

# CHAPTER OPERATING HANDBOOK

June 2018



## Brazos Valley Chapter Texas Master Naturalist Program

Adopted 21 June 2018

# **CHAPTER OPERATING HANDBOOK**

## **Brazos Valley Chapter**

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# **OPERATING HANDBOOK**

## **Brazos Valley Chapter**

### **Texas Master Naturalist Program**

#### **I: CHAPTER ORGANIZATION**

The documents governing the Brazos Valley 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, and third, this Operating Handbook shall govern the Chapter's Operating Handbook. The Chapter will be structured for governance as follows.

#### **A. BOARD**

##### **1. 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 24 months and are eligible for re-election.

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

The duties of Officers are defined in the following:

##### **President**

- a. Serve as Chair of the Board of Directors
- b. Set 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 or another designated Chapter Officer for amounts greater than \$1000
- f. Authorize in writing credit/debit card and PayPal transactions for accounts greater than \$1000
- g. Present a summary of the Chapter's accomplishments at the Chapter's first general meeting of the new year
- h. Prepare correspondence between the Chapter and the State Office, other Chapters or State agencies as appropriate
- i. Review Chapter's completed annual report before submission to State office

- j. 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
- k. 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)
- l. Be an ex-officio member of all committees, assisting as appropriate
- m. Become Immediate Past President upon completion of term as President
- n. Require 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
- o. 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
- p. Be the Chapter's representative to State Annual Meeting or appoint a Chapter State Representative (See Chapter State Representative under 3. Directors)
- q. Facilitate a retreat of all newly elected Officers and Directors with the outgoing Board Members before the first Board meeting of the coming year to facilitate exchange of responsibilities and chart the Chapter's new year
- r. Write donor-appreciation letters

#### Vice President

- a. Assist the President and act for the President in the President's 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

#### Treasurer

- a. Receive all dues and monies for the Chapter and maintain them in a Chapter bank account
- b. 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 within the first two months of the new fiscal year.
- c. 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.
- d. For any payments greater than \$1000, the Treasurer must co-sign the payment instrument with the President
- e. Submit all annual financial records, reports and audits as required by law (or sponsoring agencies)

- f. 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
- g. Present the financial records to the annual Financial Examination Committee before the last Board meeting of the fiscal year
- h. 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 according to the Chapter's Data Retention Policy
- i. Make available all financial reports and documents to any Chapter Member or Advisors as may be requested
- j. 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.
- k. 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

Secretary

- a. Prepare and distribute agenda prior to all Board and Chapter meetings
- b. Conduct all necessary Chapter correspondence
- c. Record, publish and preserve the minutes of all meetings of the Board of Directors, General Membership meetings, or special meetings
- 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 or a secure digital record keeping system of all minutes and correspondence according to the Chapter's Data Retention policy

3. Directors

The Directors shall consist of the following:

- Immediate Past President
- Membership Director
- New Member Training Director
- Advanced Training Director
- Volunteer Service Projects Director
- Youth Programs Director
- Communications Director
- Outreach Director
- Hospitality Director
- New Class Representative
- Chapter State Representative
- Advisor(s) if available to the Chapter

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 24 months, staggered with the officers, and are eligible for re-election.

4. Duties of Directors

The duties of Directors shall be to assist the Officers in their respective responsibilities and to Chair the respective Standing Committees. In addition, their specific duties are listed under their title and under the respective Standing Committees 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 of duties should not be considered exhaustive of all responsibilities that may be required of a Director's position.

- Immediate Past President
  - a. Provide continuity from prior Board of Directors with counsel for undocumented procedures and work to document those procedures
  - b. Lead an annual review and update if necessary of the Chapter's Chapter Operating Handbook document
  - c. Assist the President
  - d. Assume the responsibility as the State Representative for the Chapter if that position is not otherwise filled
  - e. Chair the Nominating Committee...Ref. Chapter Bylaws, Article V, E, 2
  - f. In the absence of an Immediate Past President, the President will reassign above responsibilities as needed
  
- Directors (Chairs) of Standing Committees
  - Directors:
    - a. Membership Director
    - b. New Member Training Director
    - c. Advanced Training Director
    - d. Volunteer Service Projects Director
    - e. Youth Programs Director
    - f. Communications Director
    - g. Outreach Director
    - h. Hospitality Director
  - Duties
    - a. Chair the respective Standing Committee (see "Standing Committees," below)
    - b. Oversee any Coordinators, Managers, or other special positions specified in the duties of the respective Standing Committees, below
    - c. Ensure that the duties and responsibilities of the Standing Committees are performed in a timely fashion
    - d. Report to and participate in Board meetings
    - e. Other duties as assigned
  
- New Class Representative
  - a. Represent the New Class as a member on the Board attending all Board meetings
  - b. Participate as a member of the New Member Training Committee

- c. Participate as a member of the annual Financial Examination Committee
- d. Attend selected New Class training sessions to provide the new class insight into the New Class Representative Board position
- Chapter State Representative  
This position may be assumed by the President or appointed from the Board membership by the President.
  - a. Work as a Chapter liaison with the State Program Coordinator
  - b. Represent the Chapter in State level matters of the Texas Master Naturalist Program
  - c. Review draft State Documents as requested
  - d. Help with coordination of activities at the Annual State Conference
  - e. Help in finding presenters for the Annual Conference
  - f. Enhance the communication between the State and the Chapters
  - g. Help guide and educate the Member Chapter's new Officers and Directors through use of the state governing documents
  - h. Participate in conference calls as requested
  - i. Attend the Annual State Conference if possible
  - j. Attend the semi-annual State Volunteer Representatives Council meetings
- Advisor(s)  
Reference TMN State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Appendix I, Advisor Guidelines and Article V, B, State Bylaws

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. 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. Voting by Remote Communications Technology. 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:
  - a. three business days' notice is given to each person entitled to participate in the meeting and includes relevant information to be discussed; and
  - b. 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
  - c. motions are made and votes are recorded in the written minutes of the meeting; and
  - d. 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.
  - Dues Schedule. 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 an 'Active 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, with approval of the Officers, appoints the Directors, who serve as Chair of the respective Standing Committee. The Director is responsible for seeing that the Committee fulfills the responsibilities and objectives for which it was formed.

1. Standing Committees
  - Executive Committee
  - Program Committee
  - Membership Committee
  - New Member Training Committee
  - Advanced Training Committee
  - Volunteer Service Projects Committee
  - Youth Programs Committee
  - Communications Committee
  - Outreach Committee
  - Hospitality Committee



- Executive Committee
  - a. The Executive Committee shall be composed of the elected Officers of the Chapter
  - b. Authority: Reference Chapter Bylaws, Article VI, B. 2. Authority
  
- Program Committee, including the Field Trip Coordinator and the Habitat Restoration and Management Manager
  - a. Assists the Vice President in obtaining programs, as necessary
  - b. Selects and secures the venue for monthly Chapter meetings for the following year based on approved Board meeting dates
  - c. Schedules Chapter field trips
  
- Membership Committee, including the Data Manager(s) and Mentor Program Manager
  - a. Maintains a roster of the Chapter Member's names, including Members-in-Training, plus pertinent contact information within the TMN VMS
  - b. Manages or assists in managing the Chapter's records and reports within the TMN VMS (Ref. State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Article VI, Volunteer Service Requirements) for reporting volunteer service hours and Advanced Training
    - i. Maintains a record of volunteer and advanced training hours within the TMN VMS
    - ii. Supervises the VMS Chapter Administrator(s) activity for reviewing and approving volunteer service hours and advanced training for accuracy, correct categorization, and appropriateness
    - iii. Ensure all Members and Members-in-Training receive appropriate training in the use of the TMN VMS
    - iv. Supports the Membership Director in ensuring that VMS time reported is accurate and fitting of the activity description and criteria
  - c. Reports the names of Members who have achieved Certification, Re-certification, and Milestone awards so that the Members can be recognized
    - i. Presents awards at chapter meetings
  - d. Organizes and manages New Member Training class application process
  - e. Oversees Chapter position of Mentor Program Manager (Ref. State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Appendix II, Mentor Program)
  - f. Provides support for compilation of the State Annual Report
  
- New Member Training Committee
  - a. Plans, implements, and evaluates the Chapter training curriculum and develops the training calendar
  - b. Arranges for training venue, and required facilities equipment for all class periods
  - c. Recommends the class tuition to the Board of Directors
  - d. Acquires the TMN State Curriculum for each new Member-in-Training and prepares additional class materials
  - e. Selects all presenters and makes arrangements for their presentation including materials, handouts and audio-visual equipment needed for the presentation

- f. Arranges for speaker gifts, travel, lodging needs, confirmation, and thank you letters
  - g. Works with the Membership and Communications Committees to arrange for publicity – newspapers, flyers, brochures, electronic media, etc.
  - h. Works with the Membership Committee to oversee the Mentor Program and the new class application process
  - i. Works with the Membership Committee to ensure each Member-in-Training receives appropriate training to use the TMN VMS
  - j. Facilitates class field experiences
  - k. Arranges and hosts initial and final New Class presentation and reception
- Advanced Training Committee
    - a. Develops a form for Members to request that a program be approved for Advanced Training
    - b. Reviews and recommends for approval or disapproval all Advanced Training requests and events using State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Article V. Advanced Training Requirements as a guide
    - c. Assists the Advanced Training Director as necessary in collecting and organizing the information necessary for setting up the opportunity in VMS: Specifically, opportunity title; description of the opportunity; location of the opportunity, including address, county, city, zip code; contact information for the organization sponsoring the opportunity, including phone, email, and website if applicable; the chapter member who is the contact or coordinator for the opportunity
    - d. Assigns the correct federal reporting category code from the list of Texas Master Naturalist Service Project Activity Categories
    - e. Ensures that the director (or other member with VMS administrative privileges) enters the service project into the Chapter VMS Opportunities
    - f. Publicizes newly-approved advanced training opportunities to Chapter members
  - Volunteer Service Projects Committee
    - a. Develops a form for Members to request approval of a Volunteer Service Project
    - b. Reviews and recommends for approval or disapproval all Chapter volunteer service project opportunity requests using the State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Article VI Volunteer Service Requirements as a guide
    - c. Assists the Volunteer Service Projects Director as necessary in collecting and organizing the information necessary for setting up the service project in VMS: Specifically, opportunity title; description of the opportunity; information on whether soil will be disturbed and whether it impacts certain types of habitat; location of the opportunity, including address, county, city, zip code; contact information for the organization sponsoring the opportunity, including phone, email, and website if applicable; the chapter member who is the contact or coordinator for the opportunity
    - d. Assigns the correct federal reporting category code from the list of Texas Master Naturalist Service Project Activity Categories
    - e. Ensures that the director enters the service project into the Chapter VMS Opportunities.
    - f. Publicizes newly-approved volunteer service opportunities to Chapter members

- Youth Programs Committee
  - a. Plans, coordinates, and oversees youth-specific chapter events
  - b. Coordinates with other committees when planning youth events
  - c. Submits reports, impact data, and other information as is necessary for follow-up of youth events
  
- Communications Committee, including the Publicity Manager, Newsletter Editor, Webmaster, and Historian/Archivist
  - a. Assists the New Member Training Director and Membership Director as necessary
  - b. Writes publicity press releases for print and electronic media covering New Class Application, Chapter meetings, and special events
  - c. Oversees management of Chapter listserv and Chapter-sponsored email, group photo/file sharing, accounts for officers, directors, and other members as needed
  - d. Oversees Chapter electronic media and social media accounts, content, and formats, ensuring website and social media content follows TMN Marketing & ID Guidelines as well as TPWD and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service policies
  - e. Provides training and education to Chapter members as necessary for data retention, data archival, electronic file, and website content management
  - f. Publicity Manager
    - i. Works with officers and directors as needed to develop and distribute announcements, news items, and publications regarding Chapter events or activities via all communication channels deemed appropriate
    - ii. Assists with updating and monitoring social media content
  - g. Newsletter Editor
    - i. Collects, produces, and distributes Chapter and state TMN news in the Chapter's Newsletter
    - ii. Solicits and accepts contributions from Officers, Directors and Members for the Newsletter
  - g. Webmaster
    - i. Works with Chapter officers and directors as necessary
    - ii. Maintains content on Chapter website
    - iii. Acts as access manager to provide appropriate access as needed for Chapter Members to create, update, or delete content
  - h. Historian/Archivist
    - i. Maintains the historical records of the Chapter. Historical records include but are not limited to: training classes, projects, recognitions, events, elections, meetings, Chapter scrapbook, and Chapter Newsletter archives
    - ii. Develop and adhere to a Chapter Data Retention Policy approved by the Board for the preservation of data, records, and other pertinent Chapter documents
    - iii. Assists the Chapter Secretary as necessary
  
- Outreach Committee
  - a. Ensures that outreach booths are staffed when planned
  - b. Acquires and maintains a Chapter display board
  - c. Coordinates activities with the Chapter Webmaster

- d. Ensure that approved outreach activities are properly staffed and supplied
  - e. Ensure that outreach statistics are properly captured in VMS by event coordinators.
- Hospitality Committee
    - a. Assists the New Member Training Director with the first and last class receptions
    - b. Manages break snacks for New Member Class
    - c. Schedules and coordinates General Membership meeting social activities

2. 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 Advisor(s) if applicable. The President appoints the Chair. The Treasurer provides the financial records for review. The results of the Financial Examination will be reported to the Board and recorded in the minutes of the following Board meeting with signed attestations from each member of the committee.
- 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 should not be limited to sex, ethnicity, creed, or national origin, but should consider attributes such as age, sexual orientation, gender identity, 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. 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 election to present a slate of Director Candidates.

The TMN State Program 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 Member Training 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 should not be limited to sex, ethnicity, creed, or national origin, but should consider attributes such as age, sexual orientation, gender identity, 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 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.

The TMN State Program 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, 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.

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. 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.
  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 have been 'inactive' for any reason, may petition a local Chapter for reinstatement, providing all Chapter membership requirements are met.

## **III: ADOPTION AND 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

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