

**Texas Master Naturalist – Hill Country Chapter
Board Meeting
May 16, 2007**

Present:

Dan Behringer, Cathy Downs, Betty Gardner, John Huecksteadt, Marilyn Murrmann, Phyllis Muska, Bill Perkison, Donna Robinson, Jim Stanley, Priscilla Stanley

Absent: Jerri Workman

The May meeting was called to order at 1:30 PM by President Phyllis Muska.

1. Chapter meeting room: Phyllis Muska had a discussion with former Riverside Nature Center Board member Janet Robinson who indicated that she had used the RNC conference room to seat 100 people. Upon consideration of moving the Welcome table and any refreshments from the meeting room to the Riverside foyer, it was decided that the Riverside conference room would be sufficiently large to accommodate our Chapter meetings for a while longer.

The UGRA \$45 rate for an evening meeting in the Auditorium is for a nature-oriented non-profit group. Thus UGRA appears disinclined to further discount this room rental rate based on the volunteer work that our chapter does for UGRA and Headwaters Groundwater Conservation District to become a TMN nature partner. UGRA did agree to give our chapter one month's notice of the new room rental rate before the rate increase takes effect.

The May 21 chapter meeting will be held at UGRA since this meeting will be held one week early to avoid Memorial Day, and the Riverside conference room has already been booked for that date.

A concern about ventilation in the Riverside conference room was addressed by re-setting the thermostat before our meetings. When the conference room is not in use, RNC sets the conference room thermostat high in the summer and low in the winter to save energy.

2. Treasurer's Report: Marilyn Murrmann reported we have a new balance of \$5453.70 in our bank account. A copy of the Treasurer's Report is appended to the hard copy of the Minutes. Two more Certification Deposit refunds of \$50 each have been made by check to members of our Class of 2006 upon their Certification.

3. Library Donations: As part of our mission of public education on the beneficial management of natural resources, Vice-President Betty Gardener recommended donating the new book *Water from Stone* by Jeffery Greene, which is the history of the land and water restoration work performed on the famous Bamberger Ranch, to libraries within our four county area, including Fredericksburg, Kerrville, Harper, Medina, Comfort, Bandera and Boerne. If we purchase the books from the Bamberger Foundation at \$25 each, 30% of the cost will go to the Bamberger Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization. Donna Robinson moved to purchase seven of these books to donate to the seven libraries listed above, Cathy Downs seconded the motion and it carried. Betty offered to have the books signed by Mr. and Mrs. Bamberger. Phyllis will make donation plates for the front of these books if the libraries do not already have an acknowledgement plate.

Action Item A. Purchase 7 *Water from Stone* books from the Bamberger Ranch, and have them signed - **Betty Gardner**

Action Item B. Make acknowledgement plates for each book – **Phyllis Muska**

4. New Class Planning Committee Update: Director of Class Planning Cathy Downs reported that the Committee had confirmed 100% of their speakers, including Barron Rector in place of Fred Smeins. The presentation on Native Plants by Priscilla Stanley will be a presentation on Wildscaping, including fauna and flora. The two field trips are setup. At the Orientation for new trainees, the Class Planning Committee will introduce the trainees, rather than having their mentors introduce them.

Cathy indicated that since gas prices had increased, the Committee wanted to increase the honorarium from \$25 to \$50. This honorarium would be given to nine speakers who are not employed by state or federal agencies, and are not members of our chapter. Dan Behringer moved to give these nine speakers a \$50 honorarium, Donna Robinson seconded, and the motion carried.

5. New Class Applications: Director of Membership John Huecksteadt reported that he has had three requests for Class applications. The publicity for our recruiting has not yet appeared in the newspapers in our four county area. The interest in the New Class is expected to increase after these articles appear.

John provided a Preliminary Mentoring Proposal (appended to the Minutes hard copy) evaluating the strengths and weakness of the past mentoring programs and proposing improvements in the plan. The Board viewed this proposal favorably with two comments:

Under **Suggestions - 3**, the Board recommended that the new Mentoring Workshop for mentors should be in late July, after the Class had been selected from the applicants, so that the mentors could contact their trainees before the orientation or first class. Thus, under **Suggestions - 4**, the mentoring assignments would have been previously made, and the introductions of the trainees will be by the Class Planning Committee.

John also reported that Gloria Costello and William Lange will certify as a Master Naturalist at our May meeting, which makes 10 of our Class of 2006, or 42%, to have certified eight months into the fifteen months new class members have to certify and receive a \$50 rebate on their tuition. This is an excellent certification rate for the Class of 2006. In addition, 13% of the Class of 2006 has already re-certified.

6. TMN New Class Recruiting Brochures: Director of Communications Donna Robinson brought some 2007 Chapter recruiting brochures to the Board meeting. Members took copies to place in various locations in their communities.

7. Volunteer Project List Update: New Coordinator Needed for Julia Campbell's Volunteer Projects: Julia Campbell, a member of our first Class in 2002, moved to Oregon recently. Our Director of Volunteer Projects, Jerri Workman, is contacting the President-Elect of the Native Plant Society of Texas – Kerrville Chapter, Cynthia Johnson, to see if she will become the TMN Project Coordinator for tending the Native Plant Display Garden behind the Kerrville Library (**KR-01-A**). It is noteworthy that the President of NPSOT – Kerrville Chapter has also been a member of our TMN chapter since our chapter's inception in 2002.

Julia's second project was **KR-02-D** for Riverside Nature Center Gardens and Grounds. Priscilla Stanley was appointed to Julia's place on the Landscape and Buildings Committee at Riverside, and she agreed to be the new TMN Project Coordinator.

8. May and June chapter meetings: Vice-President Betty Gardner reported that the **May 21st meeting** would be Chad Norris of the Water Resources Branch of TPWD and the maker of the TPWD video "Our Vanishing Texas Springs", which was on television as well. This meeting will be at UGRA (see #1 above). There will be a sign-up sheet at this meeting for member's only (including member spouses) to attend a field trip to a special spring on private property near Boerne on Saturday, June 2nd. Attendance will be limited to 20 people.

ACTION ITEM C: Send out a reminder to our members and prospective members receiving our newsletter of the change in meeting location for May, with a map to help folks not familiar with UGRA find it – **Phyllis Muska – Completed - 5/16/07**

The June 25th chapter meeting will be a "Bring Your Own Picnic" at Phyllis Muska and Dan Behringer's ranch. There will be a program at 5:00 PM on "Water Catchment for Potable Use" including a presentation and tour of their successful system, with the picnic around 6:00 PM, followed by an optional nature walk on the ranch. The Board decided that it would be easiest for everyone to bring their own food

(vs. a potluck supper). The chapter will provide soft drinks and dessert. Bill Carr, a botanist with The Nature Conservancy, has been invited.

9. Partners with our Chapter: Past-President Jim Stanley noted that Riverside Nature Center (RNC) is a partner because we provide nature-oriented volunteer service to RNC in return for a bargain room rental rate of \$50/year as a non-profit organization membership that entitles us to unlimited meetings at RNC. Riverside also serves as the call center from the public for our Land Management Assistance Program, providing coverage seven days a week.

Jim asked if the Board wanted to continue our co-sponsoring of the Down By the Riverside Nature Fair and Native Plant Sale this year. The event is scheduled for Friday, October 12 and Saturday, October 13 this year. This Native Plant Sale increases the awareness and use of native plants in the community by providing native perennials, shrubs and trees specially selected to grow well in the Hill Country, along with knowledgeable Plant Docents to help folks select the plants they need.

This large event with around 400 attendees also provides visibility to our TMN program and an opportunity for our New Class to begin volunteering with other members as a group effort. In addition, the Plant Sale is the only annual fundraiser for our TMN chapter, which is important as our project expenses increase. It does entail a substantial amount of work in its planning and execution. Initial planning begins this month. Our TMNs do bring their special knowledge of nature to this event which makes it a better event for the adult and children attendees and for Riverside.

Director of Membership John Huecksteadt moved that our chapter partner with Riverside Nature Center for the Down By the Riverside Native Plant Sale on October 12 and 13, 2007 and have more members participate in the planning to develop future Native Plant Sale leaders. Donna Robinson seconded the motion which carried.

Priscilla noted the major contributions made to Riverside's April Earth Day Celebration and Native Plant Sale by our TMN volunteers who filled over 71 shifts for the event.

ACTION ITEM D: Send a list of TMN volunteers for the Earth Day event to Donna Robinson to include in our newsletter expressing appreciation for their volunteer service— **Priscilla Stanley**

10. Review of AT sponsored by our chapter: Jim Stanley noted that for two years our chapter has offered 3 to 4 hours of in-house AT classes on Forb Identification by chapter members Scott and Sandra Magee, Tree Identification using a Dichotomous Key by Jim and Grass Identification by Jim in both the Spring and the Fall. Jim wondered if the Board supported continuing these classes at this frequency. Attendance for the Spring Forb class was 20 members, and for the Spring Tree class was 25 (including inviting a limited number of Master Gardeners and Native Plant Society members as well as part of our education mission). The Spring Grass class would be scheduled soon.

Priscilla noted that these three optional AT classes given in the Fall following the morning training classes for new trainees, with chapter members also invited, each had attendance of 30 to 36. Letting the trainees complete their 8 hours of AT with in-chapter classes appears to have increased our percentage of trainees achieving certification in the first year.

Class of 2006 Representative Bill Perkison moved that we continue these AT classes on Plant Identification, seconded by Donna Robinson, which carried.

11. Out-of-Area TMN Activities: Our chapter has a policy that, except for activities for the State TMN Office, our Volunteer Projects are within our four county service area of Bandera, Gillespie, Kendall and Kerr Counties. The one exception is teaching Kerrville students when they go to Nature Camp at the HEB Camp, which is west of our area, however the children are from within our area.

There has been some discussion with the HEB Camp in Real County that they might want to have a Land Management Assistance Program (LMAP) visit by our chapter. The HEB Camp is 6 miles north of Leakey, which is about 15 miles outside our area. Real County is in the Western Edwards Plateau Chapter, which has just begun a LMAP program with members in San Saba.

After discussion, the Board decided that it would be possible to do this LMAP visit as TMNs if requested, but since it is out of our area, our members would not count any volunteer hours for it. We would also discuss it with the Western Edwards Plateau chapter, including the San Saba members starting their LMAP program and invite them to join us if they wish.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 PM.

Next Board meeting: Wednesday, June 20 at 1:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Priscilla B. Stanley

Priscilla B. Stanley
Chapter Secretary

5/18/07