

CHAPTER OPERATING HANDBOOK  
(COH)

Adopted September 14, 2021



Alamo Area Chapter of the  
Texas Master Naturalist Program

# CHAPTER OPERATING HANDBOOK

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# CHAPTER OPERATING HANDBOOK

## Alamo Area Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist Program

### **I. CHAPTER ORGANIZATION**

The documents governing the 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 will be structured for governance as follows.

**Name.** The name of this corporation is the ALAMO AREA CHAPTER OF THE TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST, INC. as set forth by the Articles of Incorporation filed with the Office of the Secretary of State of Texas, January 25, 2000.

**Address.** The current mailing address of this organization is P.O. Box 160543, San Antonio TX 78280.

**Purpose.** The purpose of this organization shall be as stated in its Articles of Incorporation filed with the Office of the Secretary of State of Texas, Charter No. – 01568810-01

This Chapter Operating Handbook adapts the TMN Chapter Operating Handbook to the specifics of The Alamo Area Chapter, Texas Master Naturalist. In addition to this handbook and the TMN Bylaws, the Chapter's Board and members will be guided by the current versions of the TMN Chapter Operating Handbook, the TMN Program Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, the TMN Standards of Conduct and the TMN Code of Ethics. (See TMN Website, Members Resource Section: <http://txmn.org/resources/Chapter-bylaws/>)

**Nonprofit Status.** This organization is a tax-exempt, charitable corporation exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law), and shall be nonprofit, nonsectarian and nonpolitical in all its policies and activities and not organized for the private gain of any individual or entity. For additional applications, restrictions and limitations see IRS Publication 557, "Tax-Exempt Status for Your Organization."

## **A. BOARD**

### **1. Officers**

The duly elected Officers shall consist of:

- a) President
- b) Vice President
- c) Treasurer
- d) Secretary

The terms and limits of office: All officers elected at the November General Meeting shall serve for a period of 12 months beginning January 1 and are eligible for re-election.

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

### **2. Duties of Officers**

The duties of Officers are defined in the following:

- a) President
  - (1) Serve as Chair of the Board of Directors and the Chief Executive Officer.
  - (2) Prepare and distribute the agenda for Board meetings.
  - (3) Preside over Board and Chapter meetings.
  - (4) Sign all Board-approved documents that may be legally binding on the Chapter.
  - (5) Co-sign checks with the Treasurer or another designated Chapter Officer for amounts greater than \$1000.
  - (6) Authorize in writing credit/debit card and PayPal transactions for accounts greater than \$1000.

- (7) Present a summary of the Chapter's accomplishments at the Chapter's first general meeting of the new year.
- (8) Prepare correspondence between the Chapter and the State Office, other Chapters or State agencies as appropriate and provide a copy to Secretary for retention.
- (9) Review Chapter's completed annual report before submission to State office.
- (10) Communicate with Board and Chapter Members as needed; conduct votes by remote communications technology including email on issues between meetings as required by Section B, Responsibilities of the Board paragraph 4.
- (11) Appoint all committee Chairs and be an ex-officio member of all committees, assisting as appropriate.
- (12) Appoint and present a slate of candidates for all new Director positions for review and approval by a majority vote of the elected Officers, Past-President, and Advisor(s).
- (13) Become Immediate Past President upon completion of term as President.
- (14) Encourage all Officers and Directors to read and be familiar with their duties, responsibilities and program guiding documents (i.e. Bylaws, Protocols, etc.) stated in the Chapter Operating Handbook.
- (15) Be an ex-officio member of all committees, assisting as appropriate.
- (16) Ensure that before the Chapter makes any written commitments to County Governments, City Councils, etc., or executes Contracts or Memorandums of Understanding with other entities, that the TMN State Coordinator's approval is obtained.
- (17) Be the Chapter's representative to State Annual Meeting or appoint a Chapter State Representative (See Chapter State Representative under 3. Directors).
- (18) The use of Chapter credit/debit cards or PayPal is highly discouraged. If a Chapter chooses to do so, and it is to be used for a transaction greater than \$1000, a written authorization from the President is required prior to proceeding with the transaction.

b) Vice President

- (1) Assist the President and act for the President in the President's absence.
- (2) 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.

- (3) Chair the Annual Financial Examination Committee.
- (4) Select and secure the venue for monthly Chapter meetings for the following year based on approved Board meeting dates.
- (5) Compile the State annual report addendum in coordination with the Membership Director.
- (6) Perform other duties as assigned as the President.

c) Treasurer

- (1) Receive all dues and monies for the Chapter and maintain them in a Chapter bank account.
- (2) Develop and maintain an annual budget for the Chapter with input and approval by the Board of Directors. The proposed budget should be finalized and submitted for approval prior to the start of the new calendar year.
- (3) Pay all bills promptly upon receipt of a written statement or receipt for approved expenses. Treasurer shall sign all checks, drafts or other instruments for payment of money or notes of the Chapter. In the absence of the Treasurer, the President and one other designated Officer may sign any instruments for payment or notes of the Chapter.
- (4) For any payments greater than \$1000, the Treasurer must co-sign the payment instrument with the President or obtain the President's written approval of the expenditure prior to issuing payment. The President's approval must be attached to the payment documentation.
- (5) Submit all annual financial records, reports and audits as required by law (and/or sponsoring agencies).
- (6) Present a financial report from the Chapter's financial management system at all Board meetings that includes the status of all financial transactions and bank statement reconciliations.
- (7) Present the financial records to the annual Financial Examination Committee before the last Board meeting of the calendar year.
- (8) 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.
- (9) Make available all financial reports and documents to any Chapter Member and/or Advisors as may be requested.
- (10) It is highly recommended that the Treasurer maintain the financial records of the Chapter using a financial management system such as QuickBooks, Quicken, or equivalent method software processing systems that is able to produce quality financial reports easily understandable by any Chapter Member and/or Advisor.
- (11) For Chapters who maintain a 501(c)(3), the Chapter's financial management system must meet Generally Accepted Accounting Principles

(GAAP) using either accrual, modified accrual accounting, or modified cash basis.

- (12) Retain all Chapter financial records for at least seven years according to the Chapter's Data Retention Policy (a template for the policy may be found on the txmn.org website).
- (13) Provide information for the State annual report addendum in coordination with the Membership Director.
- (14) Keep a record of all donated or purchased inventory, equipment or other property belonging to the Chapter with an initial purchase price or current market value of \$250.00 or more.
- (15) Issue receipts to individuals or businesses for all cash donations over \$5.00 and non-cash donations.
- (16) Provide a Texas Sales and Use Tax Exemption Certificate to Chapter members making authorized purchases on behalf of the Chapter.
- (17) Insure that all applicable legal documents, including all tax returns, are filed on a timely basis.

d) Secretary

- (1) Maintain a copy of or conduct all necessary Chapter correspondence.
- (2) Record, publish and preserve the minutes of all meetings of the Board of Directors, General Membership meetings or special meetings.
- (3) 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.
- (4) Furnish the minutes to all Board Members and make them available to other Chapter Members when requested.
- (5) Keep a record of attendance at each meeting and whether or not a quorum is present.
- (6) Maintain a hard copy file or a secure digital record keeping system of all minutes and correspondence according to the Chapter's Data Retention policy.
- (7) Collect signed Conflict of Interest Forms from all Board members in January.
- (8) Serve on the Annual Financial Evaluation Committee unless replaced by an Advisor.
- (9) Keep a list of Board committees and their members.

### 3. Directors

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

- Immediate Past President
- Membership Director

- New Class Training Director
- Media and Technology Director
- Activities Information Director
- New Class Representatives
- State Chapter Representative
- Programs Director
- Community Outreach Director
- Hospitality Director
- Advisor(s) if available to the Chapter
  - a) All Director positions are by appointment and approved according to the Chapter Bylaws ARTICLE V, F and G.
  - b) The terms and limits of office: All appointed Directors shall serve for a period of 12 months and are eligible for re-election.
  - c) Please see corresponding committee descriptions, beginning on page 15.

#### **4. 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 and Advisors are voting Members of the Board. The list which follows may be considered the critical appointments for a successful Chapter operation but is not intended to encompass all requirements a Chapter may have. Neither does it state all responsibilities that may be required of a Director's position.

- a) Immediate Past President
  - (1) Provide continuity from prior Board of Directors with counsel for undocumented procedures and work to document those procedures.
  - (2) Lead an annual review and update if necessary of the Chapter's Chapter Operating Handbook document.
  - (3) Assist the President.
  - (4) Chair the Nominating Committee...Ref. Chapter Bylaws, Article V, E, 2.
  - (5) In the absence of an Immediate Past President, the President will reassign above responsibilities as needed.



b) Membership Director

- (1) Select committee members and form necessary subcommittees.
- (2) Maintain a roster of all Chapter Members with pertinent contact information.
- (3) Monthly maintain and publish names of Members achieving certification and milestone awards.
- (4) Present awards frequently at Chapter meetings.
- (5) 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.
- (6) Ensure all Members or a Member-in-Training receives appropriate training in the use of the TMN VMS.
- (7) Provide information for the State Annual Report with the support of the preceding year's President and Data Manager.
- (8) Certify that all candidates for board Director are members in good standing at time of election or appointment.
- (9) Order and maintain a stock of member recognition awards.
- (10) Recommend additional and special awards for recognition of sustained or one-time outstanding performance.

c) New Class Training 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 Director of Public Outreach to develop the New Class recruiting brochure.
- (5) Work with the Membership Director to manage the Mentor Program and the new class application process.
- (6) Ensure each Member-in-Training receives appropriate training to use the TMN VMS.

d) Media and Technology Director

- (1) Oversee a committee(s) performing the functions of:
  - (a) Promoting the AAMN Chapter in the local media.
  - (b) Newsletter Editor
  - (c) Webmaster

- (d) Maintaining an archive of important documents and other materials of the chapter
  - (2) Write publicity press releases for print and electronic media covering New Class Application, Chapter meetings and special events.
  - (3) Oversee social media content and formats used by the Chapter Members. Social media should follow TMN Marketing & ID Guidelines as well as TPWD and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service policies.
- e) Activities Information Director
- (1) Develop a form for Members to request that a program be considered for an Advanced Training Code or Volunteer Service Project Code.
  - (2) Work with the review committee 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, to review and approve Advanced Training Codes and Volunteer Service Requirements, including VMS, to review and approve Volunteer Service Project Codes.
  - (6) 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.
  - (7) Ensure that a complete description of those Project activities for which volunteer service hours may be accumulated. Ensures detailed descriptions are promptly posted in Chapter VMS Opportunities.
  - (8) Assign Volunteer Service Project Codes to qualifying projects and publicize to Chapter Members.
  - (9) Encourage AAMN MNs to develop service opportunities and promote them as AAMN Chapter-sponsored program and events.
  - (10) Establish points of contact with other organizations' volunteer coordinators, e.g., San Antonio Parks and Recreation to learn of volunteer service opportunities and promote volunteer recognition events and awards.
- f) New Class Representatives (two for each class)
- (1) Representatives will be selected from and by members of each training class. One class representative shall be designated as Primary Class Representative, and one shall be designated as Alternate Class Representative. The Primary Representative will carry out all the Class Representative duties

listed below. The Alternate Class Representative will assume all duties of the Class Representative should the named primary representative vacate the position. If the Alternate is unable to fill the vacancy, the position will remain vacant.

- (i) Attend and observe all Board meetings and keep members of their class informed of Board actions and Chapter events and programs.
- (ii) During the calendar year of their training class, the Class Representative observe the Board and will not have voting privileges. The Representative can earn hours for observing board meetings.
- (iii) The Class Representative will serve a full one-year term as a voting Board Member beginning January 1st of the year following the year in which they completed their training.
- (iv) The Class representative will participate as a member of the annual Financial Examination Committee.

(b) Training Committee Liaison

- (i) Participate as a member of the New Class Training Committee for the next class.
- (ii) The Representative may participate in planning and implementing training programs and may attend selected New Class training sessions to support training objectives and provide the new class insight into the New Class Representative position.

(iii) Hours may be earned for planning and implementing training programs.

- (2) If either of the New Class Representatives are unable to fill the vacancy, a member of the class will be nominated to this position. If no class member is willing to assume the role, the position will remain vacant for the remaining term.

g) Chapter State Representative

- (1) This position should be assumed by the President or appointed from the Board membership by the President.
- (2) Work as a Chapter liaison with the State Program Coordinator.
- (3) Represent the Chapter in State level matters of the Texas Master Naturalist Program.
- (4) Keep the board and Chapter membership informed of changes to the TMN Bylaws, Chapter Operating Handbook, Chapter Management and Operations

Protocols, and training activities & information communicated on the TMN listserv.

- (5) Help with coordination of activities at the Annual State Conference.
- (6) Help in finding presenters for the Annual Conference.
- (7) Enhance the communication between the State and the Chapters.
- (8) Help guide and educate the Member Chapter's new Officers and Directors through use of the state governing documents.
- (9) Participate in conference calls as requested.
- (10) Attend the Annual State Conference if possible.
- (11) Attend the semi-annual State Volunteer Representatives Council meetings.
- (12) Under the immediate past-president, as chair, and working with the committee, coordinate the annual review and update of the Chapter Operating Handbook.

h) Programs Director

- (1) Select committee members and forms necessary subcommittees.
- (2) Develop and schedule, as appropriate in accordance with the current Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Chapter programs and special advanced training classes having secured the approval of the Activities Information Committee.
- (3) Provide brief description of programs to the Chapter website and monthly newsletter.
- (4) Ensure speaker(s) are appropriately recognized with a gift card(s) not to exceed \$50 per monthly Chapter meeting. Certified Master Naturalists are restricted to \$25 honorariums.
- (5) Provide input to the annual State report addendum.
- (6) Routinely coordinate with the Hospitality Committee and other committees as appropriate.

i) Community Outreach Director

- (1) Select committee members and form necessary subcommittees.
- (2) Plan, schedule and conduct Chapter outreach activities, to include establishing relationships with the community, private businesses, service clubs, city and county public organizations and other local volunteer organizations.
- (3) Store and maintain Chapter outreach equipment and supplies.
- (4) Arrange for the distribution of AAMN literature, brochures and student recruitment material at public events throughout the city and surrounding areas.

- j) Hospitality Director
  - (1) Select committee members and forms necessary subcommittees.
  - (2) Help plan and organize Chapter social functions and events.
  - (3) Promote member attendance at social events.
  - (4) Provide and/or coordinate refreshments at general membership meetings, the New Class Training sessions, and other Chapter functions.
  
- k) Advisor(s)
  - (a) Reference TMN State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Appendix I, Advisor Guidelines and Article V, B, State Bylaws.
  - (b) 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 (Ref: Article VI, A. 2-3). All business before the Board requires approval of either a majority vote of Board Members in attendance at a Board meeting where a quorum is present, or a majority vote of all Board members using Remote Communications Technology.

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**

- a) All committees and their activities are subject to review and approval by the Board.

### **2. Expenditure Limits**

- a) The Board will honor expenditure limits as set forth in the local Chapter Operating Handbook.

### **3. Chapter Business**

- a) 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. Voting by Remote Communications Technology**

- a) A meeting of the Board or the Nominating Committee may be held by means of a remote electronic communications system, including videoconferencing technology, email, or the Internet, only if:
  - (1) Three business days' notice is given to each person entitled to participate in the meeting and includes relevant information to be discussed; and
  - (2) The system provides access to the meeting in a manner or using a method by which each person participating in the meeting can communicate with each other; and
  - (3) Motions are made and votes are recorded in the written minutes of the meeting; and
  - (4) Documentation of each of the requirements of paragraph a, b, and c above must be contained in the secretary's minutes.

#### **5. Establishment of Dues**

The Board of Directors may, with approval of a majority of Members present at a duly called and convened general membership meeting, set and change the amount of an initiation fee, if any, and the annual dues, if any, payable to the Chapter. The Board of Directors must notify all voting Members 60 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.

- a) Dues Schedule

- (1) Dues shall be payable on or before the first day of January for each fiscal year. If dues are not paid by March 31 in each fiscal year, then all privileges afforded a 'Certified Member' are rescinded until dues are paid. A Texas Master Naturalist Member who is not current in the payment of dues, if required, by the end of the calendar year, will be considered "inactive" for purposes of the State Annual Report.

### **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.

#### **1. Standing Committees**

The Chapter must perform the following functions as outlined below; however, the Chapter may combine functions or reorganize committee structures as necessary. Please see corresponding committee director descriptions, beginning on page 7.

a) Executive Committee

- (1) The Executive Committee shall be comprised of the elected Officers of the Chapter Authority: Reference Chapter Bylaws, Article VI, B. 2. Authority.

b) New Class Training Committee

- (1) Serve under the leadership of the New Class Training Director for the Chapter's training program.
- (2) Plan, implement and evaluate the Chapter training curriculum and develop training calendar.
- (3) Acquire the TMN State Curriculum for each new Member-in-Training and prepare additional class materials.
- (4) Select all presenters and arrange for their class/presentation including materials, handouts and audio-visual equipment needed for the class/presentation.
- (5) Arrange for speaker gifts, travel, lodging needs, confirmation, and thank you letters.
- (6) Arrange for publicity – newspapers, flyers, brochures, electronic media.
- (7) Arrange for training venue and required facilities equipment for all class periods.
- (8) Facilitate class field outings/trips.
- (9) Host initial New Class social and presentation reception.
- (10) Arrange for refreshment amenities during class periods.

- c) Membership Committee [This Chapter's Membership Director performs these functions without a committee.]
  - (1) Serve under the leadership of the Membership Director, typically composed of the Data Manager(s).
  - (2) Manage and/or assist in managing the Chapter's records and reports within the TMN VMS.
  - (3) Maintain a roster of the Chapter Member's names, including a Members-in-Training, plus pertinent contact information within the TMN VMS.
  - (4) Maintain a record of volunteer and advanced training hours within the TMN VMS.
  - (5) Provide support for compilation of the State Annual Report.
  - (6) Support the Membership Director in ensuring that VMS time reported is accurate and fitting of the activity description and criteria.
  - (7) Report the names of Members who have achieved Certification, Re-certification, and Milestone awards so that the Members can quickly be recognized.
  
- d) Activity Approval Committee
  - (1) Support the Activities Information Director in reviewing, organizing, assigning codes and notifying Chapter Members of approved Volunteer Service and Advanced Training opportunities and projects.
  - (2) Assist in drafting a complete description of those Project activities for which volunteer service hours may be accumulated and assures such detail descriptions are promptly posted in the Chapter VMS Opportunities.
  - (3) Assist in managing project opportunities and advanced training opportunities within the Chapter's TMN VMS.

## **2. AD HOC Committees**

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

- a) Annual Financial Examination Committee
  - (a) Responsible for conducting the annual examination of the financial records of the Chapter. Members will be appointed by the President and approved by the Board and will include the Vice-President as chair, New Class



Representatives, Secretary and Advisor(s) if applicable. The Treasurer provides the financial records for review.

- (b) Such examination would include
  - (i) examining the supporting documentation for completeness and proper inclusion in the summary financial records,
  - (ii) ascertaining all items in the summary financial records are supported with documentation, and
  - (iii) identifying any issues requiring attention.
- (c) The results of the Financial Examination will be reported to the Board at the last meeting in November and recorded in the minutes of the following Board meeting with signed attestations from each member of the committee.

b) Officer Nomination Committee

- (1) Proceed in accordance with Chapter Bylaws, Article V, E. 2. Election Process.
  - (a) The Past President will chair the Officer Nomination Committee formed by Chapter Members who are appointed by the Chapter President with Board approval. The committee will present their slate of Officer candidates to the President, taking into account the following attributes:
    - (i) 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.
    - (ii) Diversity being not limited to sex, ethnicity, creed, or national origin, but including attributes such as age, sexual orientation, gender identity, formal education, background experience, and county of residence.
    - (iii) 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.
    - (iv) 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.
  - (b) 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.

- (c) 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.
- (d) 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.
- (e) 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 election to present a slate of Director Candidates.
- (f) The TMN State Program Coordinator may provide oversight to a Chapter's nomination process.

c) 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.

- (a) 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.
  - (i) 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.
  - (ii) Diversity being not limited to sex, ethnicity, creed, or national origin, but including attributes such as age, sexual orientation, gender identity, formal education, background experience, and county of residence.
  - (iii) 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.
  - (iv) 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.
- (b) 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.
- (c) The incoming President will present a slate of Director candidates 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.

- (d) The TMN State Program Coordinator may provide oversight to a Chapter's nomination process.

- d) 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, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability or national origin. All persons who are chapter members or persons applying for TMN membership must submit to and pass the required criminal background check.

### **1. Member Categories (Reference Chapter Bylaws, Article IV, Membership)**

- a) Texas Master Naturalist-in-Training
- b) Texas Master Naturalist Pledge
- c) Certified Texas Master Naturalist
- d) Texas Master Naturalist Member
- e) Honorary Texas Master Naturalist

### **2. Member Dues**

Where Chapters have established dues, by a majority vote of Chapter Members, a qualifying Member must be current in the payment of those dues as defined by the local Chapter Operating Handbook.

### **3. Active Membership**

- a) Active members are those members in good standing (see Bylaws Article IV. C.) who (1) have completed the required training schedule as established by the TMN Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, (2) are current in their annual dues, (3) have a current liability waiver on file, and (4) have a current background

check on file. Dues shall be paid and required liability waivers and background checks shall be signed in advance of the first day of January in each fiscal year.

- b) Privileges of Active Membership. Active members have the right to vote, have the right to report hours and to receive recertification and milestone pins, have the right to serve on the Board of Directors, and receive volunteer liability coverage at approved Chapter activities and events.
- c) 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.
- d) Members who may have been 'inactive' for some reason, may petition a local Chapter for reinstatement, providing all Chapter membership requirements are met.

### **III. ADOPTION & AMENDMENT OF THE CHAPTER OPERATING HANDBOOK**

#### **1. Adoption**

- a) 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.
- b) Written distribution may be via conventional mail, email or other equivalent means.

#### **2. Amendment**

- a) 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. 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.
- b) The general membership must then be notified in written form of the final proposed changes or amendments ten (10) days before the next general membership meeting at which time a membership vote will be held.
- c) Written form may be via conventional mail, email or other equivalent means.

### 3. State Office Notification

- a) Once a Chapter has adopted a revised and/or amended Chapter Operating Handbook, an electronic copy must be sent to the TMN State Coordinator within 30 days.

## IV. CHAPTER RULES OF ORDER

The current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* shall govern the meetings of the Chapter insofar as those rules are not inconsistent with or in conflict with the Bylaws, the Articles of Incorporation, and the laws of the State of Texas or other adopted rules governing agenda, motions and related matters.

## V. APPENDICES

### A. Guidelines for Board Adoption of Chapter Projects

GOALS: The project must meet these overall goals:

- Must support the purpose and mission of the Texas Master Naturalist:
  - 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.

SCOPE:

- The project must be public, a community project; not one that is located on private land. Public Projects are defined as those located on public land: parks, natural areas, schools, etc.
- The project site should be free of charge to the public
- The project will be analyzed in terms of time, budget requirements and available resources

- The project should be long-term in nature. Example, it should be created/maintained for a period of no less than three years.

LEADERSHIP: A dedicated Group Leader who:

- Is an active member of the Alamo Area Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist
- Provides AAMN Board a least a quarterly written report of progress and an annual, in person, presentation of project status
- Recruits volunteers from AAMN membership
- Sets the work schedule
- Keeps an ongoing record of AAMN volunteer attendance (for auditing purposes)
- Creates annual budget for the project
- Coordinates the development of a Memo of Understanding (MOU) between the AAMN Board, and the venue (landowner, Natural Area, public agency, etc.) setting out the responsibilities of the project

SPONSORSHIP:

- A vote of the AAMN Board is necessary to be considered an official project and to receive funding
- The chapter may support the project financially in part or in whole
- Payment for goods and services will be based on the submitted budget, and will be paid by the Treasurer from either an invoice received or a reimbursement with original receipt. Receipts must be submitted to the Treasurer within two months of purchase in order to be fulfilled by AAMN
- Signage at the site will indicate that the project is supported and maintained by the Alamo Area Master Naturalist Chapter
- The core volunteer staff should belong to the Alamo Area Master Naturalist chapter, but projects can work with members of the public especially in an education or outreach mode

Consideration will be given to projects by people and in places that help the Alamo Area Master Naturalist more fully represent the rich diversity of San Antonio's communities and terrains.

## **B. Political Advocacy & Texas Master Naturalist**

**While we may personally engage in political advocacy or lobbying for legislation as a private citizen, we should never do that as a MN or wearing a TMN name-tag or TMN labeled clothing.**

The purpose of this section is to communicate to Texas Master Naturalists the difference between volunteering for, and providing information on behalf of the Coalition, and "lobbying," which is not a sanctioned Texas Master Naturalist activity.

Lobbying, as defined by the Texas Master Naturalist program, is the act of taking a position on proposed legislation or local ordinance. It is also defined as requesting that an elected official or voter take a specific action related to legislation or local ordinance.

The prohibition on lobbying does not preclude a TMN member from providing support to specific conservation efforts. As with any TMN service project, service hours in support of the conservation organization should be related to conservation, or an otherwise approved subject matter by the TMN Chapter/Program.

Nothing in this document or in TMN regulations prohibits a Texas Master Naturalist, acting in an official capacity as a TMN, from providing factual information to elected officials or voters about the factual impact or effect of a particular piece of legislation, as long as the volunteer is not requesting specific action be taken related to that ordinance or legislation, or expressing their personal opinion about that legislation.

Lobbying is prohibited if the volunteer is, at the time of the action, acting as a Texas Master Naturalist, or as a representative of the TMN Program or their local chapter.

The TMN program is proud to create well informed citizens that are active in advancing conservation in their private lives.

There are no restrictions on volunteers acting as private citizens who are exercising their right to speak with elected representatives and not connecting themselves to the TMN program/chapter/sponsoring agencies.

#### **Examples of allowed and prohibited activities for Texas Master Naturalists:**

- A TMN member volunteers for the Coalition to recruit organizations to join the Coalition. (Allowed.)
- A TMN volunteer is asked to provide support for the coalition by building a general website about the coalition. (Allowed.)
- A TMN volunteer is asked to create a brochure or website about the effects of legislation. (Allowed, ONLY as long as the material is limited to factual information about the issues and factual impacts of the legislation.)
- Prohibited: A TMN volunteer is asked to build a website that encourages people to call their representative in favor of or against legislation. (Prohibited as a TMN volunteer because of this specific call to action. However, TMN Volunteers could, as a TMN volunteer, build a website or brochure that does not request legislative action or does not voice an opinion for/against legislation.)

- A TMN volunteer is asked to give a presentation about the coalition to a group of businesses, volunteer group, or an advocacy group. (Allowed.)
- A TMN member is asked to speak to an elected official or voter group about a specific piece of legislation. (Allowed, ONLY if the TMN does not advocate for or against the legislation, or request that the audience take action such as voting for or against the bill. Information presented will likely center around the facts of an issue and/or the factual impacts of the bill. If a TMN member is acting as a private citizen, and wishes to advocate for or against legislation, they are prohibited from doing so as a Texas Master Naturalist.)
- A TMN volunteer would like to introduce Coalition members to each other or to Coalition employees or volunteers. (Allowed.)
- Prohibited: A TMN volunteer is asked to put out yard signs in his/her community in support of a proposed bill or law. (Prohibited.)
- A TMN volunteer, acting on their own time as a private citizen wants to put out yard signs on his/her own property, or in their community. (Allowed, but may not request service hours or represent the TMN program in any way, such as clothing or nametags.)
- A TMN volunteer would like to request that their elected representative vote for or against a bill that provides funding for nongame wildlife. (*NOT allowed as a TMN.* Allowed as a private citizen.)
- Prohibited: A TMN volunteer would like to write a letter to the editor about proposed legislation, and mention that they are TMN certified. (Prohibited. However, the volunteer may do so as a private citizen, but may not identify themselves as a TMN).
- A TMN volunteer accompanies a voter/constituent to a meeting with an elected leader. (Allowed as a TMN volunteer, as long as the TMN volunteer provides only factual information and does not take a position on legislation or request that the official takes any action).
- A TMN volunteer, acting as a private citizen, without identifying themselves as a TMN, meets with an elected leader and requests that leader take action to support specific legislation. (Allowed, but volunteer may not request service hours.)

### **C. Open Carry of Firearms: TPWD Volunteer Policy, December 2015**

**General Policy:** Members of the public are authorized to carry firearms in accordance with State law in the areas of the Department that are generally accessible to the public. Department volunteers will not take actions to discourage members of the public from the lawful carrying of firearms in areas of the Department that are generally accessible to the public.

**On-Duty Prohibition for Volunteer Open Carry:** Volunteers shall not openly carry firearms either on Department premises or while on-duty for the Department unless the volunteer has



specific volunteer duties that require firearms handling and the volunteer is handling firearms in the manner required for performing those volunteer duties. A non-commissioned volunteer holding a handgun license under Government Code Chapter 411 may possess a handgun on Department property if carried in a manner in which the presence of the handgun is not openly discernible to the ordinary observation of a reasonable person.

**Prohibition Relating to Department Clothing and Weapons:** A volunteer whether on or off duty, shall not wear any clothing, identification card, or other items identifying the volunteer as a TPWD volunteer while openly carrying a firearm. A volunteer with a job duty that requires the handling or transportation of firearms or other firearms equipment may possess that equipment while wearing an approved uniform or Department identification in a manner approved by a volunteer supervisor.

**Visitors to Non-Public Secure Portions of Department Facilities:** The Department may post signs designating non-public secure areas of Department facilities pursuant to Government code 411.207. Non-commissioned visitors to the designated non-public secure areas shall be directed to secure any personally owned weapons in their locked personal vehicle prior to entering a secure area.

#### **D. Stipend for Chapter Members to Attend TMN Annual Conference, February 2019**

It is desirable to have as many chapter members attend the TMN annual conference as possible. The training and networking opportunities during the three-day conference are unique and very worthwhile. The conference educational programs are approved for Advanced Training hours and attendance can assist members with completing their annual AT requirement. And, the conference experience overall helps members to better understand the TMN organization and how important our work really is.

The purpose of this proposal is to encourage attendance at the TMN annual conference by offering stipends to members who would not otherwise attend due to the cost.

Cost of the conference is a contributing factor to members not attending. If the chapter offers a limited number of member stipends to offset most of the conference registration expense, we may enable some additional members to attend.

*(Cost for the conference in 2018 was \$225 without hotel. Hotel accommodations costs vary, but generally cost about \$120 per night on average for single occupancy. Lower cost hotels may be available and room sharing might be an option for some. Example: a shared double occupancy room in 2018 at the conference hotel cost \$64.23 per person per night.)*

**The Board has approved \$1000 for 2019 to cover five \$200 stipends for AAMN members to attend the TMN Conference in Rockwall, Texas to be held on October 18-21. (Rockwall is located northeast of Dallas.)**

The intent is for this subsidy to be included in our future year budgets. Approval for 2019 will allow us to offer it this year and refine the process as needed after the 2019 award cycle to maximize use and equity.

To be eligible, the member requesting financial assistance for the TMN annual conference must have paid current year dues and have completed at least 15 approved hours of volunteer service at the time of submission. Deadline for submissions is June 30.

Members who accept the stipend must register for and attend the conference for two days.

If any stipend recipients do not register, cancels registration or does not attend the conference, the stipend award must be reimbursed to the chapter in full.

Process:

- Stipends will be selected by a drawing of names. From the names submitted, five will be drawn.
- Names drawn will be sent to the Membership Director to have dues and hours verified.
- If any of the selected names are ineligible, additional names will be drawn until five winners have been selected or there are no additional names to draw.
- The verified selected applicants will be notified individually of their selection no later than July 15 and asked to confirm they still wish to receive the stipend.
- The treasurer will issue and mail checks to confirmed stipend winners.
- The treasurer will individually email each non-winning or ineligible applicant to advise them of their status.
- Names of all applicants and recipients will be kept confidential.
- The chapter treasurer will report to the board on the number of stipends awarded after the completion of the process but will not include the names of the awardees.