

# CHAPTER OPERATING HANDBOOK



## Hill Country Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist program

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# **CHAPTER OPERATING HANDBOOK**

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# **OPERATING HANDBOOK**

## **Hill Country 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:

#### **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 12 months or a period of 24 months, and may be eligible for re-election.

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

The duties of Officers are defined in the following:

Officers will attend all Board meetings and report relevant activity monthly.

##### **President**

- a. Serve as Chair of the Board of Directors
- b. Prepare and distribute 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 for amounts greater than \$1000
- f. Present a summary of the Chapter's accomplishments at the Chapter's first general meeting of the new year
- g. Prepare correspondence between the Chapter and the State Office, other Chapters or State agencies as appropriate
- h. Review Chapter's completed annual report before submission to State office
- i. Communicate with Board and Chapter Members as needed; conduct email votes on issues between meetings

- j. Appoint all committee Chairs and be an ex-officio member of all committees, assisting as appropriate
- k. Following election, form a Director Nomination Committee, 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. Become Immediate Past President upon completion of term as President
- m. Encourage all Officers and Directors to read and be familiar with their duties, responsibilities and Program guiding documents, i.e. the Chapter Bylaws, and the State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, and others as may be appropriate.
- n. Be an ex-officio member of all committees, assisting as appropriate
- o. Be the Chapter's representative to the State Annual Meeting. Assume all other State obligations, or appoint a Chapter State Representative (See Chapter State Representative under 3. Directors)
- p. Facilitate a retreat of all newly elected Officers and Directors with the outgoing Board members before the first Board meeting in January to facilitate responsibility exchange and chart the Chapter's new year
- q. Write donor-appreciation letters
- r. Present Recognition Awards to out-going Officers and Board members

Vice President

- a. Assist the President and act for the President in his or her 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
- e. Select and secure the venue for monthly Chapter meetings for the following year based on approved Board meeting dates
- f. Schedule and coordinate annual Chapter social activities
- g. Provide monthly meeting publicity details to Communication Director, Advance Training Director and Webmaster not less than three weeks before each Chapter meeting date
- h. Make arrangements for program presentation at monthly Chapter meetings, such as audio-visual equipment set-up and speaker introduction
- i. Act as custodian of Chapter laptop computer and projector; maintain a log of use by Chapter members
- j. Provide written documentation of monthly Chapter programs, including speaker names, dates and attendance figures, to the Communications Director, Advanced Training Director, Webmaster, and Archivist
- k. At the end of term in office, have engaged program speakers for the months of January and February of the following year

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
- c. Pay all bills upon receipt of a written statement or receipt. Treasurer or President or one other Officer shall sign all checks, drafts or other instruments for payment of money or notes of the Chapter. Two Officers signatures are required for checks, drafts or other instruments over \$1000.00.
- d. Submit all annual financial records, reports and audits as required by law (and/or sponsoring agencies)
- e. Make a financial report at all Board meetings
- f. Present the financial records to the annual Financial Examination Committee before the last Board meeting of the calendar year
- g. 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
- h. Make available all financial reports and documents to any Chapter member and/or Advisors as may be requested
- i. Maintain update of 'Donate by Check' form to reflect current Treasurer's address
- j. Deposit donation checks received in a timely manner and provide information to the President for the appropriate 'Appreciation Letter' recipient
- k. Monitor the Chapter's Amazon Pay account for donations and transfer funds to the Chapter bank account
- l. File the annual e-postcard (IRS Form 990-N) before May 15, with the IRS and any other forms that may be required to maintain the Chapter's 501(c)(3) status
- m. Provide accounting, banking and reporting of the state Texas Master Naturalist Annual Meeting revenue and expenses as directed by the Chapter President and the Texas Master Naturalist State Program Coordinator

Secretary

- a. Conduct all necessary Chapter correspondence
- b. Record, publish (on the Chapter website), and preserve the minutes of all meetings of the Board of Directors, General Membership meetings, or special meetings
- c. Furnish the minutes to all Board members and make them available to other Chapter members when requested
- d. Keep a record of attendance at each meeting and whether a quorum is present
- e. Maintain a hard copy file of all minutes and correspondence
- f. 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 adopted by the Chapter, that is, Robert's Rules of Order
- g. Participate as a member of the Annual Financial Examination Committee
- h. Upon Chapter adoption of a revised or amended Chapter Operating Handbook, an electronic copy must be sent by the Secretary to the State office

3. Directors

The Immediate Past President is not appointed and serves as an honorary Director

The duly Appointed Directors shall be represented by the following:

- Membership Director
- New Class Director
- Communications Director
- Advanced Training Director
- Volunteer Service Projects Director
- New Class Representative
- State Chapter Representative
- Advisor(s)

All Director positions are by appointment, with the exception of the Immediate Past President, 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 12 months or a period of 24 months, and may be eligible for re-election. The Immediate Past President shall serve through the term of the current President.

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 this HILL COUNTRY Chapter Operating Handbook as required for the operation of the Chapter. All Directors are voting members of the Board. All Directors are required to attend all Board meetings and to make a report to the Board at each monthly meeting.

- Immediate Past President
  - a. Provide continuity from prior Board of Directors with counsel for undocumented procedures and works to document those procedures
  - b. Leads an annual review and update if necessary of the Chapter Operating Handbook document
  - c. Assist the President
  - d. Chair the Nominating Committee (Ref: Chapter Bylaws, Article V, E, 2)
  - e. In the absence of an Immediate Past President, the President will reassign above responsibilities as needed
- Membership Director
  - a. Maintain a roster of all Chapter members, including a roster of the new class, with pertinent contact information
  - b. Oversee Chapter position of Data Manager
    1. Maintain records of Volunteer and Advanced Training hours
    2. Provide monthly reports to the Membership Director on Members certifying, recertifying and/or receiving Milestone Awards, according to State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols Article IV. Requirements
    3. Assist Membership Director with compilation of Annual State Report

- c. Order and maintain the Member certification and Milestone Awards such as name badges, certificates, pins, and stationary. (*Name badges are ordered from ADCO Advertising in Kerrville. Bring a sample name badge from Membership archives to get badge color and appearance to be consistent for all Chapter Members.*)
- d. Notify the Board of Members meeting certification and milestone achievements by the newsletter deadline each month; notify those Members to be recognized at the monthly meeting.
- e. Monthly maintain and publish names of members achieving certification and milestone awards
- f. Attend and present awards at frequent Chapter meetings
- g. Receive all Applications, and forward electronically, copies of Applications to all Board members for their review, evaluation and appointment to the New Class in accordance with Appendix A, Criteria for Evaluation of New Class Applications
- h. Work with Communications Director and New Class Director to update the recruiting brochure for use during annual membership drive
- i. Organize, publicize and manage the New Class Application process. Work with New Class Director to update new Class Application packet (cover letter, application, maps acceptance letter, etc.) by March 1, and present to the Board for review and approval at the March Board meeting
- j. Maintain all New Class Applications and the New Class attendance sheets for each training class for the current year, as well as for all prior years in folders by class date. The TMN State office requires all New Class Applications and their liability waivers to be archived.
- k. Prepare Member and visitor sign-in sheets for monthly Chapter meetings; take head count at each meeting; maintain and distribute meeting attendance records to the Board
- l. Inform Land Management Assistance Program (LMAP) Project Coordinator of interest in LMAP from visitor sign-in sheet; inform Communications Director and/or Newsletter Editor of visitors interested in receiving the Chapter Newsletter
- m. Ensure that transferring Members have a current signed Liability Form on file from their original new class or a new waiver is completed and they are familiar with VMS reporting
- n. Maintain a record of high level interests and specific expertise of Members from their new Class Applications or other sources of information
- o. Manage the Chapter's Mentor Program (Ref: State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Appendix II, Mentor Program)
- p. On or before June 15, in cooperation with the New Class Director, electronically send an invitation to: 1) those who have agreed to be Mentors, 2) have expressed an interest in mentoring, or 3) those being recruited as a Mentor for New Class applicants
- q. Following the Board's July meeting and the release of the New Class applicants names: 1) assign trainees to responding Mentors (some Mentors may request a specific trainee and Mentors may have more than one trainee assigned); 2) convene a meeting of Mentors on or before August 10, conduct meeting in accordance with State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Appendix II, Mentor Program

- r. Electronically forward a copy of each assigned trainee's Application to their respective Mentor
  - s. 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
  - t. Electronically remind members before the end of the month to report Volunteer and Advanced training hours
  - u. For Chapter Members not having access to the VMS, provide the Chapter Activity form for reporting Volunteer Project and Advanced Training hours by members
  - v. Ensure new members/trainees receive appropriate training to use the TMN VMS
  - w. Compile the State Annual Report with the support of the preceding year's President and Data Manager
  - x. Ensure that the Chapter's post office box is checked regularly and renewed as needed
  - y. Maintain a list of members who have requested 'inactive' status and members who are no longer 'active' because they moved away, never finished class, etc. for the TMN State Annual Report
- New Class Director
    - a. Form the Training Committee, appointing members to include representatives from two or more previous classes
    - b. Serve as Manager for the New Class, planning, curriculum development, calendar, instructors, venue, reception, etc., through graduation
    - c. Recommend the individual class tuition cost to the Board of Directors by March 1, based on proposed budget for current year's class expenses
    - d. Use the latest version of the Chapter's new Class Guidelines to coordinate Chapter's training program; plan, implement and evaluate the Chapter training curriculum; develop training calendar
    - e. Arrange for location, room seating and equipment for all classes and reception
    - f. Select all presenters and make arrangements for their class/presentation, including materials, handouts and audio-visual equipment required
    - g. Provide the Board with a list of topics to be covered in the New Class by March 1, in electronic format so that general information can be included in the relevant recruiting materials
    - h. Provide the Board with the basic class schedule in electronic format by June 1, including details on topics and speakers for inclusion in the acceptance letters to New Class members
    - i. Work with Membership and Communications Directors to develop the New Class recruiting brochure for use during the annual membership drive
    - j. Order class materials and prepare New Class manuals
    - k. Work with the Membership Director to update the New Class Application packet (cover letter, Application Form, maps, acceptance letter, etc.) by March 1, and present to the Board for review and approval at the March Board meeting
    - l. Arrange for speaker gifts, travel and lodging needs, confirmation and 'thank you' letters
    - m. Provide class name tags for trainees

- n. Work with Membership Director to manage the Mentor Program and the New Class application process
- o. Maintain attendance records during the training period
- p. Assist trainees in locating and reporting make-up classes, approving same; report approved make-up classes to membership Director for certification purposes
- q. Ensure new trainees receive appropriate training to use the TMN VMS
  
- Communications Director
  - a. Oversee the position of the Publicity Manager whose responsibilities include:
    1. Promote the Chapter to the public by creating and distributing press releases and flyers announcing Chapter meetings and other events
    2. Track publication of news releases in area newspapers
    3. Maintain Chapter display and recruit volunteers for area events as needed
    4. Oversee the Newsletter Editor whose responsibilities include collecting Chapter and State news, along with contributions from Board and Chapter Members; to produce and distribute the Chapter newsletter prior to each month's Board meeting
  - b. Oversee the Webmaster whose responsibilities include building, supporting, and maintaining the Chapter website
  - c. Oversee the Archivist whose responsibilities include: maintain historical Chapter records, including newsletters, projects, events, recognitions, elections, meetings and a written record of monthly meeting speakers, field trips and related details, etc.
  - d. Coordinate with Vice President, Membership Director, and New Class Director to develop publicity press releases for print and electronic media covering the New Class Applications, Chapter meetings, and special events
  - e. Update recruiting brochure for use during annual membership drive using information provided by Membership and New Class Directors; provide a draft of the revised brochure to the Board for review and approval by March 15
  - f. Arrange for printing and distribution of final version of the New Class recruiting brochure
  
- Advanced Training Director
  - a. Develop a form for members to request that a program be considered for an Advanced Training Code
  - b. Review and recommend for approval or disapproval all Advanced Training requests and events.
  - c. Assign Advanced Training Codes and Advanced Training Titles to qualifying events and notify Chapter membership of approved Advanced Training opportunities
  - d. Set up and manage Advanced Training opportunities in the Chapter's TMN VMS
  - e. Use State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Article VI. Advanced Training Requirements, including VMS, as a guide to review and approve Advanced Training Codes

- Volunteer Service Projects Director
  - a. Develop a form for members to request a Volunteer Service Project Code
  - b. 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.
  - c. Use State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Article VI. Volunteer Service Requirements, including VMS, as a guide to review and approve Volunteer Service Project Codes
  - d. Assign Volunteer Service Project Codes to qualifying projects and publicize to Chapter members
  
- New Class Representative
  - a. Represent the New Class as a member on the Board
  - b. Participate as a member of the New Class Committee
  - c. Participate as a member of the annual Financial Examination Committee
  
- Chapter State Representative
  - a. Work as a Chapter liaison with the State Program Coordinator
  - b. Review draft of State Documents as requested
  - c. Help with coordination of activities at the Annual State Conference
  - d. Help in finding presenters for the Annual Conference
  - e. Enhance the communication between the State Program and the Chapters
  - f. Help guide and educate new Chapters with the training of new Officers and Directors through use of the State governing documents
  - g. Participate in conference calls as requested
  - h. Attend the Annual State Conference if possible
  - i. Attend the semi-annual State Volunteer Representatives Council meetings
  
- Advisor(s)

Reference State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, Appendix I, Advisor Guidelines

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) approved by the membership. Board approval requires either a majority vote of Board members in attendance at a Board meeting where a quorum is present, or a majority vote of Board members via electronic media.

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. New Class Applications. The Board shall review and approve New Class Applications. Application approval will follow criteria set-forth in Appendix A
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 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**

- Executive Committee
  - a. The Executive Committee shall be comprised of the Officers of the Chapter
  - b. Authority: Reference Chapter Bylaws, Article VI, B. 2. Authority

- Training Committee
  - a. Serves under the leadership of the New Class Director for the Chapter's training program.
  - b. Plans, implements and evaluates the Chapter training curriculum and develops training calendar
  - c. Acquires the TMN State Curriculum for new class trainees and prepares additional class materials
  - d. Select all presenters and make arrangements for their class/presentation including materials, handouts and audio-visual equipment needed for the class/presentation
  - e. Arranges for speaker gifts, travel, lodging needs, confirmation, and thank you letters
  - f. Arranges for publicity in the form of newspapers, flyers, brochures, electronic media
  - g. Arranges for training venue and required facilities equipment for all class periods
  - h. Facilitates class field outings/trips
  - i. Hosts initial New Class social and presentation reception
  - j. Arranges for refreshment amenities during class periods
  
- Membership Committee
  - a. Serves under the leadership of the Membership Director, typically composed of the Data Manager
  - b. Manages and/or assists in managing the Chapter's records and reports within the TMN VMS
  - c. Maintain a roster of the Chapter member names, including in-training members, plus pertinent contact information within the TMN VMS
  - d. Maintain a record of volunteer and advanced training hours within the TMN VMS
  - e. Supports Membership Director with compilation of the State Annual Report
  - f. Reports members achieving Certification and Milestone awards regularly
  
- Volunteer Service Projects Committee
  - a. Supports Volunteer Service Projects Director to review, organize, assign codes and notify Chapter members of approved Volunteer Service opportunities and projects
  - b. May assist in managing project opportunities with the Chapter's TMN VMS
  
- Advanced Training Committee
  - a. Supports Advanced Training Director to review, organize, assign codes and notify Chapter members of approved Advanced Training opportunities
  - b. Assist with managing the Chapter's Advanced Training Opportunities within the TMN VMS

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/or Advisor. The President appoints the Chairperson. The Treasurer provides the financial records for review.

- 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 being not limited to sex, race, creed, or national origin, but including attributes such as age, 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 his/her election to present a slate of Director Candidates.

The State Master Naturalist 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 Class 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 being not limited to sex, race, creed, or national origin, but including attributes such as age, 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 State Master Naturalist 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, religion, disability, or national origin.

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 may have been 'inactive' for some 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 and/or amended Chapter Operating Handbook, an electronic copy must be sent to the State Office within 30 days. The Chapter Secretary will send an electronic copy of the revised and/or amended Chapter Operating Handbook upon adoption.

## **IV: APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX A: Criteria for Evaluating New Class Applications**

In some years, the Chapter receives more applications for the Chapter's New Class than can be accommodated. The Board reviews all applications at its July monthly meeting.

In the interest of fairness, the Board uses the following general criteria for determining which applicants will be accepted:

#### **Positive attributes:**

Applicant responses to:

- Why he or she wants to be a Master Naturalist (for sharing with the community)Affiliation with nature-related organizations, as an indication of interest
- A history of volunteering, with some preference for nature-related organizations.
- Skills that an applicant might possess from his or her educational background, work experience or self-training that might be applicable to TMN projects.
- Other information known, from the application, or from other contacts (phone calls, e-mail etc. or comments from our Members).
- The Board's best judgment of whether an applicant appears likely to become active in TMN programs and Chapter volunteer projects.
- Additional consideration may be given to applicants who were not able to become part of the class in an earlier year, in recognition of their continued interest in TMN and the Hill Country Chapter.

#### **Negative attributes:**

- Unable to attend a significant number of classes or field trips (*i.e.* 3 or more)
- Lack of interest in volunteering or giving back to their communities.

#### **Neutral attributes:**

The application period generally runs from mid-April to mid-July. The date the application was received has no impact on the criteria listed above. Each applicant will be judged on his or her positive and negative attributes as described above, and not on the order in which the application was received.

The Chapter does not practice "rolling admissions". All acceptance letters to New Class applicants will be sent only after the Board review of all of the applications has been completed at the July Board meeting to assure acceptance of the most-qualified trainees.

After the Board has selected the applicants to be accepted, the Membership Director will send the acceptance letters to these applicants.

#### **Maximizing Opportunities for the Potential Trainee and for the Chapter**

All Applications will continue to be taken until the July Board meeting. The Board will review and select not more than 35 (thirty-five) trainees, plus 3 (three) applicants to be assigned to a Waiting

List. Acceptance letters will be sent by the Membership Director to the selected trainees; 3 selected applicants will be called and offered a position on the Waiting List as openings may occur in the class. These applicants may have their application and check returned immediately, or after week 3 of the class if openings do not become available. Other applicants reviewed, may be moved up to fill the Waiting List, if they agree. Applicants who were not accepted and are not on the Waiting List will have their check and application returned promptly.

Unfilled seats in the classroom represent both a lost opportunity for the applicant to become a TMN and a lost opportunity for our Chapter to train a TMN who can then volunteer and further the TMN Mission. In some classes, up to 3 trainees either never come to class or drop out by the third class. Often applicants who are not accepted do not re-apply the following year.

In past years, new trainees from the Waiting List have successfully made up the 1 to 3 classes they missed, often completing these classes in the following year's class. In 2006 the third person on the waiting list, who joined the class on week 3, went on to become president of our Chapter.