



Welcome to VMS our online volunteer hours reporting system

The purpose of this special newsletter is to provide an introduction and background for this new reporting system.

What is VMS?

Volunteer Management System

The Volunteer Management System (VMS) was introduced by our VMS team at the November chapter meeting.

VMS is a web-based volunteer software program designed by Samaritan Technologies. The program consists of an administrator component, eCoordinator and a volunteer component, eRecruiter.



Our chapter will begin using the online system to record service hours.

Why are we using VMS?

Master Naturalist service is valuable.

The Texas Master Naturalist program (TMN) is funded by grants. Our volunteer hours are used as an in-kind match to generate funding. Each hour reported by one of our well-trained volunteers is valued at \$23.

Federal grant programs and auditors recently required Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) to implement a centralized hours reporting system for all TPWD volunteer programs. TPWD selected VMS to manage volunteer service hours and four TMN chapters pilot-tested the system. We are now in the final phases of converting all forty-six TMN chapters to VMS.

What have we done so far?

Hill Country Chapter VMS Administration Team

The Hill Country Chapter VMS Team began working with the TMN state office during the summer of 2015 on the conversion from our current hours reporting system to online hours reporting.

The VMS Team

Brenda Fest
Kristie Denbow
Lisa Flanagan
Liz Ross
Sandy Leyendecker
Claire Mitchell

The team worked hard to meet VMS requirements. They completed Data uploads, Volunteer Projects were entered, and AT categories were created and entered.

Your volunteer and AT history through 2014 has been uploaded to VMS. 2015 data will be entered in January.

The Class of 2015 trainees have been using VMS since September to record their service hours online. These new chapter members have provided positive feedback stating, "VMS is easy to use to report hours."

VMS Basics

VMS page

Go to the Hill Country Chapter VMS web portal

txmn.org/hillcountry/vms/

This page contains instructions and information:

- The VMS Training PowerPoint presentation used at the November chapter meeting is a good tool with step-by-step instructions on how to get started.
- Links to the VMS login page, the VMS Help Desk, and Getting Started videos
- Volunteer projects lists and other instructions
- Use your VMS User ID and Password to login. If you are already in the TPWD system, use your existing user ID. Your password is case sensitive. Change your password by clicking "forgot my password". If you have not received your user ID and password, contact a chapter VMS administrator



Each chapter member has been issued a **VMS User ID and Password.**

Report Hours

Log into VMS and select the volunteer project you worked on or AT you attended to enter your hours.

Why the 45-day limit on reporting?

The TMN program must submit monthly and quarterly state and federal grant reports. This time frame provides the best 'snapshot' of activity and accomplishments of members, the chapter, and the TMN program.

Hours reported after 45 days cannot be included in the grant reports. Hours reported late are missed opportunities and may cause the program to fail to meet grant requirements.



Hours must be reported within **45 days** of the date performed.

Volunteer Projects on VMS

Your projects may have changed.

Many Hill Country Chapter Volunteer Projects have changed to satisfy VMS requirements. Some projects stayed the same, 13 projects were combined with other projects, and several projects became inactive.

Our new project ID codes incorporate the new Texas Master Naturalist Service Project Activity Categories. These eight categories define all of the projects performed by Master Naturalists throughout the state.



You must check each project for a new project ID code.

CB - Chapter Business	PO - Public Outreach (Indirect)
FR - Field Research	RM - Natural Resource Management
NPA - Nature/Public Access	TG - Technical Guidance
OT - Other	TR - Training and Educating (Direct)

- A key to the eight project extensions is located at the top of our Excel projects list.
- Use the project description to help you decide under which extension to report hours.

The current VMS Approved Volunteer Projects List and the Inactive Projects list are posted on our chapter website. Discard any previous projects list. A complete list of our approved projects with their descriptions can also be viewed after signing into VMS.

- The project lists will change from time to time as new projects are developed and approved.
- Be sure to check our chapter website or VMS for the latest listings.

Reporting Volunteer Hours on VMS

Look for the project ID and extension

If the project ID **does not have** a two or three letter extension after our standard code, you will report all hours volunteered under that single ID.

example: **BD-01-B** Bandera Library Wildflower Garden

Any and all service performed on the Bandera Library Wildflower Garden will be reported under BD-01-B.

- Projects with a **two or three letter extension** after our standard code have been expanded to illustrate activity components of the project as required by VMS.

If your project ID **has** a two or three letter extension after our standard code, you must report your hours according to the type of service performed.

- The description for each project will tell you what type of activities are included in the extension.

example: **BD-03-A-FR** Love Creek Preserve Field Research

BD-03-A-NPA Love Creek Preserve Nature/Public Access

BD-03-A-RM Love Creek Preserve Natural Resource Management

If you spend one hour on Field Research activities (a census) and then two hours on Nature /Public Access activities (trail or garden work), look on the list to locate the project ID with the extension that best reflects your volunteer service. You will then report one hour FR and two hours NPA.

AT Revision on VMS

We have streamlined the way Advanced Training (AT) hours are listed on VMS.
Here's how to enter AT into VMS:

1. On the chapter calendar find the AT to get information about the AT number, title, date, time, and location.
 2. Login to VMS.
 3. On the VMS dashboard click "Report My Service".
 4. Select one of the approved AT categories from the drop down menu. These new AT categories will be included in the calendar listing of each AT event.
 5. Enter the **date and hours** in the survey.
 6. Under "Description" enter the **AT title and AT number** as shown on the chapter calendar.
- All Advanced Training must be approved by our Director of Advanced Training and posted on our website calendar.
 - If the AT event is not listed on the chapter calendar, the AT event **has not** been approved and hours entered **will not** be approved.
 - If you do not list the AT title and AT number from the calendar in the "Description" section of the survey, your AT hours **will not** be approved.

AT Categories
AT: HCMN Chapter Meeting (1 hour)
AT: HCMN Other Pre-approved Training (Name of Class in Comments)
AT: HCMN Webinars Approved (Name of Class in Comments)
AT: TMN Annual Conference
AT: Cibolo Nature Center (Name of Class in Comments)
AT: Fredericksburg Nature Center (Name of Class in Comments)
AT: Riverside Nature Center (Name of Class in Comments)
AT: Native Plant Society of Texas (Name of Class and Location in Comments)
AT: Texas Parks and Wildlife (Name of Class and Location in Comments)
AT: Texas A&M AgriLife (Name of Class in Comments)
AT: Public Library (Name of Class and Location in Comments)

Terms
to
Learn

AT Hours: TMN advanced training hours

Dashboard: where to report service hours and view log book

Log book: the record of TMN volunteer hours

Opportunities: Volunteer Projects or AT events


Survey: used by members to report hours

TMN Hours: service hours applied to a TMN event

Here's what
your dashboard
looks like


TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

Welcome, Your Name




Find Opportunities

Look for ways to serve on a one-time or regular basis.




View My Schedule

See the shifts where I have signed up.




Report my Service

Submit volunteer hours.




View My Log Book

View my volunteer transaction history.



My Placements

View opportunities I have applied for that have been approved.



My Referrals

View opportunities I have applied for that are pending approval and placement.

Edit My Profile

Enable Login Using...

Log out

Summary

Volunteer Hours

Month: 0

Year: 0

Lifetime: 0

NOTE: These are TPWD hours not TMN hours. This will always be 0.

Some things have stayed the same.

Record your hours

- You can continue to record your hours on your calendar, spiral notebook, or whatever personal way you use to keep track of your activities.
- Sandy Leyendecker, our data manager, will continue to keep track of hours. Your hours for milestones and recertifications will continue to accrue for awards.
- Remember, as a member of the Hill Country Chapter, the service hours you report contribute to our efforts in support of the mission of the Texas Master Naturalist program:

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.

If you have any questions, please contact one of the VMS Team Members via e-mail or phone.

Brenda Fest brendafest@arczip.com

Kristie Denbow denbow@gvtc.com

Lisa Flanagan hillcountrysmembership@gmail.com

Liz Ross lizrossat@gmail.com

Sandy Leyendecker sandy325@windstream.net

Claire Mitchell claire.c.mitchell@gmail.com