

**Texas Master Naturalist – Hill Country Chapter
Board Meeting
March 21, 2007**

Present:

Dan Behringer, Cathy Downs, Betty Gardner, John Huecksteadt, Marilyn Murrmann, Phyllis Muska, Bill Perkison, Donna Robinson, Jim Stanley, Priscilla Stanley, Jerri Workman **Visitor:** Tom Collins

Absent: None

With all Board members present, the March meeting was called to order at 1:25 PM by President Phyllis Muska.

1. Plant Sale Proceeds: Our Chapter received a check for \$1762.46 from Riverside Nature Center as our 50% share of the net proceeds from our TMN fundraiser at the Down By the Riverside Native Plant Sale in October 2006. This check was delayed because of complications in calculating the expenses involved with the use of credit cards by the plant sale customers. The Native Plant Sale was held in the first month that Riverside had accepted credit cards. We do not expect such delays in our payment in the future.

2. Treasurer's Report: Marilyn Murrmann reported we have a new balance of \$6,147.97 in our bank account. A copy of the Treasurer's Report is appended to the hard copy of the Minutes. Five Certification Deposit refunds of \$50 each have been made by check to members of our Class of 2006 upon their Certification.

3. Contributions from chapter to nature-related organizations: President Phyllis Muska suggested that Board members be thinking of worthy nature-related projects where our chapter could make grants that would make a meaningful contribution to the beneficial management of natural resources. Donna Robinson moved to consider making a contribution to a nature-related cause, organization, activity or project. The motion was seconded by Jim Stanley and carried.

Some discussion indicated a preference to donate to a specific, identified project rather than making a contribution to an organization, to assure that our contribution made a difference. Some suggestions were replacing the successful bat house that was vandalized at Riverside Nature Center (RNC) several years ago, building a wildlife guzzler at RNC to demonstrate how water can be provided for wildlife by rain water collection, and donating to the wildscape or other specific project at the Old Tunnel Wildlife Management Area. Jim mentioned considering honorariums or gas compensation for speakers for the New Class training this year. Phyllis suggested that we could survey the nature books in the local libraries in our four county area and donate books on native plants for landscape use, such as Jan Wrede's new book on priority native trees and shrubs. Betty Gardner suggested the Images for Conservation book. These proposals and others will be discussed at the April Board meeting.

4. Larger Venue for chapter meetings: Phyllis suggested that we begin looking for a larger meeting room for our 2008 chapter meetings. We currently have 121 members and expect a Class of 2007 of at least 30 new members. Since we have been successful in attracting the public to our educational monthly meetings, we may need additional space to comfortably accommodate a larger group in 2008.

The Texas Lions Camp was suggested, however that facility is not set up for evening meetings. In 2006, UGRA charged us \$45 for an evening meeting. Currently our chapter's \$50 non-profit membership at RNC allows us to have unlimited meetings at RNC for free. Schreiner University and the new Dietert Center (both in Kerrville) may be attractive possibilities.

5. AT Granted for our February 26th meeting: It was decided that the Hummingbird presentation by Mark Klym of TPWD met the requirements for one hour of AT for our members who attended.

6a. Earth Day Event at Cibolo Nature Center on April 7: Membership Director John Huecksteadt indicated that he had recruited some TMNs to staff our Chapter display in Boerne at this event.

6b. RNC Earth Day Celebration & Native Plant Sale on April 21: John has TMNs to staff our Chapter display for this event as well. These events are important to help the public learn more about the TMN program and its activities by signing up for our electronic newsletter, a Land Management Assistance Program visit or membership information.

6c. Article by a TMN in the TPWD magazine: Phyllis passed around a text copy of the article to the Board, suggesting that it might be a useful handout at our Chapter display and at chapter meetings as we enter our recruiting season from April through mid-July. It was suggested that we should price reprints from TPWD which would also contain the many photos that told a story as well. Priscilla expressed concern that the Rio Grande Chapter practice of having their trainees complete their 40 hours of volunteer work and 8 hours of Advanced Training **during** their 40+ hours of TMN training seemed to be an extreme commitment that might have a negative effect on our recruitment, even though it is our understanding that most chapters give their trainees a year to become certified TMNs. If this article is distributed, it seems appropriate to attach a disclaimer that our Chapter does not have the same arduous certification schedule portrayed in the article.

7. Bandera Home & Landscape Show in Bandera on April 14: John also has TMNs to staff our Chapter display at this event.

8. Volunteer work guidelines: Past-President Jim Stanley had researched TMN State and Chapter volunteer guidelines. Other TMN chapters permit members to count volunteer hours for nature-related partners for annual nature-related events, such as RNC's Earth Day Nature Fair and Native Plant Sale. Several documents from the State TMN office and our chapter were reviewed. Tom Collins, who serves on the TMN State Committee and authored one of these documents, indicated that this type of decision is left to individual chapters. Tom said that the State By-laws are required to be followed as written, but some other State guidance documents were open to interpretation by each chapter. He noted that other chapters do allow members to count volunteer hours for working on special nature-related events for a nature partner, even if the event is a fundraiser for the nature partner. He noted that this is justified by the event occurring infrequently, and being balanced by the nature education provided to the public by the event. He differentiated that type of event from a routine fundraiser, such as working in a nature-partner's gift shop, which would not be acceptable for volunteer hours. Phyllis found a citation in the Hill County Chapter Volunteer Project Guidelines from February 2004 indicating that volunteering for a nature event that is also a fundraiser for a nature-oriented non-profit organization can be counted as TMN volunteer hours if pre-approved by the Chapter Board. Donna Robinson moved, and Jim Stanley seconded, that the Board approve an exception for Earth Day because it is a special nature event for a nature-partner, and it is not working at a permanent fundraising facility. The motion carried. Thus, for Earth Day 2007, any volunteer work (except working in the gift shop) will be counted as TMN volunteer hours under existing project **KR-02-A** for Youth and Adult Educational Programs, Visitor Assistance & Programs at RNC.

It was also noted that Cibolo Nature Center is a nature-partner, and thus the Board might choose to make a comparable exception for Cibolo in the future.

9a: March program: Vice-President for Programs Betty Gardner told us that the March program would be Carolyn Vogel of the Texas Land Trust Council speaking on "Conservation Easements".

[Note: This program had to be re-scheduled due to serious, wide-spread, flash flooding on the program date.]

The April program will be Michelle Haggerty, Executive Director of the State TMN Program. Additional speakers will be first Chapter President, Sandy Pena speaking on the history of our chapter, and Past-President Jim Stanley speaking on the events of the past two years and our chapter's Land Management Assistance Program. Betty noted that April is the beginning of our chapter's annual recruitment period to fill our Class of 2007.

9b. Publicity discussion: It was recommended that a membership flyer be made available at our April meeting and other meetings during the recruiting season.

It was then noted that the article submitted by our chapter External Publicity Chair on the March meeting had not yet appeared in the Kerrville Daily Times. [Organizational news typically is published in the KDT Lifestyles section which comes out on Wednesday and Saturday]. There was a concern that perhaps our publicity might not be published. Class of 2006 Representative Bill Perkison moved to “place a classified or display ad for 3 months in the Kerrville Daily Times”. Jerri Workman seconded the motion, which carried. Subsequent discussion tasked Director of Communication Donna Robinson to check on the rate for a display ad and inform the Board.

It was also decided that a membership packet would be prepared and made available to the public at our March chapter meeting. There was a discussion of the advantages of working to co-publicize events with Cibolo Nature Center and Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT) chapters in our four county area, where we include their events in our newsletter and visa versa.

10: Citizen Wildfire Ecology Specialist (CWES) expenditures: In February, at the request of the Texas Forest Service (TFS) - Urban Wildland Interface Specialists, our chapter hosted a 30 hour wildfire-preparedness course in Fredericksburg on February 13, 14 and 27. We recruited a class of 31 trainees, including 27 TMNs, from 6 chapters. The \$50 fee for the course went entirely to TFS for their expenses. The chapter expenses totaled about \$280, including a \$100 honorarium for a 3 hour presentation by Bill Armstrong, TPWD-retired, \$150 for refreshments for three 8 hour days for 38 people, and a \$30 dinner certificate for Bill Lindemann who volunteered his ranch and home for the 3 hour field day to design defensible space around various rural structures. Co-chair Jane Crone obtained the Gillespie County Cooperative Extension classroom at no fee. Co-chair Priscilla Stanley prepared brochures and posters at no cost. External Publicity Chair Ginny deWolf put articles in newspapers in our four counties at no cost. Approximately \$20 worth of soda, sugar, creamer and paper goods remain to be used in chapter AT events.

11. Board Meeting Minutes and our chapter Frequently Asked Questions document: Our Board Minutes and our chapter FAQ, dealing with TMN practices, volunteer hours, AT, reporting etc. will be posted on our chapter website in the new Members Only area. John Huecksteadt is working with our Webmaster Kim Whitaker to construct this new area. John will let Priscilla know when the Members Only area is operational so she can send the documents to Kim.

12. New Project – Tom Collins: Chapter member Tom Collins proposed a “Riverside Nature Center Fauna Census” as a new volunteer project for our chapter. This project would provide a long-term (3+ years) census study of the birds, butterflies, dragonflies and other arthropods, herps and mammals. The project goals include: creating a RNC Nature checklist, giving volunteers the opportunity to apply training in identification of animal species, making RNC visitors aware that there are more than plants to see, and improving our understanding of the ecology of an urban nature center. The birds will be recorded in Texas e-Bird under “Riverside Nature Center”. The Board enthusiastically endorsed this new Project. [More detailed information can be found in the e-mail to chapter members from Director of Volunteer Projects Jerri Workman, dated April 4 6:46 pm, announcing this new project.]

13. Holiday Party Plans: Betty Gardner reported that the party will be in Gillespie County this year, where it was in 2003, now that parties have been held in the other three counties we serve. The Holiday Party Committee includes Jane Crone and Sharon Corley.

14. Use of our Chapter member and prospective member lists: Director of Communications Donna Robinson asked if it would be appropriate to use these lists to inform these folks about a course that she will be teaching in Club Ed in Kerrville (adult education sponsored by KISD) on April 21. The course is entitled “Who Speaks for Wolf?” is based on Iroquois Indian culture and how it can be applied in today’s world as a community building tool. After some discussion, it was decided that neither the prospective member list nor the member list should be used for events that are outside our mission of beneficial management of natural resources.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:10 pm

Next Board meeting: Wednesday, April 18 at 1:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Priscilla B. Stanley

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Chapter Secretary

4/15/07