

# Chapter Communications Overview and Infrastructure

There are numerous chapter Officers, Directors, members and committee folk who directly contribute to the process of “communicating” internally and externally. It’s a fun group and it works well.

## **Our Chapter Website:**

[txmn.org/elcamino](http://txmn.org/elcamino) is by far and away our primary repository and both an internal and external vehicle for communicating everything we know, have done, are doing, and want to share educationally regarding nature and our Chapter. Everything is either directly loaded there or has links to other pertinent websites and chapter repositories. As described in more detail below, our chapters Google Drive, Google Photos and Google Calendar resources are directly linked from various pages on the website. The website is very limited in the size of files that can be uploaded, hence the use of Google resources as a major storage repository.

## **Key Email accounts and other resources, and their purpose:**

- [ElCaminoRealMasterNaturalist@gmail.com](mailto:ElCaminoRealMasterNaturalist@gmail.com) This is our official chapter communications email for external contacts and is posted on our website as our official contact email address. It is managed by the Communications Director. This Google Account also contains our Chapter’s Google Drive, Photos and Calendar repositories also managed by the Communications Director.
  - **Emails** – The above account is set up for access by the Comm Dir’s own private email address (currently [MiddleAgeSpread@gmail.com](mailto:MiddleAgeSpread@gmail.com)), where all chapter contacts and distribution lists are maintained for chapter and personal purposes and can be used by either personal account or this Chapter account by simply selecting which address to send from. All incoming emails to the chapter account are forwarded directly to the personal account – one inbox – and left undeleted from the Chapter account until reviewed / deleted later. Most internal chapter emails by the Comm Dir are sent from the personal account, and more official / external emails are sent using the Chapter address. Should a different Comm Dir become involved, the chapter contacts and distribution lists can be exported for importing by the new person, as well as all the chapter Email folders.
  - **Shared Gmail Contacts** – A service we purchased from Gmail Shared Contacts (<https://app.gmailsharedcontacts.com/>). We have 4 licenses in their Lite Plan. This allows one person to maintain a single set of contacts and up to ten contact lists for other license holders, making update maintenance easier for those who regularly send emails to certain members and others, for example, Board Members, Active Members, Ex Members, Students, Potential Students, Weekly Events Notice Recipients (includes Active, Students, Potential), and more are available. This email address is the master or “owner” for the data and assigns authority to the other licenses. At this time there are 3 other licenses – [ECRMNPresident@gmail.com](mailto:ECRMNPresident@gmail.com), [ECRMNotification@gmail.com](mailto:ECRMNotification@gmail.com) for the weekly events notices, and the owners (me) personal email address for help in managing, [middleagespread@gmail.com](mailto:middleagespread@gmail.com).

## Chapter Communications Overview and Infrastructure

- **Drive** – This is used to store many larger chapter documents and by the Treasurer for storing all chapter financial documents. Most documents stored there have links to from various website pages. This is managed by the Comm Dir, with edit access granted to Treasurer for those folders.
- **Photos** – A direct Photos resource and is also a sub feature under Drive. It has a large repository of photos and videos captured over the years by many members, organized by albums / folders which are directly linked from our website Photos page and others. Unfortunately, there is not a way to publicly share an entire Album collection, only one album (folder) at a time. This is managed by the Comm Director. Prior to Google Photos they supported PicassaWeb for this, and many chapter photo albums are archived there, linked from the website Photos page, and most(?) have been migrated to the new Google Photos.
- **Calendar** – Using similar linkage to the Comm Dir own Google Calendar, this chapter calendar can be managed within his personal google sign in without having to sign in to chapter account. Entering personal events or chapter events is done by selecting which calendar to post on. This calendar contains only chapter events and is shown as a calendar widget on our website Calendar page, containing all history and future events. If any member also uses Google Calendar on PC or Smart phone for their own personal events, you can also have this Chapter calendar events added to your own calendar, in a different color of your choosing, so all events are always there – old or new. (See the website Calendar page for instructions).
- [ECRMNNotification@gmail.com](mailto:ECRMNNotification@gmail.com) This is used for official internal communications of chapter events. The events can originate from several sources but are currently sent to Janice Johnson at [2emailjj@gmail.com](mailto:2emailjj@gmail.com) and then communicated by a weekly email distribution to all Active members and potential new members, using this email address. A standardized format is used to collect all pertinent data, including subject, date and time, location, description including any links for more info, and what VMS opportunity should be used to log hours. The Comm Dir uses these events distributed by email to copy / paste to the website Calendar page, and each new or updated event is added or edited on the Google Calendar. So, events are available by weekly email, by website calendar page in list form and Google Calendar widget form, and by integration with your own Google Calendar. A little overkill maybe, but different strokes for different folks.
- [ECRMNPresident@gmail.com](mailto:ECRMNPresident@gmail.com) would be assigned to whomever is President, for handling communications of that nature.
- **Our Chapter Facebook page:** The Comm Dir created a public Facebook group, called “Texas Master Naturalists – El Camino Real Chapter” located at [www.facebook.com/TMNEICaminoReal](http://www.facebook.com/TMNEICaminoReal) and can also be used / located by using @TMNEICaminoReal in a post. It is for anyone to share their nature stories, photos, etc. in a public setting. If you are interested, then “like” the

## Chapter Communications Overview and Infrastructure

page. It is not meant for official chapter communications for notifying members of specific events or activities (that is done by email primarily), but as another way to share what we all love about nature – in a typical social media way for those who enjoy and use that medium.

- [ElCaminoRealTMN@gmail.com](mailto:ElCaminoRealTMN@gmail.com) This is the owner email address for the above Chapter Facebook Page. Our Blog <https://ecrmasternaturalists.blog/> entries are often also posted on the Facebook page. Our President Sue Ann Kendall is the blog creator and manager, and posts regularly to our public Facebook page as do some other members. Any emails sent to the above address are usually handled by Sue Ann, but are also forwarded to the Communications Director's personal email account, as is the official chapter email account mentioned earlier.

### **VMS Opportunities communications**

Our chapter is somewhat different than several others in this area, as we create Opportunity descriptions that may cover numerous related activities or events, versus an individual Opportunity for every single event or activity (some chapters have hundreds). There are several State guidelines that must be followed in doing this. A single VMS Opportunities document is maintained with very detailed opportunity descriptions of Advanced Training, Citizen Science (Field Research), Outreach and more. Each Opportunity has specific past and current activity lists, descriptions, and sponsors describing those activities that are closely related and meet the guidelines to be included in a single Opportunity. It is posted on the Library page on the website. This document is used by the above Events notification process to determine and note which opportunity to claim for each event published, and by the Advanced Training and Volunteer Projects Director(s) to assist in approving new opportunity requests, sometimes resulting in new or modified VMS Opportunity descriptions if needed and an update posted on the website and in VMS. The exact same descriptions from this document are copied into the online VMS system so descriptions are identical online and in the reference document. This is all done by the Comm Dir.

### **Newsletters**

We no longer regularly publish Quarterly Newsletters as we have since our beginning in 2008 with our first issue and continued until our Winter 2018 issue. This newsletter won "Best Newsletter Award" at three different Annual State Meetings. Contributions came from members, professors, past speakers and TPWD or other nature resources, and were then edited into a Newsletter by the Communications Director. They were then distributed to a very wide outside distribution list by the Comm Dir as well as posted on the TMN Listserv and our website. Sometimes articles were shared with local newspapers. They are all stored on our webpage [txmn.org/elcamino/chapter-projects/los-caminos-newsletter/](http://txmn.org/elcamino/chapter-projects/los-caminos-newsletter/).