



NOVEMBER 2019

Chapter News

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT KRISTINE RIVERS

How is it already November? It seems like this year has flown past in a blur of constant activity. On October 9th we held our first Fall Field Day at Quintana Beach County Park, and it was so much fun! Not only did everyone learn a lot, but they made new friends as well. I am so proud of our team for working together to ensure that the event went smoothly, including our chapter members who work for Brazoria County Parks Department. We plan to make this an annual event, visiting different parks within the county each year to explore their unique natural environments and to learn from each other.

The 20th TMN Program Annual Meeting was held in Rockwall in mid-October, and I was grateful to have the opportunity to attend and represent our chapter. In addition to offering amazing educational workshops and field trips, the meeting was a great forum for gaining a better understanding of our chapter's place within the overall TMN organization, sharing ideas and best practices with others, and establishing relationships with nearby chapters to work together on future projects. During my tenure as President, I have been pleased to see an increase in the amount of collaboration that we have With other chapters, especially Coastal

Prairie and Galveston Bay Area, as a direct result of our interactions at the annual meetings.

In related and exciting news, the location of the 2020 TMN annual meeting was announced, and it will be right here in Houston! We will be working with our area sister chapters to host the event, so there will be a variety of volunteer opportunities. A few Board members will be attending a planning meeting soon, and we will keep you posted as we learn more. In the meantime, save the dates: October 15th to 18th, 2020. We hope the nearby location will allow many more chapter members to attend.

I hope to see you at our November chapter meeting; our guest speaker, April Russell from Sea Center Texas, will educate us about microplankton, including both zooplankton and phytoplankton. Chapter member Chip Sweet is presenting Nature Notes about tardigrades—odd-looking microscopic critters known as water bears or moss piglets that are some of the most resilient animals on earth (and beyond!) It should be a fascinating meeting.

Kristine Rivers is the president of the Cradle of Texas Chapter. She can be reached at rivers@tmn-cot.org.



CONTENTS

Page 1
President's Message

Page 2
Next General Meeting

Page 3
Membership Data Report; '20-'21 Duck Stamp; BASF Planetarium

Page 4-5
Oct 9 Fall Field Day

Page 6
Notes on TMN State Meeting

Page 7
American Eel Project Update; Q&A: Seed Size Matters

Page 8
Brinkmeyer receives certification; New Nat'l Park Svce Acting Dir

Page 9
Member Activities

Page 10
A Taste for Nature

Page
Remembering Suzie Safley



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Masthead photo by Peggy Romfh.

Texas Master Naturalist Program
Cradle of Texas Chapter
Chapter News – November 2019

REMINDER: HOG WILD HOLIDAY PARTY
Dec. 8 after General Meeting. Details to come at Nov. meeting and via email.



Texas Master Naturalist Program—Cradle of Texas Chapter General Meeting and Advanced Training

Wednesday, November 13, 2019

First Presbyterian Church, 130 S. Arcola St., Angleton

8:30 AM – 9:00 AM	Fun and Fellowship Snack Team: Bill Ahlstrom, Ellen Lasseter, Michael Lasseter, Kim Richardson, Kristine Rivers, Larry Ruhr, Rose Wagner
9:00 AM – 9:50 AM	General Membership Meeting <i>[This meeting is approved for 1.00-hour volunteer time plus travel up to 1.00 hour]</i>
9:50 AM – 10:00 AM	Nature Notes Speaker: Chip Sweet Topic: “Tardigrades”
10:15 AM – 12:00 PM	Advanced Training Speaker: April Russell, Sea Center Texas Topic: “Microplankton” <i>[Hours for Advanced Training (AT) TBD at close of meeting]</i>



April Russell has worked at Sea Center Texas since March 2019. She received her bachelor’s degree in biology from Abilene Christian University as an honors graduate and her master’s degree in marine biology from Texas A&M University in Corpus Christi, where she spent two and a half years completing her master’s thesis on the synergistic effects of rising temperature and ocean acidification on early development of marine invertebrates.

Upon graduation, April was part of a grant-funded project studying the prospect of utilizing local marine phytoplankton as a biofuel source. After moving to Dallas to support her husband’s educational goals, April spent seven years teaching both college and high school level courses. In 2017, she and her husband moved to south Texas to pursue their dream careers. April had just begun volunteering for Sea Center Texas when she accepted a position at a fish hatchery in Alaska’s interior in 2018 and spent six months studying and raising sockeye salmon. Upon her return to Texas, her current position opened with TPWD at Sea Center Texas.



Membership Data Report

by Pete and Peggy Romfh, Data Managers

Congratulations to those who will be announced as recertified at COT's November 2019 General Meeting:

Recertification 2019 (Warbler Pin)

Patty Brinkmeyer	Mike Mullenweg
Sandy Henderson	Connie Stolte
Anna King	Sherry Summers
Michael Lasseter	

Impact Data YTD—January 1—October 31, 2019

14,942 Adults 32,693 Youth 47,635 Total

Hours Totals YTD—October 31, 2019

14,219 Hours VT 1,637 Hours AT 118* Volunteers

* 123 active members and 2019 interns

2020-21 Federal Duck Stamp Winner Announced

Alabama artist Eddie LeRoy's painting of a black-bellied whistling-duck pair (see below) emerged as the winner of the USFWS Federal Duck Stamp competition. The \$25 Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, which raises approximately \$40 million each year that supports critical conservation to protect wetland habitats in the National Wildlife Refuge System, will go on sale in late June 2020.

Source: <https://tinyurl.com/duckstamp20-21>



BASF Planetarium Show November 2019 GALILEO'S TELESCOPE



Galileo Galilei, a Renaissance man of science, takes the telescope – used to view distant landscapes and turns it up to the night sky. There he discovers truths that change our view of the heavens forever. Have fun exploring Galileo's vision in this interactive show.

Tuesday, November 5, 12, 19, 26
And 4th Friday, November 22
 Lobby opens 6:30 pm. All shows begin 7 pm.



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 FOR THE ARTS & SCIENCES
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October 9 Fall Field Day at Quintana Beach County Park: A Photo Sampler



All photos by Dave Brandes.

Continued on next page

October 9 Fall Field Day: A Photo Sampler *continued*



All photos by Dave Brandes.

Notes on the Texas Master Naturalist 2019 State Meeting in Rockwall by Bill Ahlstrom

For me, going to the TMN Annual State Meeting was like going to a state fair for the first time. There were great exhibits, USDA and TPWD booths, 30 off-site trips, and an incredibly-diverse list of session topics. It was BIG—really big. The two main meeting-room venues were on opposite sides of the hotel—about a 2000-foot journey (or so it seemed), with a five- to ten-minute interval between sessions. All but one of the sessions I attended were very interesting and pertinent, and the instructors were top-notch and very approachable—both after the class was over or wherever you might happen to cross paths with them. The subpar session was given by a man and woman who were substituting for the intended presenter.

Dennis Markwardt, Director of Vegetation Management for TXDOT, presented “Archeology, Weeds, Wildflowers? Go Beyond the Road with TXDOT.” He has 30 years of experience with TXDOT and is a champion of planting native wildflowers along Texas highways. In fact, he and his crews now plant over one million acres of native wildflowers along Texas roadsides every year. His was the largest session I attended. He is a great speaker and provided attendees with several packets of his special wildflower mix.

Adrienne Paquette of the Texas Wildlife Association presented, “A Guide to Guiding,” which was packed with info on how to organize a hike, how keep everyone happy and alive throughout the hike, and how to deal non-cooperative, know-it-alls.

My second favorite session turned out to be a hidden gem and was both funny and full of information. “Conservation Laws & Ethics 3.0” was a fascinating and interactive exploration without legal mumbo jumbo. We learned how TPWD Game Wardens make real-time ticketing decisions based on whether the person was trying to do the right thing and was making ethical decisions. We also learned how many TPWD-related laws are on the books and how few are known by most people. The instructors for this session were Michael Mitchell, TPWD Game Warden, and Richard Heilbrun, TPWD Conservation Outreach Program Leader. Their names may sound familiar because they authored chapter 22 of the TMN Statewide Curriculum.

I also attended a couple of one-hour sessions on Saturday, one of which was given by Riya Mohan on, “The Unfortunate Reality of Plastics in our Local Ecology.” Her topic dealt with levels of micro plastics in various species of fish found in Lake Ray Hubbard, near the conference site. Riya won many awards for the paper she co-authored, but the most amazing thing about this session was that she had to miss some of her classes at Grapevine High School where she is a senior honor student. One of her goals is to become a Texas Master Naturalist as soon as she’s old enough.

Finally, my favorite session was: “Year Three of TMN Instruction at the TDCJ Ellis Unit—Unexpected Consequences and Unexpected Outcomes.” The

instructors were Scooter Langley of Lee College and Scott Ball of the TMN Heartwood Chapter. What’s happening at the Ellis Prison facility is unbelievable. Lee College was already ensconced at Ellis, offering inmates an opportunity to receive an associate degree in horticulture. An opportunity for the inmates to be involved in an outside project at Lake Livingston was offered: Growing water willows at the prison in order to restore native habitat. The instructors had no say as to who got into the project. All the inmates who got in were volunteers. Some of the ‘students’ had done some pretty bad stuff. They were a captive audience, but they loved the class, read the 700-page curriculum manual forwards and backwards, did presentations and professional-level artwork, received Texas Water Certification, and finally, became certified Texas Master Naturalists. Not all the participants in the three classes to date will be getting out soon, but a considerable number of them will, and they’ll leave with an associate degree in horticulture along with a TMN Certification.

Three former inmates were speakers at the session. Two are members of TMN chapters near Ellis. The most compelling and hardest to believe story was from an inmate whose parole came through during the program. He begged the warden to let him stay in prison until he became a Master Naturalist. He stayed, got his certification, was released, and asked to participate in the state-meeting presentation. I understand that the TMN Project is not likely to become a program in the statewide TDCJ system anytime soon—it takes a great deal of cooperation, effort and support. However, the recidivism rate for inmates who receive an associate degree and TMN Certification is currently 0%!

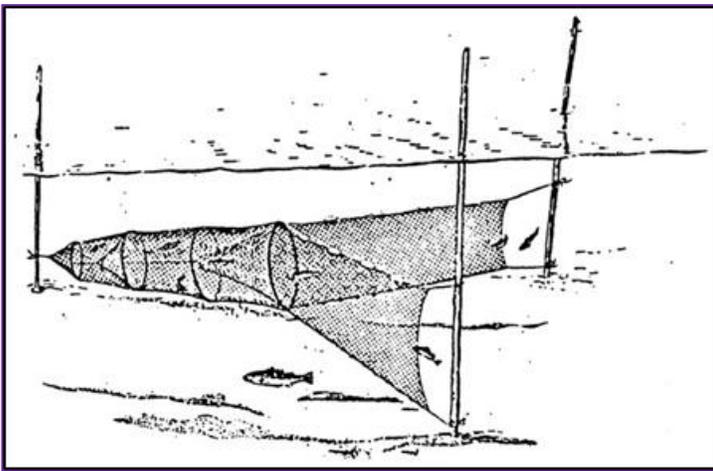
Now for something a little lighter. The bad news: on Saturday night, the ALCS game (the last game as it turned out) was not on any of the TV channels in the rooms. The good news: the only place in the Hilton where you could watch it was at the Hilton’s ‘watering hole,’ and several of us were “forced” to watch including Michelle and Mary Pearl, TPWD Game Wardens, Dr. Baron Rector, a slew of our good friends from the Coastal Prairie Chapter, TXDOT, and TMN members from other chapters. I know I made some good contacts—I wish I could remember who they were.

Two interesting announcements were made at the Sunday morning breakfast and awards program: Next year’s state meeting will be in Houston (westside) at the Omni on I10 heading west towards Katy. The second (and most important) announcement: I won third place in the photo contest. The 2020 meeting should be a great one. Many of the offsite trips will undoubtedly be along the coast, and we’ll likely have opportunities to participate in those trips as well as the sessions. Given the locale, I hope we’ll be there in force. Plus, it will be held in the exact same time frame as this year’s meeting, so we’ll get to watch the Astros in the ACLS at the Omni ‘watering hole’, which by the way, is a much, much cooler place!

Rings in Their Ears: An American Eel Project Update by Peggy Romfh

According to Stephen Curtis, TPWD Coordinator of the American Eel Project, capture of American Eels with fyke nets was successful. This contrasts with the lack of American Eels captured with eel mops placed by Cradle of Texas Master Naturalists in 2018 to 2019.

A **fyke net** is a fish trap that consists of cylindrical or cone-shaped netting bags mounted on rings or other rigid structures (see figure, below). It has wings that guide the fish towards the entrance of the bags. Fyke nets are fixed on



the bottom by anchors, ballast or stakes. [Source fyke net information and drawing:

<http://www.fao.org/fishery/geartype/226/en.>]

All tissues/otoliths dissected from captured eels have been sent to laboratories for processing. This winter, Stephen and other project participants plan to age the otoliths.

Otoliths are small, oval, calcareous bodies in the inner ear of vertebrates involved in sensing gravity and movement. Similar to tree rings, there are roughly one pair of translucent and opaque bands laid down in otoliths every year to make a ring, so counting the rings provides the researcher with an estimated age of the fish.

There is also considerable information gained in measuring trace elements and isotopes in otoliths, as results can show a fish's migration patterns and different habitats it has used. Thus, otoliths keep a record of a fish's entire life.

The eel project, a joint effort between TPWD and UH Clear Lake, will continue for another year with fyke net sampling.

Seed Size Matters from *The New York Times*

Q Why are some seeds huge, while others, which may produce similar-size plants, are tiny?

A Many reasons for a disparity between seed size and plant size have been suggested, and many aspects of plant development are thought to be related to seed size.

Larger seeds are better able to support themselves initially, while smaller seeds have a better chance for dispersal over a wide area, helping at least some seedlings survive.

Plants also have evolved different adaptations to their sprouting environments, helping some smaller seeds thrive in drier, less nutritious soils, while larger seeds

often are able to take advantage of richer soils that hold water better.

Seed size is often related to relative growth speed; smaller seeds develop more quickly than larger ones. But not always: a [2012 study in the journal *Ecology*](#) concluded that small-seeded species only sometimes possess additional adaptations for rapid growth over and above their general size advantage.

A [study last year](#) in the journal *PLoS Biology* found that a faster speed of evolution of new species in a broad range of plant types is correlated with smaller seed size. Small-seeded plants also tended to have shorter life spans, with the rapid turnover linked to more rapid evolution.

Source:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/26/science/plants-seed-sizes.html>

Patty Brinkmeyer Receives Native Landscaping Certification by Peggy Romfh

Whether she is adding new plants to a pollinator garden, working with beekeepers to relocate bees nesting below the Discovery Event Center, planning and maintaining the wetland pond, or sharing her knowledge and love of nature with visitors at Quintana Beach County Park (QBCP), Patty Brinkmeyer uses her Master Naturalist skills to the fullest! Patty is supervisor of the park and a member of the Cradle of Texas Master Naturalists.

An avid photographer, Patty has also won several ribbons in the Migration Celebration photo contest and often shares her photos on the QBCP page on Facebook. Patty and her staff recently hosted the COT chapter field day at the Discovery Event Center and the beach.

Recently, Patty received certification from the Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT) for Levels 1

and 3 of their Native Landscaping Certification Program (NLCP). The classes are designed to provide the basic knowledge necessary to start and maintain native plant gardens and habitats.

The NPSOT believes that plants in gardens, landscaping and habitats help sustain nature when the “wild and natural” are quickly disappearing. In the certification classes, best practices for native plant landscapes and habitat preservation are taught. The courses include both classroom instruction and outside fieldwork. At each level of training, students are introduced to 45 native plants that thrive in the Houston area and five invasive species to avoid.

For more information on the NPSOT certification program, see <https://npsot.org/wp/houston/nlcp/>.

Congratulations, Patty!



Photo credits, left to right: Patty in beekeeper attire helping to relocate bees (photo by Pete Romfh); Pollinator Palooza poster (Quintana Beach County Park); and American Beautyberries at Kleb Woods Nature Preserve (photo by Patty Brinkmeyer).

Former Texas A&M Student Named National Park Service Acting Director



Raymond “David” Vela, a Texas A&M University graduate in 1982 has been promoted to the position of acting director of the National Park Service (NPS) effective in October. Per U.S. Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt, Vela’s

official title will be deputy director for operations.

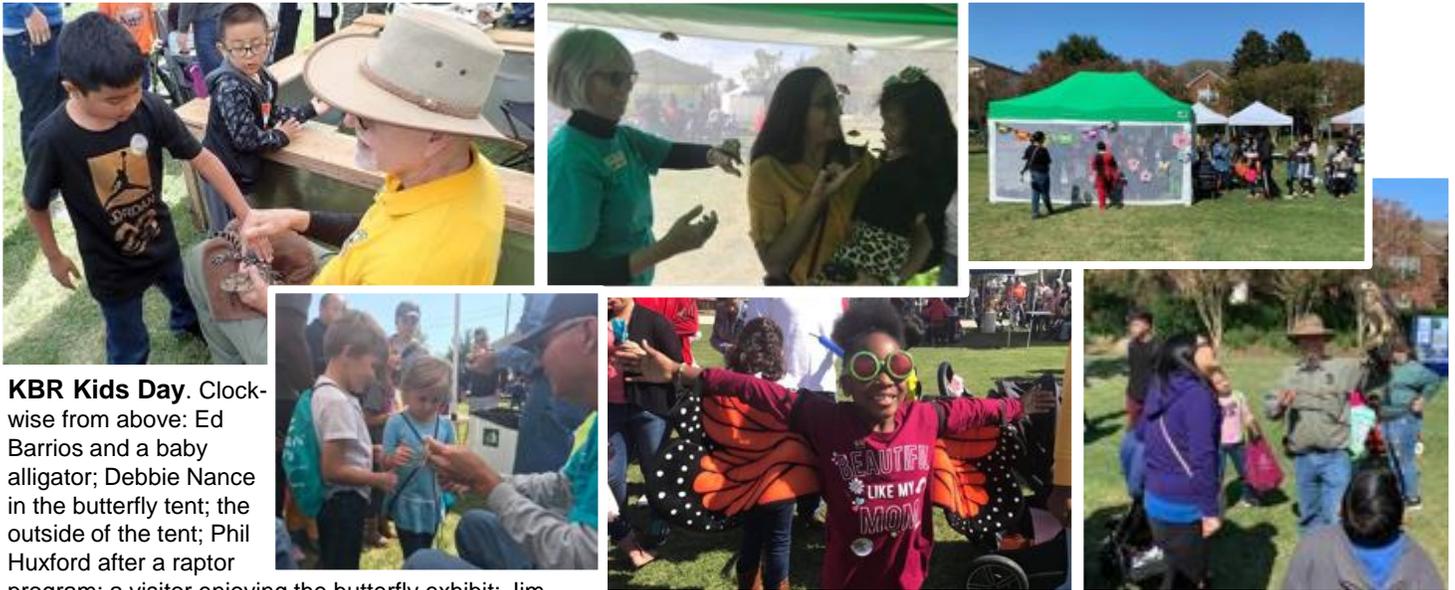
In his new role, Vela will lead nearly 20,000 NPS employees, manage a budget approaching \$3 billion and oversee all 419 NPS parks.

Vela brings nearly 40 years of public service experience to the role, most recently having served as superintendent of Grand Teton National Park and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway. He has also held various positions at San Antonio Missions Historical Park in Texas; Virginia’s Appomattox Court House National Historical Park; Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Texas’s Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site. Vela has also served as superintendent of George Washington Memorial Parkway.

Source: *Texas A&M Today*, 22 Oct. 2019,

<https://tinyurl.com/newParkDir>

Member Activities: What We've Been Up To Lately



KBR Kids Day. Clockwise from above: Ed Barrios and a baby alligator; Debbie Nance in the butterfly tent; the outside of the tent; Phil Huxford after a raptor program; a visitor enjoying the butterfly exhibit; Jim Nance and snake. Photos by David Plunkett.



Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges November Refuge Walk to see cypress trees in Linville Bayou on the Big Pond Unit. Photo far left by Ed Barrios; right, by Heardy Myers.



DEEP at Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge with students from Freeport Intermediate School. Photos by Tom Schneider.

Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuge's *A Taste for Nature*



Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges' biennial fundraiser, held on October 18, netted over \$60k towards the cost of developing the Cannan Bend Recreation Area. Many COT members volunteered to help make the event a success.



Clockwise from top left: Ed Barrios welcomes Phil Huxford and other guests; Jennifer Sanchez, Refuge Complex Manager, chats with guests; Barbara Burkhardt serves Ann and Mike Lange; Tom Schneider, refuge Outdoor Recreation Planner, chats with Mike Lange; Bill and Becky Huff serve wine and hors d'oeuvres to guests. Photos by David Plunkett.

Remembering Suzie Safley

Excerpted from *The Facts*, October 9, 2019

Susan Ann Safley, “Suzie,” 79, of Rosharon, Texas, was born on June 9, 1940, in Baltimore, Maryland, to Paul and Nancibelle Pyers and passed away on October 1, 2019. Her family moved in 1950 to Houston, where Suzie attended elementary school at St. Vincent De Paul Catholic School and graduated high school from St. Agnes Academy. She received a B.A. in Arts from St. Dominic, Houston.

Suzie met the love of her life, David Safley, at the age of 16 through a high school friend. They were married June 17, 1962, lived in Houston until 1977, and then moved to Rosharon to the 150 acres that has been in the Safley family for over 100 years. They had two children, Jimmy and Nancy. She and David shared a lot of good times hosting friends and family on the Rosharon property. Neighbors and Friends from Houston would pitch tents and bring RV’s down on the weekends. Suzie and David would cook and entertain. They held an annual New Year’s Eve party at their home for many years.

Suzie worked as a secretary for the Windham School System at Harrington Prison Farm. She then took a position as a guard and later was promoted to the Maintenance Director. She was the first female to earn this title and was respected by prisoners and staff alike. She worked in the Brazoria County Fair office and later served on the Jr. Commercial Heifer Committee. After she retired, she became a Texas Master Naturalist in 2016. She enjoyed volunteering with this group, hunting for turtle eggs on the beach and other activities.



Suzie was a fabulous cook and baker. Her signature black bottom pie was a popular birthday request. Chocolate chip cookies were always available, and she kept the family tradition of baking cookies at Christmas—up to 24 different varieties—all hand decorated and made with love.

At one time she maintained a half-acre garden from which she produced relishes and sauces and canned vegetables. She made jelly with native grapes and dewberries and picked pecans in the fall to use in Christmas cookies.

Suzie was an outdoor enthusiast who grew up fishing at her camp in Sargent. Suzie could throw a cast net, catch her own bait, paddle across the creek in her boat and land a big redfish. She could clean and fillet it too! She loved spending time with her family outdoors and encouraged her grandchildren to fish and hunt.

Suzie was an amazing mom, grandmother, great grandmother and loved her dog Tootsie. She will be dearly missed.

A special thanks to Melba Beken, mom’s friend of 40 years, who was with mom the entire journey as was caregiver Gloria Mathis, who became her devoted friend during the journey.

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. ~Timothy 4:7-98



From left: Suzie with Lisa Myers and Melba Beken at the COT class of 2016 graduation; Susan Conaty (intern mentor), Larry Peterson, Melba Beken, Chris Kneupper (intern mentor) and Suzie at an intern project-planning session; Suzie during intern project work at Nash Prairie. Photo credits: Top, *The Facts*; left and center, Neal McLain; right, Susan Conaty.

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- Instructions http://tmn-cot.org/Email_Lists/index.html
- Send messages to TMN-COT@googlegroups.com
- Message Archive <http://tinyurl.com/TMN-COT-Mail>
- All messages are sent immediately.

State Master Naturalist list

- Instructions <http://txmn.org/staying-connected/sign-up-for-tmn-listserv/>
- Subscribe listserv@listserv.tamu.edu
- All messages are held for moderation by the TMN State Coordinator.

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