

Roadmap for New Chapter Establishment



Texas Master Naturalist Program™

Revised September 2016

Roadmap for New Chapter Establishment Texas Master Naturalist Program™

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I. Overview

A Texas Master Naturalist (TMN) Chapter may be created to organize a group of responsible and dedicated, like-minded people, in a common cause to support the volunteer objectives stated in the Texas Master Naturalist Mission.

- **Mission:** *To develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the State of Texas.*

The guidelines which follow offer first time Chapter applicants the formal process steps required to petition the State Program Coordinators for a new Texas Master Naturalist Chapter Charter.

- **Definition of a Chapter:** A Chapter is a geographically defined unit of the Texas Master Naturalist Program. Generally, a Chapter may be associated with an urban area, a county or a block of counties in Texas. The purpose of the Chapter is to advance the Texas Master Naturalist Program's goals and objectives throughout its Chartered area.
- **Governing Documents:** The Chapter governing documents are the Chapter Bylaws, Chapter Management and Operations Protocols and the Chapter Operating Handbook. These documents may be found on the State website at: <http://txmn.org/chapterdocuments/>. Before beginning this process, each individual interested in pursuing the Charter of a new Texas Master Naturalist Chapter should become familiar with these current Chapter governing documents. Questions regarding these documents may be directed to the TMN Program Office. The creation of these documents is explained in Phase IV of this document. A thorough reading of this document, 'Roadmap for New Chapter Establishment', is recommended before initiating any formal activity.
- **Local Coordinating Committee:** The Local Coordinating Committee will be composed of the group wishing to petition the State Program Coordinators for a Chapter Charter. This Committee is the driving force behind the creation of a Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist Program. The Committee members are the people who insure the petitioning process is correct, complete, and meets all the requirements to become a 'Certified' Chapter. Each Committee member must complete the Local Coordinating Committee Commitment form found in Appendix I of this document.

II. Establishment of a Chapter

Phase I - New Chapter Draft Petition

To obtain a Charter for the creation of a Chapter requires the submission of a written draft petition to the State Program Coordinators. The draft petition must meet all requirements of both Phase I and Phase II listed below. Phase I and Phase II petitions may be submitted separately or at the same time. The draft petition must address the minimum standards cited in the following paragraphs.

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- A. Clearly define the geographic boundaries that enclose the area to be served by the requested Chapter. If this boundary extends into an already existing Chapter area, then a letter from the existing Chapter must be submitted, indicating that it concedes the area to the petitioning Chapter. If the existing Chapter does not wish to concede the area, then a letter must be submitted clearly stating that an agreement has been reached in which the area in question will be mutually served by both Chapters or be served by only the existing Chapter.
- B. A letter must be submitted from the local Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service County Agent and/or a local Texas Parks and Wildlife Department employee (of any division) demonstrating their acknowledgement of having been contacted to determine their interest in the development of a local Chapter. The letter should state that a Texas Master Naturalist Chapter would be viable in the area and that they will support the Chapter as an Advisor(s). It is preferred that there is at least one representative from both of these partnership agencies contacted and to be involved in the development process, however, it is understood that in some cases both are not always available.
- C. The petition must provide a list of Chapter goals and the goals of any local agencies or organizations in which the Chapter intends to form partnerships with and any timelines for partnership action. Partnerships within the Texas Master Naturalist Program are important and have proven to be the keystone to the successful development of a Chapter; they are strongly encouraged.
- D. Attach at least five (5) completed Local Coordinating Committee Commitment forms (See Appendix I) for each participating member who will serve as the Chapter's Local Coordinating Committee. At least two of these members must be willing, able, and identified as such, to attend a Local Chapter Coordinator's training program hosted by the Texas Master Naturalist Program and its State Program Coordinators. These committee members must be selected carefully for they will be the nucleus and driving force behind the establishment of the new Chapter.
- E. From your Local Coordinating Committee members, list your Committee Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer who will serve during this phase of your Chapter development.
- F. State the name by which the Chapter will be officially recognized. Include the Chapter's chosen logo from the list of available Texas Master Naturalist drawings as described in the Texas Master Naturalist Marketing and Identity Guide under 'Graphic Design Guidelines' (publication MKT-3342) or as found on the Texas Master Naturalist website at <http://txmn.org>.

Phase II - Initial Training Development

- A. After the State Program Coordinators have given written notification to the petitioning Chapter of its Phase I approval (see Phase I, D) the second phase of the

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chartering process may proceed. This process will begin to form the Chapter member training curriculum for the new Chapter.

- B. The petitioning Chapter must submit its training curriculum and anticipated training agenda for review and approval by the State Program Coordinators. This curriculum must contain a minimum of 40 hours of Texas Master Naturalist training as specified by Article II, Program, B. Curriculum Development, Ref. Chapter Management and Operations Protocols. The curriculum must address the core topics specified and include field based training for hands on learning.
- C. A petitioning Chapter may not convene their initial Texas Master Naturalist training until its training agenda has been reviewed and fully approved by the State Program Coordinators, and, it has received written approval from the Texas Master Naturalist Program Office.
- D. A petitioning Chapter must also submit, in general, a preliminary list of possible/anticipated volunteer opportunities in the local area. This list should also include possible/anticipated natural resource related volunteer service opportunities with the partnering local agencies and organizations. There should be at least one project in every county the Chapter has named as its service area. For a single county service area, the Chapter should have projects located in multiple areas of the county.
- E. The preceding requirements must be submitted to the State Program Coordinators for review and written approval. The State Program Coordinators may make suggestions or additions to the petitioning Chapter's submission. In this case, the State Program Coordinators may recommend that the petitioning Chapter amend portions of its training curriculum and anticipated training agenda and resubmit for further written approval.

Phase III - Official Status Criteria

The petitioning Chapter will have official, fully chartered status, when the following final criteria have been met, submitted to, and approved (in writing) by the State Program Coordinators:

- A. When a minimum of ten (10) members have completed the initial 40-hour training course. (A list of names with contact information must be submitted to the State Program Office and up to date in the TMN Volunteer Management System (VMS).)
- B. When the petitioning Chapter has adopted the Chapter Bylaws. (Electronic copies of both the Chapter Bylaws and the Chapter Contact Form must be provided to the State Program Office.)
- C. When the petitioning Chapter has elected a slate of Officers according to the Chapter Bylaws.

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- D. When the petitioning Chapter provides the State Program Office with its primary Chapter mailing address, the name, contact information, and position of all Chapter Officers, committee chairs, and Advisor(s). The Chapter Contact Information Form may be found in Appendix IV. This contact information must also be updated in the TMN Volunteer Management System.
- E. The State Program Office must have received the information requested in Phase II, A-D. The Program Office will then review all materials and submit a recommendation to the State Program Coordinators for approval. Upon review, the petitioning Chapter will be notified via letter with (A), their Chapter Charter Certificate for their acknowledgement as an 'official' Texas Master Naturalist Chapter or (B), attach further recommendations by the State Program Coordinators for the petitioning Chapter's review and amendment. The date on which the approved Chapter Charter notification is written and has been received by the petitioning Chapter, is the 'official' acknowledgement of the new fully developed Texas Master Naturalist Chapter.

Phase IV - New Chapter Document Development

New Chapters should follow a three step document adoption process. 1) Send the draft of the Chapter Bylaws to the State Office for approval. 2) Once approval has been obtained, send the drafts of the Chapter Bylaws and Chapter Operating Handbook to all Chapter Members at least thirty (30) days prior to consideration by the membership. 3) At a general membership meeting, the members present must approve both the Chapter Bylaws and Chapter Operating Handbook by a two-thirds vote of those members present.

A. Chapter Bylaws

- 1) The governing documents for a Chapter are the Chapter Bylaws, Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, and the Chapter Operating Handbook (COH). It is extremely important that each template and document be read and thoroughly understood before development of a specific Chapter document is initiated. If questions arise, contact the TMN Program Office for clarification. It is required that the Bylaws Template be amended, following only the options of Paragraph 2 below as the Chapter Bylaws and be submitted for approval by the State Program Coordinators before development of the Chapter Operating Handbook is started. There is no Chapter-specific language in the Chapter Management and Operations Protocols and therefore that document is to be used as posted on the State TMN website.
- 2) Review the Bylaws template. The Chapter Bylaws are required to be uniform across all Chapters. Chapter Bylaws are to be adopted verbatim, with only the term of Officers and Directors (Bylaws, Article V, G.) to be decided by the Local Coordinating Committee, using the template on the State website at:

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<http://txmn.org/chapterdocuments/>. The Committee should also decide if it wants to exercise the option to adopt the Addendum for 501 (c) (3) Chapters in its Bylaws. This addendum provides conflict of interest policy requirements to protect the Chapter. It is especially useful if the Chapter intends to obtain a tax-exemption for its donors.

B. Chapter Management and Operations Protocols

Review the State Chapter Management and Operations Protocols. Become familiar with the contents of this document as it provides the foundation for the development, management and operation of Chapters. The Chapter Management and Operations Protocols contain only information describing the business functions of all the Texas Master Naturalist Chapters and do not contain any Chapter specific language or information.

Again, there is no Chapter specific language in the Chapter Management and Operations Protocols and therefore this document is to be used as posted on the State TMN website.

C. The Chapter Operating Handbook

- 1) Review the Chapter Operating Handbook Template. The template is flexible and may be modified as appropriate for each Chapter. This template contains language that is a consolidation of the best practices of existing Chapters. While the organizational structure may be changed to meet the individual needs of each Chapter, the responsibilities, roles and tasks have been found to be essential for effective Chapter design and operation. Hence the template may be molded and modified as needed to meet each Chapter's unique local administrative and organizational needs but the functions and tasks will need to be included in some form or manner. The language of this document must be consistent with the Chapter Bylaws and Chapter Management and Operations Protocols.
- 2) While prior State Program Coordinators approval of the Chapter Operating Handbook is not required, electronic copies of the Chapter Operating Handbook should be sent to the State Program Coordinators once approved by the local Chapter membership and presented again after any additional changes are made in the future.

D. The Texas Master Naturalist Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct

Review the Texas Master Naturalist Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct found in Appendix II and III, as these documents establish the values and principles upon which the Texas Master Naturalist Program is founded and will provide clarification when questions arise about behavior and intentions of the Program and its Members. Each Member must abide by the Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct.

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E. Texas Master Naturalist Annual Chapter Report

Following the completion of each calendar year, the Chapter is required to file an Annual Chapter Report with the State Office, before the end of January detailing the prior year's activities. For details of this procedure, Reference: <http://txmn.org/chapterdocuments/> Chapter Forms. The deadline for the Chapter's annual report is generally January 15th, of each year.

III. Dissolution of a Chapter

Just as there are procedures for the development of a New Chapter, there are procedures for the dissolution of a Chapter under several circumstances. (Reference: State Bylaws, Article XI, Dissolution)

Appendix I

Local Coordinating Committee Commitment

The Local Coordinating Committee is the driving force behind the creation of a Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist Program. The Committee members are the people who ensure that the petitioning group completes all the requirements to become 'Chartered' as an official Chapter. The work is challenging and the reward is the gratification of your respective community.

As a member of the Local Coordinating Committee, I understand that:

_____ I must complete all the requirements of a committee member as outlined in the
(Initials) Roadmap for New Chapter Establishment within the Texas Master Naturalist Program.

_____ I must make a greater than normal commitment of time and talent to insure the successful
(Initials) achievement of our group becoming a 'Chartered' Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist Program.

_____ As a Committee member, I will follow the Roadmap for New Chapter Establishment
(Initials) within the Texas Master Naturalist Program.

_____ I agree to seek and accept the guidance and support needed to complete the requirements of
(Initials) developing a new Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalist Program.

_____ I agree to faithfully fulfill my obligation as a committee Member of the Local
(Initials) Coordinating Committee

_____ I agree to present a positive public image that speaks well of the Texas Master Naturalist
(Initials) Program and its statewide sponsors of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department.

_____ I agree to actively participate as a team member with other individuals of the Texas Master
(Initials) Naturalist Program.

_____ I understand that in consideration of being accepted as a participant in the Texas Master
(Initials) Naturalist™ Volunteer Program ("Program") sponsored by the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, I hereby release, discharge, and agree to hold harmless the Program and its sponsoring State agencies, their agents, employees, officers and successors, from and against all liability, claims demands, and judgments which the undersigned, may have, or which my heirs, executors, administrators or assigns may have or claim to have against the Program and sponsoring State agencies, their successors, employees, or officers for all personal injuries (including death), known and unknown or damage to property caused by or arising out of activities performed under the Texas Master Naturalist Program.

Appendix I

Local Coordinating Committee Commitment

_____ Yes, I will be able to comply with the requirements listed above.
(Initials)

_____ No, I cannot comply with the above policies and understand that I cannot be accepted nor
(Initials) 'Certified' as a Texas Master Naturalist and/or a Local Coordinating Committee Member.

_____ **I am willing and able to attend a Local Chapter Coordinator's training program.**
(Initials)

Coordinating Committee Member Pledge:

I understand and agree to uphold the above statements of the Texas Master Naturalist™ Program:

Signature _____ Date _____

Name (please print) _____

Organization/Chapter Affiliation _____

Mailing Address 1 _____

Mailing Address 2 _____

City _____ State TX Zip Code _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone _____

Email Address _____

Petitioning Chapter: _____

Appendix II

Texas Master Naturalist - Code of Ethics

Each member, in striving to meet the mission, goals and objectives of the Texas Master Naturalist Program, pledges to:

1. Subscribe to the highest standards of integrity and conduct.
2. Promote and support the statewide and local Texas Master Naturalist Program.
3. Respect the state sponsors of Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, their roles and expectations.
4. Disseminate information to promote understanding of, and appreciation for, the values of our natural resources.
5. Strive to increase knowledge and skills to advance as a Texas Master Naturalist volunteer.
6. Promote competence as a Texas Master Naturalist volunteer by supporting high standards of education, service and performance.
7. Encourage the use of sound biological information in education and outreach and in management decisions.
8. Support fair and uniform standards of service and treatment of those engaged in the Texas Master Naturalist Program.
9. Know and follow established Texas Master Naturalist Program protocols and policies.
10. Abide by the local Texas Master Naturalist Chapter Bylaws.
11. Avoid use of the Texas Master Naturalist title, logos and trademarks for personal endeavors and/or profit.
12. Act as trustworthy and ethical stewards of the environment.
13. Never inappropriately disturb or harass wildlife. Never inappropriately remove anything from its natural state or area.

Appendix III

Texas Master Naturalist – Standards of Conduct

Texas Master Naturalist Program volunteers shall at all times:

1. Uphold the Commitment made to the Program and the required volunteer and advanced training hours required by the Texas Master Naturalist Program and the Local Chapter.
2. Uphold the dignity and integrity of the Texas Master Naturalist Program. Volunteers shall endeavor to avoid even the suspicion of dishonesty, fraud, deceit, misrepresentation, or unprofessional demeanor.
3. Conduct themselves appropriately to context and setting at all times.
4. Be considerate and respect other's points of view.
5. Keep accurate records of volunteer service, training and research, and monthly (at a minimum) report these records to your local Chapter.
6. Avoid performing service when such service is judged to be contrary to the Code of Ethics or detrimental to the well-being of the Texas Master Naturalist Program and its sponsors, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.
7. Provide maximum possible effort in the best interest of each client and/or volunteer project.
8. Be mindful of their responsibility to society and the Texas Master Naturalist Program.
9. Studiously avoid discrimination in any form, or the abuse of Texas Master Naturalist Program authority, Certification, or Membership for personal satisfaction. Advocacy, lobbying or promoting political issues while performing as a TMN volunteer is strictly prohibited.
10. Cooperate fully with professionals and other Master Naturalist volunteers in the best interest of our natural resources.
11. Refrain from advertising in a self-laudatory manner, beyond statements intended to inform prospective clients or members of qualifications, or in a manner detrimental to the Texas Master Naturalist Program and its volunteers.
12. Avoid all use of alcohol and controlled substances while on duty as a Texas Master Naturalist volunteer. Reporting for service while under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance will result in termination from volunteer service.
13. Accept responsibility for decisions made and actions taken based on these decisions.

