

**Hays County Chapter
Texas Master Naturalist
Board Meeting February 16, 2006
White Wings Ranch**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 by President Tom Watson.

Membership Committee – no report

Training Committee

All dates and speakers are confirmed for the new class. The list of trainees is closed and has been delivered to Dixie Camp who will assign mentors. Task details are under control. The budget is a break-even budget. The only outstanding issue is some missing supplies at the Extension office.

To facilitate use of the White Wings Ranch space, handouts will be distributed at each trainee chair. Training will be in the smaller of the two rooms. Registration with Kay Beth Williams will be conducted outside the training room. According to Extension office staff, the projector is not available to the training class. Tom said he thought our negotiations with White Wings included use of a projector for a small fee to cover the bulb cost, per original negotiations through Jamie. Walt said the microphone is either stored with the old video camera or in Bryan's office.

Nancy will call Bryan to resolve outstanding issues.

Treasurer's Report

Winifred Simon distributed a balance statement for last year's expenses and reported on dues history. Forty people have paid dues for 2006. More are expected. In 2005, 42 people paid dues and in 2004, 45 people paid. Chapter expenses are normally low. Last year's costs included the unusual cost of printing of the bird list. Expenses from last year totaled \$261.85. Current balance is \$2,496.10. The cost of printing the newsletter has usually been shared by the class and the chapter. Hard copies are mailed only to dues paying members who do not have computer access.

Winifred will ask that class reimbursement requests continue to be approved by the Training Chair or the Food Chair.

The chapter meeting held February 9 generated a bill for \$38.85 in supplies and \$166.67. The chapter will cover the difference.

Secretary

Susan reported on the e-mail test which identified 56 respondents out of a list of 161 names. This number continues to evolve. The group discussed follow-up options with non-responders and rejected addresses. Susan will collaborate with Dixie Camp, Telephone chair and Judy Telford, Membership, to double-check lists and make a follow-up plan.

Programming

Dale Shively reported on his survey results requesting input on possible speakers and topics for chapter meetings. Just over half of attendees completed a survey. The # 1 topic of interest was birds, followed by butterflies. Hummingbirds/owls was rated #3, while water issues were #4. For field trips, the #1 topic of interest was tree identification, followed by grass identification, possibly at the Onion Creek project. The third popular topic was Bracken Cave and bat tour, followed by Cibolo Park (prairie management) and Government State Park. Kerr Wildlife Area wasn't as popular as Dale had

anticipated. Data showed how well responders liked topics. Walt suggested a combination of grasses and aquifer structure.

On the topic of volunteer hour opportunities, San Marcos Visitors Center was of the least interest. The #1 choice was to hold a joint work day with the Austin chapter. A number of respondents said "we have enough work days." Adopt-A-Highway was rated #3 out of four choices offered. In spite of beneficial PR value, highway trash pickup is not an acceptable project under state MN guidelines.

Dale will create a summary to begin setting up some specific events. Judy Telford suggested that Dennis Jones, a Texas Parks and Wildlife speaker named who appears in 1840 Texian costume and talks about the natural and human state history, might be a good graduation speaker to which members would be invited.

The group discussed how many events to plan for the year, noting that the chapter must provide a minimum of six activities a year. The Board concluded that the goal be to provide six chapter meetings and additional outdoor events to approach a total of 12 events a year. The Board empowered Dale to move forward with planning an event for late March or early April. Chapter meetings with programs and social time will be held at locations of interest and will generally alternate with field trips and other learning opportunities. Tom hopes to add up to 3 work days within this schedule.

The Board will conduct one more monthly meeting and then schedule meetings every two months unless otherwise indicated. The largest remaining task for this year is to finalize programming and plan publicity. Beyond that most business can be handled by e-mail. The completed calendar will be distributed early so members can plan to attend.

Events will be scheduled around the class schedule. Chapter meetings and workshops will provide advanced training hours. Work days will provide volunteer opportunities.

Current list includes:

February	Chapter meeting, Jacobs Well
November	Election of officers
December	Christmas party

Ideas included Bamburger Ranch, West Cave, Hamilton Pool, Reimer Ranch, fish hatchery, Texas Trail Tamers. Tom will set up a work day at Onion Creek within 4-6 weeks. He and Dale will coordinate dates.

President's Report

Tom has been working with Jane Little, Cara Wernli, Betty Watkins and Karen Hayward on outreach. Jane and Cara are developing a program to present to the school district for use at the elementary school level.

Dixie Camp has volunteered to be telephone committee chair and is identifying volunteers to help.

Tom, Judy Finley, Marion Couvillion, Betty Finley, and Minnette Marr have been revising the guidelines for advanced training and volunteer hours. (The state agency has volunteer guidelines but none exist for advanced training.)

Tom is trying to get a Land Management Assistance program going. In this project, a group of highly trained, certified master naturalists conduct site visits as Bryan currently does. Calls to the Extension office would be referred to this MN group. The service would be advertised to real estate agents, etc. The Hill Country Chapter completed 52 site visits last year, providing good outreach efforts. This activity, which originated with the Hays County chapter, should be carefully controlled would probably involve additional training for the volunteer corps who do this service. They should also practice before implementing site visits.

Old Business

The chapter meeting at Jacobs well was deemed a great success.

New Business

Walt announced three upcoming meeting opportunities.

1. Feb 25- Regional MN meeting sponsored by state organization. The intent is to update those running local chapters on the state organization and provide networking. Great for board members.

2. March 11 – Volunteer Reps Council, Ding Dong Texas, near Fort Hood.

The chapter's one open board position is "Volunteer Representative." All chapters have one. This group forms the Volunteer Reps Council. This council advises state leadership about various issues. Walt will attend in his current capacity and report back.

3. March 1-2 , Retreat. The state agency is now 7-8 years old and has passed the early growth stage of development. This meeting will reevaluate governance issues for the more mature organization. Some chapters now have questions about who is appropriate to make decisions affecting all chapters .Questions about governance can be directed to Walt.

Internal Communications

Improving communication may improve retention of members. Tom noted: 1) announcements from the chapter do not reach all members; 2) announcements should go out to trainees as well; 3) we currently have duplication of message delivery. Class representatives have been sending messages as well as the chapter secretary. Tom proposed that all chapter announcements come from the chapter secretary, and all training announcements that pertain only to trainees should come through the Training Committee.

Information about all other activities from other organizations needs to flow in to a designated person, the secretary Susan Nenney, who will check with Tom about send-outs.

Events late to newsletter will have to be sent out through e-mail. It was agreed to use live links and short notes to accommodate dial up and spam difficulties. It was also suggested that a web site banner announce the next chapter meeting or activity.

Measuring Success

The Board discussed the definition of retention and active membership in relation to the interrelated goals of retention, increased outreach and increased volunteer hours.

For evaluation purposes, active membership includes members who pay dues or volunteer any time. Attendance records will be compared as part of evaluation of progress. The board discussed the value of face-to-face and one-on-one contact in membership retention, including a buddy system and offers to carpool to events, creating a culture in which members initiate contact with others.

Membership recognition

Tom proposed the development of a chapter recognition system for outstanding volunteer contributions. Numerous possibilities were discussed. A committee will make suggestions.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned about 9:30.