copy to the District Extension Administrator and county Extension agent. Letters should be sent to the following address:

Courtney F. Dodd
YPS
4180 State Highway 6
College Station, TX 77845

2. The appeal is reviewed and the volunteer receives a written statement from the Texas 4-H YPS Office regarding the decision made within a reasonable amount of time.
3. This grievance procedure pertains only to decision(s) made by Extension personnel. If a concern is raised about the information obtained through a criminal background check, the volunteer should be given the following information.

If an applicant disputes information that is on the criminal history record transcript, he/she must follow the procedure to review personal criminal history record, which

includes getting fingerprints and sending the prints to DPS along with the appropriate form. If it is determined that the record is indeed the applicant's own record and the applicant feels that there is a mistake in the criminal record, a letter should be written specifying the area of concern. An investigation will be conducted to determine whether or not an error has been made. Any costs associated with the process will be the responsibility of the volunteer.

The letter should be addressed to:

Texas Department of Public Safety
Error Resolution Department
P.O. Box 4143
Austin, TX 78765-4143
512/424-2151

II. 4-H Volunteer Screening Procedures

A. Volunteer Forms:

1. All 4-H volunteers must enroll online via 4-H CONNECT. If a volunteer does not have access to the internet, he/she may complete and submit a Texas 4-H Adult Volunteer Application (downloaded from the Texas 4-H website: texas4-h.tamu.edu/publications). The County Extension Office must then input the volunteer's information into 4-H CONNECT.
2. Since 4-H volunteer screening is processed through 4-H CONNECT, 4-H volunteer forms do NOT have to be sent in to process for screening. However, the invoice (printed from 4-H CONNECT) and the check payment must be sent in for screening to be processed.

B. Screening Cost and Payment Options:

1. Starting in the 2014-15 4-H year, 4-H volunteers will be assessed a volunteer application fee in the amount of \$5. This fee will be assessed annually when a 4-H volunteer creates or reactivates his/her profile in 4-H CONNECT. The application fee will cover the cost of volunteer screening (which is conducted every three years).
2. Payment of the 4-H volunteer application fee can be made by club/county check or credit card. A specific outline of the process is included in the volunteer enrollment instructions posted at: <http://texas4-h.tamu.edu/connect-2>.
 - a. Credit Card Payments: Upon processing of the credit card payments by the state 4-H office, criminal background checks will be processed as needed.
 - b. Check Payments: If payment of the volunteer application fee is made by check, the County Extension Office will create an invoice, secure a check, and mail both invoice and check to the Texas 4-H Foundation. Once received, the invoice and check will be processed and credited against the 4-H volunteer's profile and criminal background check will then be processed as needed. ***Please note that the check payment process is much slower than payment made by credit card since screenings are not processed until the check payment is received.***
 - c. Checks should be made payable to Texas 4-H Foundation and sent in to the following address:
Texas 4-H Foundation
P.O. Box 11020
College Station, TX 77842
 - d. Check payments for volunteer application fees must be paid separately and not combined with youth enrollment or event registration fees.
 - e. Each county, club and/or association is responsible for determining how to cover the cost of volunteer application fees.

C. Creating an Invoice for Payments by Check

When paying the volunteer application fees by club/county check, a volunteer screening invoice generated from 4-H CONNECT ***must*** accompany the payment.

1. Log into 4-H CONNECT.
2. Click the [Finances] Tab.
3. Click the [Transfers] Tab.
4. Click the [Quick Add] link.
5. Scroll down to the Enrollment section to view all the adult enrollments that require a payment.

6. Click the orange [Create] button under the enrollment section.
7. Click on the box to the left of each adult to include on the transfer invoice.
8. Click either of the orange [Save] buttons.
9. Review the invoice and click [Submit]. This will lock the transfer for any future changes or adjustments.
10. Click the [Print Transfer] link. This will prompt you to save or open up depending on the settings on the computer.
11. Mail the transfer, along with the check payment, to the 4-H Foundation office. ***Please note:*** volunteer application fees paid by check will not become eligible for approval at the county level until the payment has been received and processed by the 4-H Foundation.

D. Follow Up to Screening

1. Volunteer Status

Upon completion of screening, a 4-H volunteer's status will be updated in 4-H CONNECT. The status will be designated as one of the following:

- Approved,
- Restricted from handling funds,
- Restricted from driving youth other than own children, or
- Denied.

2. Correspondence

- a. An e-mail is sent stating the volunteer profiles have been updated in 4-H CONNECT. The volunteer profiles are then ready for final approval at the county level (will be listed in the "Awaiting County Approval" list).
- b. If a volunteer is restricted or denied, a letter will be sent directly to them from the YPS office, with a copy of the letter e-mailed to the County Extension Agent, District 4-H Specialist and District Extension Administrator.

3. Volunteer Cards

Volunteer cards have been distributed to all County Extension Offices. As volunteers are screened and approved, counties should complete the volunteer card and distribute to the volunteers. Additional cards may be requested by contacting Courtney Dodd at the State 4-H Office.

F. Screening Summary Spreadsheets

1. County Extension Agents may generate a volunteer screening report from 4-H CONNECT. To access the report, follow the instructions below:
 - a. Logged in to your county profile, click on the "Reports" icon on your dashboard.
 - b. On the reports page, click on "Shared" to access shared reports created at the state level.
 - c. From the list of reports, click on "Volunteer Leader Screening Status" and then "Run Report."
 - d. This report will provide you with a list of all 4-H volunteers in your county that have a 4-H CONNECT profile and their screening status/last year approved through YPS.

III. Non-4-H Volunteer Screening Procedures

A. Volunteer Forms

1. All Master Volunteers and BLT Volunteers must complete and submit a Volunteer Background Check Form. It is imperative all information requested is provided to avoid any delays in the screening process.
2. EFNEP Volunteers should use the EFNEP Volunteer Registration Form (EFNEP-2816).

B. Screening Cost and Payment Information

1. The cost of screening is \$10 per volunteer.
2. One check per county submission is required from the appropriate volunteer group or association.
3. Checks should be made payable to **Extension Account #255003** and sent to the following address:
Texas 4-H Office
Youth Protection Standards
4180 State Highway 6
College Station, TX 77845
4. Each county, club and/or association is responsible for determining how to cover the cost associated with screening volunteers.
5. Screening of volunteers is not conducted until payment is received in the Texas 4-H YPS Office. Therefore, counties should plan to submit volunteers for screening **at least one month prior to fulfilling any volunteer duties.**

C. Process for Submitting Volunteer Applications

1. Volunteer applications are completed and submitted to the County Extension Office in which the volunteer resides.
2. The volunteer applications are then forwarded to the Texas 4-H YPS Office with a transmittal form and a check for \$10 per volunteer being screened. The transmittal form is included in Attachment C.
3. Counties are asked to send volunteer applications on a monthly basis and not hold volunteer applications for extended periods of time. Volunteer applications are processed for screening on a weekly basis.
4. Please note that screening will not be processed until payment is received.

C. Follow Up to Screening

1. Volunteer Status & Screening Summary Spreadsheets
 - a. A screening summary spreadsheet is maintained for each county volunteer group.
 - b. Upon completion of screening, counties will receive an updated screening summary spreadsheet via e-mail, with the names of volunteers screened and the volunteers' status (cleared, restricted, pending, dismissed).
 - Cleared (C)
 - Restricted Money (R-M)
 - Restricted Driving (R-D)
 - Pending (P)
 - Denied (D)
 - d. Counties should use the screening summary spreadsheet to determine volunteers that are due for another screening.

- e. Any time county faculty needs an updated copy of the screening summary spreadsheet, a request can be made with the Texas 4-H YPS Office (yps@ag.tamu.edu), and the spreadsheet will be sent to the county Extension agent via e-mail.
- 2. Correspondence
 - a. An e-mail is sent to the county stating volunteers have been processed, with the screening summary spreadsheet attached.
 - b. When a volunteer is pending, restricted or dismissed, letters are sent from the Texas 4-H YPS Office directly to the volunteer, with a copy of the letter e-mailed to the County Extension Agent, 4-H Specialist and District Extension Administrator.
 - c. A letter may be sent from the county Extension office to the volunteer notifying them of their “approved” screening status. See Attachment D for example.
- 3. Volunteer Cards

Volunteer cards have been distributed to all County Extension Offices. As volunteers are screened and approved, counties should complete the volunteer card and distribute to the volunteers. Additional cards may be requested by contacting Courtney Dodd at the State 4-H Office.

Youth Protection Standards Who should be screened?

Volunteer Type	Role of Volunteer	Screened?
Achievement Event Judge	Episodic	No
Activity Leader	Direct	Yes
Volunteer/Parent providing transportation to a 4-H event, coordinated by the County Extension Agent or club/group	Direct	Yes
Parent providing transportation for youth to a local 4-H event, NOT coordinated by the County Extension Agent or club/group	Not a volunteer role	No
Livestock Board Member/Committee Chair	Indirect	No
Validation Committee Member	Indirect	No
4-H Enrichment Curriculum Leader (teacher or volunteer)	Direct	Yes
Overnight chaperone	Direct	Yes
Master Volunteer	Direct	Yes
Livestock Mentor	Direct	Yes
4-H Club Manager/Assistant Club Manager	Direct	Yes
Volunteer/Parent who fills in for club manager on short notice	Direct	Yes
4-H Clover Kids Project Leader	Direct	Yes
Day Camp Volunteer	Direct	Yes
Treasurer/Signer on a 4-H affiliated account	Direct	Yes
Shooting Sports Coach	Direct	Yes
Project Leader	Direct	Yes
Judging Team Coach	Direct	Yes
Quiz Bowl Team Coach	Direct	Yes
Ag Day/Farm Safety Day Event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event Coordinator(s) • Group Leader • Resource Person/Speaker 	Direct Direct Episodic	Yes Yes No
Assistant at 4-H contest	Episodic	No
Donor	Indirect	No
LAB/Program Area Committee Member	Indirect/Direct	No/Yes
Parent accompanying own child to event, but not serving in volunteer role (observer)	Indirect	No
Teen or Junior Leader	Youth	No
Public Event sponsored by another organization and an Extension volunteer is a Resource person/speaker	Episodic	No
Youth event sponsored by another organization but Extension is responsible for portion of the day	Direct	Yes

Youth Protection Standards Approved Prior Screening Entities

School Districts

Churches

Youth Groups/Associations

Little League, Sports Association, etc.

Youth Agencies/Organizations

Big Brother/Big Sister, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, After School/Extended Care Programs, etc.

Law Enforcement

County, State or Federal law enforcement*

Prison system

Texas Youth Commission

Department of Defense - Child and Youth Services

Department of Defense - Family Programs

Concealed Handgun License

Licensed Day Care Workers

Department of Homeland Security

Texas Parks & Wildlife Department

Volunteers may document a prior criminal background check from another entity on the volunteer application. The Texas AgriLife Extension Service will only accept screenings performed by entities on the approved list. The minimum requirement is a criminal background check conducted through DPS or a national criminal search entity.

Documentation may include a letter of acceptance from the employee or volunteer group, a letter written to the Texas AgriLife Extension Service stating the volunteer has been screened and passed, or a copy of the volunteer card or credentials (*Example*: copy of concealed handgun license). All information provided must be visible and readable.

If a volunteer claims prior screening, but it is not from an approved entity, he/she must be screened through the Youth Protection Standards Program.

Although volunteers may have been screened and passed a criminal background check through an approved entity, it is Extension's policy that volunteers be screened every three years, no matter the entity.

*Counties should not have county law enforcement (sheriff's department) screen volunteers for free or a minimal fee. This screening is a local, county search and does not search all records that the YPS search does. However, if a volunteer was screened through the county law enforcement for county employment purposes, that screening is accepted by Extension. Proof of screening with the past three years must be provided.



**Transmittal Form
For Volunteer Applications and
Background Check Forms**

District _____ County _____

Program Area _____
(Master Gardener, Master Naturalist, Master Wellness, TEEA, EFNEP, BLT, etc.)
**4-H Volunteers – The Volunteer Screening Invoice (from 4-H CONNECT) should accompany
payment for volunteer screening.

Attached is:

_____ (#) Volunteer Applications or Volunteer Background Check Forms (in
alphabetical order by last name).

One check in the amount of \$ _____ (\$10.00 per volunteer screening) made payable to
Extension Account #255003.

_____ (#) Volunteer Applications that have been screened through another entity. (No
payment needed.)

Send confirmation of screening results to the following:

Note: If a name/e-mail address is not listed, results will be sent to the county Extension office box.

Name: _____ E-mail: _____

Mail one (1) copy of this form, along with applications to:
Texas 4-H Office
Youth Protection Standards
4180 State Highway 6
College Station, TX 77845

Keep one copy of this form in county files.

Signature (County Extension Agent)

Date

**Sample Letter
Volunteer Acceptance
Screened Through YPS**

We are pleased to welcome you as a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service _____
(*program area*) program volunteer in _____ County. We believe that you will
be a valuable addition to the _____ (*county or Extension*) program.

This letter is to notify you that you have been screened through the Youth Protection Standards Program with the Volunteer Center of North Texas (the Texas Legislature required vendor) and passed. You are fully qualified to serve in the volunteer position for which you applied, including working with and supervising youth.

As a new Extension program volunteer you will have the opportunity to participate in many training programs on the county, district, regional and state levels that are designed to strengthen your subject matter skills, provide organizational and management ideas and support you in your volunteer role. These trainings are scheduled throughout the year and you will be notified by (*the county newsletter, a personal letter, a phone call, at leaders meetings, etc.*).

Enclosed is a volunteer certificate for your files. Once again, welcome to the Extension Program. Please do not hesitate to call me if you have any questions. Thank you for your interest in Extension.

Sincerely,

(*Name*)

(*Title*)

(*Program Area*)

**Sample Letter
Time for Re-Screening**

Thank you for your interest in serving as a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service _____
(*program area*) program volunteer in _____ County. We believe that you will
be a valuable addition to the _____ (*county or Extension*) program.

This letter is to notify you that you need to be screened through the Youth Protection Standards
Program. The volunteer background checks are conducted through the Volunteer Center of North
Texas (the Texas Legislature required vendor).

If you have been screened and passed a criminal background check through another entity within
the past three years, please let me know. The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service accepts
previous screenings from certain entities; however, proof of screening must be provided. A list
of these entities may be obtained from the county Extension office.

In order to begin the screening process, please complete the volunteer application enclosed and
return to the county Extension office by _____ (*date*). Please note that
volunteers may not fulfill their duties until the criminal background check has been conducted
and you have been approved as an Extension volunteer.

Please do not hesitate to call me if you have any questions. Thank you for your interest in
Extension.

Sincerely,

(*Name*)

(*Title*)

(*Program Area*)

**Sample Letter
Volunteer Acceptance
Screened Through Extension-Approved Entities**

We are pleased to welcome you as a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service _____
(*program area*) program volunteer in _____ County. We believe that you will
be a valuable addition to the _____ (*county or Extension*) program.

This letter is to notify you that your previous screening conducted by another, approved entity
has been accepted. You are fully qualified to serve in the volunteer position for which you
applied, including working with and supervising youth.

As a new Extension program volunteer you will have the opportunity to participate in many
training programs on the county, district, regional and state levels that are designed to strengthen
your subject matter skills, provide organizational and management ideas and support you in your
volunteer role. These trainings are scheduled throughout the year and you will be notified by
(*the county newsletter, a personal letter, a phone call, at leaders meetings, etc.*).

Once again, welcome to the Extension Program. Please do not hesitate to call me if you have
any questions. Thank you for your interest in Extension.

Sincerely,

(*Name*)

(*Title*)

(*Program Area*)