

VMS for the Chapter Member

A Reference to Help Members Choose Opportunity Titles for Recording Volunteer and AT Hours

Gideon Lincecum Chapter
Update: November 16, 2019

Each of our TMN volunteer hours is worth **over \$23** to our sponsoring organizations in the form of grants, mostly from U.S. government entities. We personally gain satisfaction and knowledge from volunteer work and attending programs for Advanced Training, and TMN recognizes us with pins for certifications and hours milestones. The method Texas Parks and Wildlife chose for us to record our hours is the Samaritan Volunteer Management System, an on-line application we refer to as VMS.

The federal government has created Federal Reporting Categories under which each of our hours must “fit” if they are to be used for the grants. The interpretation of those categories is continually refined as new information is received. As a result, sometimes we have to create new Opportunity Titles for our projects as they expand into new areas or we find we have incorrectly used existing Opportunity Titles.

The federal grants are also the reason for the strict enforcement of the rule that any hours must be recorded in VMS (and approved) within 45 days of the occurrence. Federal auditors won’t use volunteer hours approved more than 45 days after they happened.

The purpose of this document is to help members figure out how best to report their hours. The GLC VMS Administrators are always willing to help out, and we encourage anyone to ask for assistance if there are still questions after reading through this material.

Gideon Lincecum Chapter Opportunity Titles with Descriptions

Administrative Work – Chapter Administration, including chapter business meetings, Board meetings, hours keeper, typical officer duties, web page, newsletter, training, state organization work, etc. [See explanation of drop-down items within this Opportunity on p. 4 & 5 of this document.]

Adopt-A-Highway – Workdays to remove trash from a 2 mile stretch of Hwy 159 from Rutersville to La Grange

AT: AgriLife Land Management and Wildlife Conservation Workshops and Programs – New Landowner Workshop series, watershed protection, etc., sponsored by Texas A&M AgriLife

AT: Cibolo Nature Center workshops and programs – Wildlife, Land Management and naturalist programs presented at Cibolo Nature Center in Boerne, TX and sponsored by approved organizations, such as Texas Master Naturalist chapters

AT: Citizen Science Project Training – Training for specific projects such as weather monitoring, invasive species, seed collection water quality monitoring, deer surveys, quail counts, bird banding, Cornell nest watch, butterfly watch, etc.

AT: NGO Workshops and Programs on Wildlife Conservation and Land Stewardship – (Non-Governmental Organization) - Training presented by Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center, Austin Butterfly Forum, Audubon Society, the Nature Conservancy, Wildlife Habitat Federation, NPSOT (Native Plant Society of Texas), universities or other educational institutions, prescribed burn associations, water conservation groups, etc.

AT: Outdoor Education Training for Volunteers – Training such as provided by TWA L.A.N.D.S, TPWD, a school district, a private organization, etc. to support projects related to outdoor education.

AT: Research in Support of Volunteer Service Projects – Meaningful research in support of volunteer service such as presentations, workshops, or other educational activities. Does not include time spent creating a power point, handout, or other aspects of putting a presentation together. [Putting a presentation together goes under “Educational Group Presentation”

AT: TFS (Texas A&M Forest Service) Land Management Workshops and Programs – Such as A Plan For Your Land

AT: TMN Chapter Program – Programs sponsored by GLC in conjunction with chapter meetings or at other times. Could also be other TMN chapter programs.

AT: TMN State Meeting Advanced Training – Any Advanced Training session provided at the TMN Annual Meeting in October, unless it is specialty training with its own AT opportunity.

AT: Top Ten Presentation Research – Research to prepare a Top Ten Presentation to chapter or the general public.

AT: TPWD Wildlife and Land Management Workshops and Programs – Such as Landowner Workshops, Field Days, Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Seminars. Individual sessions must be approved, as not all sessions fit the TMN mission.

AT: TPWD Wildlife Management Association programs – These are often county-wide Wildlife Management Associations or Wildlife Societies with multiple WMA’s sponsored by TPWD. Programs that are specifically related to naturalist activities are approved, but general education or entertainment programs are not.

AT: TWA Workshops and Programs – (Texas Wildlife Association). NOT Outdoor Education training. Programs such as Women of the Land series, Land Stewardship Programs, etc.

AT: TX Waters Certification Training – Training to earn a Texas Waters Specialist designation

AT: US Government Agency Wildlife and Land Management Workshops and Programs – Naturalist related programs by NRCS/USDA, USFWS, USFS, etc.

AT: VMS Training – Advanced Training, VMS Training, user training as a volunteer, approver, or administrator.

AT: Webinars – Internet delivered training by government agencies or NGOs related to naturalist activities, usually in wildlife and land management and stewardship areas. Examples are TWA/AgriLife Wildlife for Lunch series, NRCS or AgriLife webinars. Does NOT include Webinars for Tx Waters Specialist Certification.

AT: WotB Workshops and Programs – Seminars, workshops, and programs held at Washington on the Brazos Historic Site and Park, facilitated by TMN-GLC in coordination with TPWD. Pre-approved as advanced training.

Attwater Prairie Chicken Refuge – Assist staff with habitat maintenance/restoration and other projects as assigned.

Austin County Natural Resource Projects – Projects in Austin County that enhance wildlife habitat or other natural resources not specifically listed in another Opportunity Title.

Brenham ISD Outdoor Learning Projects – Support BISD Outdoor Learning Curriculum, Outdoor Classroom, L.A.N.D.S. projects.

Citizen Science (other) – Citizen Science projects that do not have a separate Opportunity Title, including State MN projects. Citizen Science projects are those where members collect data and/or analyze natural resources for the improvement of scientific understanding.

CoCoRaHS – (Community Collaborative Rain, Hail, and Snow Network) - Daily monitoring and reporting of precipitation at a specific location.

Colorado County Natural Resource Projects - Projects in Colorado County that enhance wildlife habitat or other natural resources not specifically listed in another Opportunity Title.

Colorado River Watch – Trained volunteers submit water quality data that is reviewed and analyzed by CRWN staff, creating an early warning system that alerts LCRA to potential water quality threats.

Educational Group Presentations – Presentation to a “captive audience” for a designated length of time on a Master Naturalist topic. Includes preparation for the presentation (other than research – see AT: Research in Support of Volunteer Service Projects). May be presented to the community or other Master Naturalists.

Fayette County Natural Resource Projects – Projects in Fayette County that enhance wildlife habitat or other natural resources not specifically listed in another Opportunity Title.

Fayetteville Native Plants Project – Plant and maintain native pollinator beds on the court house square in Fayetteville.

Indian Creek Nature Area – Pollinator garden and trail maintenance.

Initial MN Training – Initial training classes for new, prospective Master Naturalist (trainees)

Invaders of Texas – Identify and report invasive species observed in the environment using Invaders of Texas training and their app.

La Grange AgriLife Extension Bldg. Native Plant Landscape – Maintain & expand (when appropriate) native plant landscaping at LGAE building in designated areas north of main building entrance. Identify plants with signage.

Lee County Natural Resource Projects – Projects in Lee County that enhance wildlife habitat or other natural resources not specifically listed in another Opportunity Title.

Monument Hill State Historical Site– Assist with identifying and clearing invasive species. Assist with identifying and labelling species of interest along trails.

Nest Watch – Monitor birds on the nest, report when nesting occurs, number of eggs, hatch, how many hatchlings survive. Through Cornell University.

Out of GLC Area Direct Outreach (Training and Educating) Service – Volunteer time on a project outside of our chapter’s normal area, equivalent to our chapter’s Educational Group Presentation opportunity. It includes leading, organizing, developing, delivering, instructing, or staffing an educational activity where participants have a planned learning objective and

generally stay for the full event or session (e.g.: planned start and end times with a single agenda. Includes work with other TMN chapters and/or organizations compatible with TMN Mission. Travel time is not allowed.

Out of GLC Area Field Research (including Surveys and Citizen Science) – Volunteer time outside of our chapter’s normal area that include planning, leading or participating in data collection and/or analysis of natural resources where the results are intended to further scientific understanding. Includes work with other TMN chapters and/or organizations compatible with TMN Mission. Travel time is not allowed.

Out of GLC Area Indirect Outreach (Public Outreach) Service – Volunteer time on a project outside of our chapter’s normal area that is leading, organizing, or staffing an educational activity where participants come and go and are able to inquire on a broad set of topics (equivalent to our chapter’s Outreach Booth opportunity) -OR- Writing an educational article or brochure. Includes work with other TMN chapters and/or organizations compatible with TMN Mission. Travel time is not allowed.

Out of GLC Area Natural Resource Management Service – Volunteer time on a project outside of our chapter’s normal area that improves the health of a public natural area or resource: natural resource management, restoration, rescue, and rehabilitation. Includes work with other TMN chapters and/or organizations compatible with TMN Mission. Travel time is not allowed.

Out of GLC Area Nature/Public Access Service – Volunteer time on a project outside of our chapter’s normal area that is field based activity that improves and manages the public’s access to natural areas or resources: creating and/or maintaining nature trails, wildscapes, and/or interpretive areas. Includes work with other TMN chapters and/or organizations compatible with TMN Mission. Travel time is not allowed.

Out of GLC Area Technical Guidance Service – Volunteer time outside of our chapter’s normal area that is providing FREE, detailed natural resource management advice or assistance for any natural resource related program or related business. For example: providing expertise in land management guidance, in consultation and/or written form to Chapters, partners, landowners and/or land managers. Includes work with other TMN chapters and/or organizations compatible with TMN Mission. Travel time is not allowed.

Outreach Booth – Provide information to the public about aspects of the natural environment and our prairie ecosystem, and information about TMN and our chapter projects. Examples would be fairs, science nights, and non-TMN programs where the *public roves by seeking information*, but not a formal presentation to a captive audience.

Prescribed Burn Activity - Assist with planning and execution of prescribed burn.

Project Feeder Watch – Watchers periodically count birds they see at their feeders from November through April and send counts to Project FeederWatch (Cornell University).

Schubert House Pollinator Project – Establish and maintain a pollinator garden and other native plants in existing beds around the museum in this historic home.

SF Austin State Park Educational Group Presentation – Leading, organizing, developing, delivering instruction, or staffing an educational activity at Stephen F Austin State Park where participants have a planned learning objective and generally stay for the full event (e.g. planned start and end times).

SFA State Historic Site Native Plant Garden – (San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site) - Identify native plants in existing gardens at Visitor Center, plant native plants, apply mulch, weed as necessary, place signage to identify plants, work with SFASHS staff as necessary.

Stephen F Austin State Park – Support for TPWD staff as needed, maintain a pollinator garden, projects may be in cooperation with Friends of the Park group.

Washington County Natural Resource Projects – Projects in Washington County that enhance wildlife habitat or other natural resources not specifically listed in another Opportunity Title.

Washington on the Brazos State Park – Pollinator garden

Winedale Project – Landscape project at Winedale: Pollinator Garden, wildflower trail, signage identifying plants.

Explanation of drop-down menu under “Administrative Work/Chapter Administration” Opportunity Title (From VMS Admin Manual – May, 2019)

- **Chapter Meeting** – activities relating to preparing for, presiding over, or setting up for a regular chapter meeting (other than hospitality activities – see Hospitality below)
- **Board/Committee Work** – any activity in support of chapter through your duties as a chapter recognized committee representative or your activities in conducting chapter business as a member of the Chapter Board of Directors
- **President Duties** – any of the chapter activities which, as outlined in the Chapter Operating Handbook, are conducted in your official capacity as Chapter President (planning meeting agendas, interfacing with other chapters or agencies)
- **Vice President Duties** – any of the chapter activities which, as outlined in the Chapter Operating Handbook, are conducted in your official capacity as Chapter Vice President (planning programs, interfacing with other chapters or agencies, conducting Chapter business in the President’s temporary absence)
- **Treasurer Duties** – any of the chapter activities which, as outlined in the Chapter Operating Handbook, are conducted in your official capacity as the Chapter Treasurer (preparing a budget and budget reports, presenting budget related information to the chapter)
- **Secretary Duties** – any of the chapter activities which, as outlined in the Chapter Operating Handbook, are conducted in your official capacity as Chapter Secretary
- **Hours Management** – activities related to the review and approval of submitted hours, preparation of reports concerning AT and Service hours both to the chapter and the State Program Office; volunteers who are officially designated by the chapter leadership to enter hours for other volunteers when those volunteers are unable to do so themselves
- **Hospitality** – activities related to organizing others to prepare refreshments or the actual preparation of refreshments for chapter activities to include serving, delivery, setup and take down
- **Communications** – activities relating to promoting the chapter news and events through the production of a newsletter (writing articles, preparing the newsletter, publishing the newsletter, preparing and publishing a chapter brochure, providing information to newspapers, radio, television and other media outlets)
- **Website and Social Media** – activities related to developing and maintaining a web site and/or Facebook site or other social media outlets for the chapter
- **Photographer** – activities performed by the person or persons designated by the chapter administration to document chapter functions by means of photography or videography
- **Programs** – activities related to providing programs at chapter meetings that meet the criteria for Advanced Training at a Chapter Meeting (other than actually presenting at a meeting) [GLC - If you are a presenter, use Educational Group Presentations]
- **Project Management** – volunteer time spent in organizing volunteers and preparing for the success of the project; accumulating and reporting the impact data for the activity; preparing needed materials
- **Recruiting** – activities related to generating interest among potential eligible trainees in becoming a Texas Master Naturalist. Includes manning the GLC trifold booth at non-TMN functions such as New Landowner series or Bee Festival. May also include discussions at other occasions encouraging potential new members to join our training class
- **Training Classes** – activities related to supporting the Training Class through mentorship or as a class helper (distribute hand-outs); does not include presentation time
- **Fundraising** – activities related to raising funds or obtaining/creating items for the chapter that can be used to generate funds for the chapter, or other such activities as grant writing for the chapter or State Program
- **Samaritan VMS Rollout** – (**no longer used**) – activities related to the rollout of the VMS – for chapter personnel: preparing chapter data for conversion, training your volunteers; for the VMS team: activities involving assisting chapter personnel with any aspect of the conversion to include chapter training, troubleshooting and responding to Help Desk questions, editing chapter upload files
- **State Meeting** – activities relating to the support of the State Annual Meeting (preparing chapter contest entries), working as a volunteer at the State Meeting; does not include presentations. (Note: for AT, GLC use “AT: TMN State Meeting Advanced Training”)
- **State Program Office** – activities relating to the support of state-wide projects like the Endowment Committee

**Federal Opportunity Category Definitions from VMS Admin Manual
With Gideon Lincecum Chapter Opportunity list for each Category (5-2019)**

Federal Category Service/Activity	Description	Examples	Gideon Lincecum Opportunities in this Category
Direct Outreach (Training and Educating)	Leading, organizing, developing, delivering, instructing, or staffing an educational activity where participants have a planned learning objective and generally stay for the full event (e.g., planned start and end times with a single agenda).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom instruction • Delivering workshops • Developing & delivering training presentations • Conducting/Leading webinars • Delivering/An instructor for Chapter MN Members in Training/interns class • AT you prepare & present as a TMN Member to other TMN Members • Leading interpretive hikes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brenham ISD Outdoor Learning Projects • Educational Group Presentations • SF Austin State Park Educational Group Presentation • Out of GLC Area Direct Outreach (Training and Educating) Service
Advanced Training	Advanced Training you attend as a participant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AT sessions at TMN Statewide Annual Meeting • Rainwater Harvesting Steward Program Training • Project WILD Instructor/Facilitator Training • GLC programs designated as AT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AT: AgriLife Land Management & Wildlife Conservation Wrkshps & Pgrms • AT: Cibolo Nature Center Wrkshps & Pgrms • AT: Citizen Science Project Training • AT: NGO Wrkshps & Pgrms on Wildlife Conservation & Land Stewardship • AT: Outdoor Ed Training for Vols • AT: Research in Support of Vol Service Projects • AT: TFS (Texas A&M Forest Service) Land Management Wrkshps & Pgrms • AT: TMN Chapter Program • AT: TMN State Meeting Advanced Training • AT: Top Ten Presentation Research • AT: TPWD Wildlife & Land Mgmt Wrkshps & Pgrms • AT: TWA Wrkshps & Pgrms • AT: TX Waters Certif Training • AT: US Govt Agency Wildlife & Land Mgmt Wrkshps & Pgrms • AT: Webinars • AT: Washington-on-the-Brazos Wkshps & Pgrms

Federal Category Service/Activity	Description	Examples	Gideon Lincecum Opportunities in this Category
Indirect Outreach (Public Outreach)	Leading, organizing, or staffing an educational activity where <u>participants come and go</u> and are able to inquire on a broad set of topics -OR- Writing an educational article or brochure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being a docent for a nature center (excludes selling items) • Writing articles, brochures or newsletters for the public • Posting to GLC Facebook pg. • Staffing GLC booth with info on various nature topics • Offering educational activities to students or adults at a festival, science night, or similar open activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach Booth • Out of GLC Area Indirect Outreach (Public Outreach) Service
Technical Guidance	Providing FREE, detailed natural resource management advice or assistance for any natural resource related program or related business. For example: providing expertise in land management guidance, in consultation and/or written form, to Chapters, partners, land owners and/or land managers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site visits for and writing ecosystem management plans • Land Management Assistance Program (LMAP) • Serving on a City/Community/Regional Habitat Conservation Plan Committee • Advising other organizations on natural resource management (outside of serving as a board or committee member of an organization) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out of GLC Area Technical Guidance
Natural Resource Management (including Natural Resource Stewardship and Conservation)	Activities that improve the health of a public natural area or resource. Natural resource management, restoration, rescue, and rehabilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove foreign debris that improves the health of a public natural area or resource • Invasive species removal • Plant and/or endangered SGCN (Species of Greatest Conservation Need) species rescue (not rehab) E.g.: Turtle Patrol • Restoring or improving natural habitat • Wildlife houses, towers, chimneys • Tree planting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt-A-Highway • Attwater Prairie Chicken Refuge • Monument Hill State Hist. Site • Prescribed Burn Activity • Austin County Natural Resource Projects • Colorado County Natural Resource Projects • Fayette County Natural Resource Projects • Lee County Natural Resource Projects • Washington County Natural Resource Projects • Out of GLC Area Natural Resource Management
Nature/Public Access	Field-based activities that improve and manage the public's access to natural areas or resources. Creating and/or maintaining nature trails, wildscapes, and/or interpretive areas	<p>Developing new or maintaining and/or improving existing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiking trails • Interpretive native species gardens (NOT vegetable gardens) • Wildlife viewing blinds • Wildscapes/native plant gardens • Cleanup activities in habitat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indian Creek Nature Area • Fayetteville Ct House Square • La Grange AgriLife Landscape • San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site • Schubert House • Stephen F Austin State Park • Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site • Winedale • Out of GLC Area Nature/Public Access Service

Federal Category Service/Activity	Description	Examples	Gideon Lincecum Opportunities in this Category
Field Research (Including Surveys and Citizen Science)	Planning, leading or participating in data collection and/or analysis of natural resources where the results are intended to further scientific understanding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field Surveys • Banding and tagging • Species watch • Texas Nature Trackers Program • CoCoRaHS • Stream Watch/Stream Team/Water Quality Monitoring • Nestbox monitoring • Citizen Science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen Science (Other) • CoCoRaHS • Colorado River Watch • Invaders of Texas • Nest Watch • Project Feeder Watch • Out of GLC Area Field Research
Chapter & Program Support, Business, and Administration	Activities related to managing and running a TMN Chapter and its committees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TMN Chapter Board of Director or committee duties • TMN Chapter newsletter, website or social media management • Management of TMN Chapter records and reporting • Representing TMN Chapter at multi-chapter events • Other TMN Chapter Administration • Assistance to TMN State Program & State Program Office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative Work/Chapter Administration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Chapter Meeting ○ Board/Committee Work ○ President Duties ○ Vice President Duties ○ Treasurer Duties ○ Secretary Duties ○ Hours Management ○ Hospitality ○ Communications ○ Website and Social Media ○ Photographer ○ Programs ○ Project Management ○ Recruiting ○ Training Classes ○ Fundraising ○ State Meeting ○ State Program Office
Other	Any activity approved by a Chapter not defined above. In general, a Chapter should only have a small percentage of hours in this activity (<5%). When this activity code is used, a Chapter should investigate the reason.	Wildlife rehabilitation (not SGCN animal rescue)	

Other Bits and Pieces

45 Day Rule...

Please remember that you have 45 days from the day of the event to record your hours and make any necessary corrections. Don't wait until the last minute!!

What Opportunity Title Do I Choose?

From VMS Admin Newsletter 1/02/2019

NPA (Nature/Public Access) vs. NRM (Natural Resource Management)

- *If you are doing work for the animals/plants or Mother Nature, it's NRM.*
- *If you are doing work to help humans, it's NPA.*

Does this mean you need two opportunities for each opportunity? Maybe... and you may need your volunteers' help to decide if you need to add opportunities.

- *For Instance: If you have an opportunity for trail maintenance, that would be NPA. If your volunteer notices an invasive kudzu plant above the trail and decides to go take it out, then you probably don't need a separate NRM opportunity.*
- *But if they consistently work on invasives removal at a property and also put up bird blinds and trails, then you should probably create another opportunity and then train them to use the different opportunities. (The Federal Category will show up on the survey page when they type in the opportunity name to fill in their hours.)*

PO (Public Outreach) vs DT (Direct Training and Educating Others)

- *If you have a captive audience, it's DT (Direct Training and Educating Others)*
- *If people can come and go at will, it's PO (Public Outreach)*

Interpretive Gardens and Wildscapes are another interesting conundrum.

- *The area maintenance would be NPA (Nature Public Access) because the signage in the gardens or wildscape is for the humans.*
- *However, creating the signs would be PO (Public Outreach)*

GLC Opportunity Titles: Educational Group Presentation vs Outreach Booth vs Administrative Work/Recruiting

We have evolved on this, and now you'll have to re-learn some stuff. Sorry about that.

- It's **Educational Group Presentation** if it is presented to a captive audience that will stay for a designated amount of time to hear the presentation. Ex: L.A.N.D.S Deer Day, Ag Safety Day, speaking to the Lion's Club on native grasses, presentation to youngsters at Bee Festival, creating and presenting an AT program. People don't rove in and out of the presentation.
- It's **Outreach Booth** if you have a roving audience that drops by, and you have displayed some information about birds, or grasses, or bees, etc. that will teach the public and they may ask you questions. You may also have our GLC trifold with information about the chapter. Examples are school science night, Cotton Gin Festival.
- It's **Recruiting** (the drop-down under **Administrative Work**) if your purpose is to recruit new members of the GLC Training Class. Staff the GLC trifold booth with materials about our next training class. People rove by and ask questions about the class and TMN. The display doesn't include materials to teach about master naturalist topics.