



# Texas Master Naturalist™ Program

Chapter Management Guidelines

Revised November, 2012

*Please appropriately discard of all previous versions.*

*This document is intended to serve as preliminary guidelines for initiating, developing and managing a local Texas Master Naturalist Chapter.*

**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.

**Sponsorship.** At the state level, the Texas Master Naturalist program is sponsored jointly by *Texas A&M AgriLife Extension* and the *Texas Parks & Wildlife Department* (TPWD). Partnerships at the local level are encouraged and might include other public agencies, as well as private organizations whose interests are within the boundaries of the program. At the state level, the Texas Master Naturalist program is supported financially by TPWD and the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service along with occasional grants from other outside sources when available.

## Objectives

1. Improve public understanding of natural resource ecology and management by developing a pool of local knowledge about natural resource ecology that can be used to enhance education efforts within local communities.
2. Enhance existing natural resources education and outreach activities by providing natural resources training at the local level, thereby developing a supply of dedicated and informed volunteers.
3. Develop a Texas Master Naturalist volunteer network that can be self-sufficient.

## Program

The Texas Master Naturalist program exists as a collection of local programs that adhere to a set of objectives, procedures, and minimum requirements set at the state level. The program, at the state level, is guided by a Statewide Committee made up of Certified Texas Master Naturalist Volunteers, as well as statewide sponsor representatives from TPWD and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. The state committee sets the minimum standards and curriculum requirements, as well as reviews and approves each local chapter's development and curriculum.

Texas Master Naturalist volunteers are trained and certified at the local level through their respective chapters. When feasible, each local chapter should have at least local coordinating committee participation by local AgriLife Extension and/or TPWD personnel – these individuals form the administrative connection to the statewide coordinators for their respective agencies.

It is important for Texas Master Naturalist chapters to capitalize on local resources and expertise through partnerships. Representatives of these local partners may serve on a planning committee. This committee may include natural resources personnel, the leaders of local natural resources groups, interested landowners, and other interested individuals. When chapters are in their early stages (i.e., during the planning of their first training sessions) the local planning committee may be led by TPWD

and/or AgriLife Extension personnel or in some cases, a volunteer or other organization. As a chapter matures, trained Texas Master Naturalist volunteers should assume a larger role in the administration of the program. Once the chapter has attained a trained cadre of volunteers these volunteers should take on larger roles in the coordination of the chapter by developing and maintaining a Chapter Board and committee chairs. At this time, the original local chapter steering committee begins serving in an advisory capacity to the Chapter and its Board. (Appendix I lists guidelines for these advisors).

Because Texas has such a diversity of climate, population and land types, the natural resources (and their uses) in each area of the state are unique. Therefore, each local chapter should consider customizing their training program to focus on their local ecosystems. When planning the training schedule, the local coordinating committee should try to use expertise from local universities, nature centers, and research centers, as well as local landowners and managers. The local coordinators should plan and facilitate the training sessions so that class and field sessions adequately cover the following suggested categories of topics:

- **Roles, responsibilities, and benefits of being a Texas Master Naturalist.**  
Trainees should understand the purpose and mission of the program – and they should commit to participate as a volunteer. This should be briefly discussed during the first meeting of the class; the mission of the program should be continually reinforced throughout subsequent training sessions. It shall also be the responsibility of the chapter training coordinators or other appropriate chapter representatives of informing and enforcing appropriate Chapter Management Guidelines to the new Texas Master Naturalist trainees of each class.
- **Historical perspectives of naturalists in Texas and elsewhere.**  
Naturalists were frontiersmen, pioneers, observers, interpreters, and teachers. They were important in the history of our state. Master Naturalist training should include programs designed to create an appreciation for the role that these early naturalists played in Texas and US history. Because many of the early naturalists kept accurate records of what they observed, this study can provide an interesting way for people to realize the changes in our landscapes over time. Also, studying those early “master naturalists” creates a sense of appreciation that goes along with the title of Texas Master Naturalist.
- **Traditional disciplines of a naturalist.**  
The original naturalists were *botanists, entomologists, ornithologists, mammalogists, herpetologists, paleontologists, and geologists*. Professionals within these disciplines are available at universities, nature centers, and research centers. These natural scientists are generally eager to share their disciplines and may be excellent teachers. An effective way to incorporate these disciplines into training session is in a field trip situation. Inviting natural scientists along as “Master Naturalist faculty” on field sessions is an effective way for Master Naturalists to be exposed to these disciplines first hand. Many of those enrolled in Master Naturalist training may also have some formal training in these disciplines.
- **Ecological concepts.**  
Ecological concepts may be discussed in a classroom situation – but when combined with case studies and/or field demonstrations, these concepts take on more relevant meaning. Texas Master Naturalists should come away from their training sessions with an accurate baseline

understanding of what is meant by some of the ecological concepts and ideas that need to be understood in order to manage natural resources. These include the functional definitions of *ecosystems, landscapes, communities, species assemblages, and populations*. They should be exposed to concepts of *biodiversity and species diversity*. Training sessions should expose the dynamics of natural systems – including *succession; natural and human disturbances; recovery and restoration*.

- **Eco-regions of Texas.**

Texas Master Naturalists should be trained to understand the basic differences among the various eco-regions of the state. In addition, they should be trained to understand the unique character and interactions among the *geology, climate, water, soils, flora, fauna, and major land uses* in their local eco-region.

- **Management of natural systems.**

Texas Master Naturalists should be exposed to the management of natural systems, including *forest ecology & management, rangeland ecology & management, wetland ecology & management, urban ecology & management, and aquatic ecology & management*. These applied fields are each represented by natural resource professionals with the qualifications to lead these sessions. Because not all parts of the state have land types suitable for these managed systems, training sessions should focus on those managed systems that are a dominant feature in the local area.

- **Interpretation and communications.**

The Master Naturalists you are training will represent your efforts to the public. Through their training they should be given an opportunity to develop presentation skills and active learning techniques. The Texas Master Naturalist chapter should function as a reservoir of teaching resources and materials for use by chapter members. The availability and effective use of these resources should be reviewed as part of the initial training.

There is no one best way for you to conduct these training sessions. In fact, you should experiment. One of the advantages of having a statewide network of Texas Master Naturalist organizations is to provide a proving ground for finding out what works best.

## **Requirements**

The *minimum* training requirements include 40 hours of combined classroom and field experiences. These educational sessions should be designed to expose volunteers to a wide variety of natural resources disciplines, providing them with a high-quality learning experience. The sessions should be designed not only to teach the volunteers, but also to provide them with access to the resources that they need in order to teach this information to others in an interesting, useful and meaningful way.

To become a Certified Texas Master Naturalist, a trainee must complete the following:

- The state committee approved curriculum with a *minimum* of 40 hours of combined field and classroom instruction.
- Obtain a *minimum* of 8 contact hours of approved advanced training.
- Complete a *minimum* of 40 hours of approved volunteer service.

Volunteers have a maximum of 15 months in their first year to complete the above requirements to receive their first Certification as a Master Naturalist.

To retain the Texas Master Naturalist™ title during each subsequent year, volunteers must complete a minimum of 8 hours of advanced training per year and provide a minimum of 40 hours of volunteer service per year coordinated through their local chapter. In general, the first year begins once the volunteer has completed the initial training. Local chapters may require more training, volunteer service and/or advanced training.

A chapter may allow participants to begin earning volunteer service hours once they begin the Texas Master Naturalist training. Once the volunteer has completed all the requirements they shall receive a state certificate (MKT- 3338) and color dragonfly pin as a Certified Texas Master Naturalist. At this time, volunteers are also eligible to receive Texas Master Naturalist business cards (MKT-3341) and name tags. A Nametag template has been set up. These are available through Crackerjack Engravers at 1-800-613-7172. Nametags will run between \$4.00 and \$6.00 each.

### **Class attendance**

*In anticipating the need to set standards for maintaining class attendance, the State Advisory Committee has set the following policy:* Each chapter may set a local standard for the maximum number of classes that may be missed during a given training cycle. Chapters are encouraged to keep this standard to a minimum. However, regardless of the number of classes that can be missed, a participant must make up the class(es) by attending the appropriate class(es) within 12 months. Appropriate means the chapter can allow an advanced training class to count as make-up or the chapter may require that it be the same subject class presented during the next training cycle. If an advanced training class is used as make-up, then for that individual, it does not also count as advanced training. In this case the class must account for only one type of training --initial training OR advanced training. A participant may also attend the same subject class of a neighboring chapter within the same ecoregion given adequate prior notification and space availability of the neighboring chapter. If a participant must miss more classes than the local standard allows then the respective chapter may consider an exception to their rule in special circumstances, such as medical problems, family illness, accidents, etc. However this should be the exception not the rule. Until these classes are made up, a volunteer cannot become a Certified Texas Master Naturalist, but may earn volunteer service hours or advanced training hours towards certification. Upon completion of an approved Texas Master Naturalist program training, it is recommended that the volunteer receive a Texas Master Naturalist (“in training”) nametag. Upon completion of all the requirements within the first year, a Texas Master Naturalist volunteer becomes certified and is awarded a state certificate.

### **Advanced Training Requirements**

The purpose of advanced training is to provide Texas Master Naturalists an opportunity to focus their interests on one, or a few, specific topics that interest them. Also, advanced training on an annual basis promotes continued learning and development. Advanced training is a benefit in itself, providing the experienced Master Naturalist with tools to work in more advanced volunteer efforts. Although the State Texas Master Naturalist program may occasionally provide statewide or regional advanced training opportunities, it is generally the responsibility of the chapter to insure that there are sufficient advanced training opportunities offered so that members can attain their 8-hour minimum

requirement. In addition, the local chapter should be a clearinghouse for notifying members of approved advanced training opportunities that exist outside the chapter boundaries.

Advanced training courses may be made available directly through the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, TPWD, or any number of short-courses provided by universities or nature centers. One way for a chapter's trainees to meet their advanced training requirements is by actually sponsoring the advanced training sessions. The chapter's Local Coordinating Committee, Advanced Training Committee or equivalent must pre-approve all advanced training opportunities before the volunteer attends. Educational television shows are not a form of advanced training and therefore should not be approved as such. Advanced training hours are also counted one hour for each hour of advanced training, however travel time is not included for advanced training hours. Pre-approval must be obtained for an advanced training session that is outside the chapter boundaries.

Chapter Coordinators and/or the Chapter Advanced Training Committee should use the following criteria or ask the following questions of the opportunity when reviewing and approving Advanced Training Opportunities:

Does the Advanced Training opportunity:

- 1. Promote continued learning and development of naturalist skills?**
- 2. Provide Master Naturalists with knowledge and skills to work in volunteer efforts?**
3. Direct trained volunteers toward specific programs in need of their services?
4. Provide practical information and training for application in volunteer efforts?
5. Take advantage of local partnerships?
- 6. Provide Master Naturalists an opportunity to focus their interests in one or a few specific topics?**
- 7. Build on the core curriculum initially provided by the local chapter?**
- 8. Provide natural resource management issues and information applicable to Texas?**

Advanced Training opportunities must meet the following criteria: 1, 2, 6, 7, and 8. It is suggested that the remaining criteria also be a part of the opportunity.

### **Volunteer Service Requirements and Guidelines**

In order to attain certification, a Texas Master Naturalist trainee must complete a minimum of 40 volunteer service hours on pre-approved projects within one year of the initial training series. In order to retain the title of Certified Texas Master Naturalist, a volunteer must complete another 40 service hours on pre-approved projects in every subsequent year. Volunteer service hours are those direct contact hours spent on Texas Master Naturalist projects approved by the local chapter. (Thus, volunteer hours credited for the TMN program may not be credited from or to another Master Volunteer or other volunteer program). Sometimes travel and prep time for specific projects may be counted as service time as determined by the local chapter. Service activities relating to the development and management of a local chapter, such as serving as a board member, should receive volunteer service credit hours.

Volunteer service project opportunities can be presented by various different identities ranging from the state program sponsors, the chapter, local chapter partners, an individual volunteer, other agencies such as city, county, state and federal agencies and even nature centers and schools. Several chapters

have even successfully instituted a “class project” where the current training class of the chapter finds/develops and mutually agrees to volunteer for the project as a group and receive their required volunteer service hours at the same time.

Volunteer projects may be a series of short experiences such as serving on a speaker’s bureau – or they may involve the long-term efforts of an entire volunteer team from just one or even several chapters. Either way, for a master volunteer, the opportunity to do meaningful and interesting work is the reward. Texas Master Naturalist volunteers will vary in their abilities and interests. Some will want volunteer opportunities to be presented to them by the local chapter and state program sponsors and partners, while others will see a need and want to design their own project. There are few constraints, except that volunteer service must meet the program mission by being dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities.

All volunteer service projects must be pre-approved, ideally, through a local committee process, as this can often be an arduous job that should not be left to just one person. The pre-approval of volunteer service projects and opportunities is important to:

- Ensure that volunteers are covered by the program insurance available
- Provide a list of service projects for volunteers of the chapter
- Ensure the goals of the organization and the partners are met
- Avoid assumptions

Chapter leaders will be confronted with numerous service projects and opportunities to approve. Below are some points to consider as a chapter Volunteer Service Committee pre-approving individual service projects.

- A. Is the proposed service project representative of the goals, practices and teachings of the Texas Master Naturalist Program?
- B. How does the project address a pressing naturalist, natural resource management, chapter and/or partner need for meaningful service or resources?
- C. What is the scope of the project in terms of when it would need to be conducted, where, estimated time needed to complete or maintain per month, how many volunteers would be needed, etc.?
- D. Is the project within the Chapter’s service area and ecological training?
- E. How does the project allow the chapter to focus and/or create visibility, identity and/or recruitment for the chapter?
- F. How can the project’s impact on the community and our natural resources be measured?

**Actual Volunteer Service Examples:**

<b>Bad/Unacceptable</b>	<b>Better</b>	<b>Best</b>
Being “on call” as a wildlife rescuer for a non-partner organization	Actually performing a wildlife rescue event for a partnering organization of the local chapter	
Planting exotic plants at a local school	Planting native plants or a Wildscape at a local school	Leading 5 <sup>th</sup> graders and staff in implementing a native plant garden/Wildscape at a local school

Monarch monitoring in Colorado	Monarch monitoring in Texas	Monarch monitoring within your local chapter's area
Cleaning the elephant cage at a zoo	Caring for the Prairie Chicken area at a local zoo that is in partnership with the local chapter	Leading interpretive programs about Prairie Chickens at a local zoo that is in partnership with the local chapter
Maintenance at a private native plant nursery	Maintenance of a demonstration garden at a park/nature center or being part of a native plant propagation team for the city's botanical garden	Holding a workshop on how to install and maintain a wildscape or other similar type of native habitat.
Conducting wildlife management activities on your own land	Conducting wildlife management practices/activities on public land	Teaching/assisting landowners to develop their own wildlife management plans that the landowner would carry out
A teacher receiving service credit for natural resource education activities he/she conducts in their classroom	A teacher receiving service credit for natural resource education activities he/she conducts as an unpaid after school Environmental Club leader	A teacher /volunteer who organizes and conducts a natural resource education workshop for other Master Naturalists or the general public.
Stream clean-up by a volunteer who works for a local watershed protection program	Stream clean-up by volunteers who do not work for a local watershed protection program	Master Naturalist Volunteers conducting stream or watershed restoration practices. Or Master Naturalist volunteers coordinating a stream clean-up for the local community to participate in.
Receiving service credit for time spent serving as a Board or Committee member for another natural resource/environmental organization NOT in partnership with your local Texas Master Naturalist Chapter.	Receiving up to a set limit of service credit (e.g. 10 hours per year as set by your local chapter) for serving as a Board or Committee member for another natural resource/environmental organization that is ALSO a partner with your local chapter, providing the chapter with resources such as meeting space at little or no cost.	Receiving service credit for time spent serving as a Board or Committee member for a natural resource/environmental organization in partnership with your local chapter and because the organization invited you to serve and represent your local Master Naturalist Chapter in this capacity.
	Conducting endangered species surveys; developing nature trails or habitat brush piles at a local park/nature center which is in a partnership with your local chapter.	Maintaining a nature classroom/training area for that same partner who also allows the chapter to keep an office and/or hold chapter meetings in this same space.

A trained volunteer, no matter how little or how much volunteer service they are providing the chapter within a given year is always considered a Master Naturalist volunteer. Master Naturalist volunteers in any given year are either "Certified" or working towards certification for that given year.

Unanticipated situations, i.e. family illness, medical procedures, accidents, etc., that will prevent a member from attaining the required 40 hours of volunteer service can be addressed in an appropriate manner by the Chapter's Executive board.

### **Certification**

A volunteer shall be presented with a Texas Master Naturalist certificate and a color dragonfly pin when that volunteer has completed all of the required 40 hours of Texas Master Naturalist training; the minimum 40 hours of service; and the minimum 8 hours of advanced training. Each of the above requirements must be completed within the first year of that volunteer's involvement in the Texas Master Naturalist program. Volunteers can begin accumulating service and Advanced Training time on chapter approved events the first day of their first class. In Chapters training in small blocks of time, such as once a week for 12 weeks straight, the volunteers' year (12 months) to obtain the 40 hours of service begins the day of their last class. However, volunteers are encouraged to begin service and training at the same time thus giving them a maximum of 15 months to complete their service and Advanced Training requirements. Many volunteers like and exceed a challenge to finish their volunteer service before their training is complete. In Chapters training over the course of a year (e.g. once a month over the course of a year), the volunteer has a maximum of 15 months from the first day of their first class to complete their 40-hour service requirement. In both cases, volunteers are receiving the opportunity to complete their service requirement over a 15-month time span. Members should only receive the dragonfly Certification pin once during their involvement in the Master Naturalist program.

### **Special "Double Certification" in the first Year**

A volunteer in their first year of the program may be presented with their first Initial Certification (as indicated above) AND the current year's Annual Re-Certification pin if they complete an additional 40 hours of service and 8 hours of Advanced Training within the current calendar year. A Texas Master Naturalist in training, in this case would need to complete a total of at least 80 hours of service and 16 hours of Advanced Training within the year to obtain both their First Certification AND the Annual re-certification pin available that year. Many chapters have used this opportunity as a challenge to their new trainees and many in each chapter have achieved this challenge in their first few months in the program.

### **Annual Re-Certification Pins**

The Master Naturalist program will also have a specially designed pin for each year a certified volunteer maintains their certification by obtaining the required service and advanced training--which at the state level consists of a minimum of 40 hours of service and 8 hours of advanced training annually. There will be a new pin design each year and this design will only be available during that given calendar year. Each volunteer, given that they have attained the requirements, should only receive one of these pins during the given year. Volunteers being certified for the first time through the program will still receive their certificate and a dragonfly First Year Certification pin unless they also complete an additional 40 hours of service and 8 hours of advanced training to be "Doubly Certified" as stated above in their first year.

### **Milestone Pins**

The Master Naturalist program offers a series of pins commemorating different milestone achievements within the program. The milestone pins honor those volunteers that have given:



- 250 (bronze dragonfly pin),
- 500 (brushed silver dragonfly pin),
- 1,000 (brushed gold dragonfly pin),
- 2,500 hours (polished [shiny] silver dragonfly) and
- 5,000 hours of service (polished [shiny] gold dragonfly w/ diamond).
- 10,000 hours of service (polished [shiny] gold dragonfly w/ emerald).

These milestones are cumulative. A volunteer may reach these milestones within one year or over the course of several years. Volunteers should only receive one of each of these pins during their involvement in the program once they meet these milestones. Given these milestones, it is important that a chapter and a volunteer always report service hours above and beyond the 40-hour minimum.

### **Member Transfer**

When a member moves to a different part of the state or wishes to become active in an alternative chapter, that member may join the nearest chapter of choice. The transfer can be affected under the following conditions:

1. The transferee brings a letter from the old chapter certifying that the transferee is a member in good standing, which includes paid dues. In addition, the letter should certify the number of volunteer service hours and advanced training hours, training or Certification that have been accrued during the current year.
2. It is *strongly* recommended that a transferee complete additional training that is specific to the new area, chapter and/or ecoregion during the new chapter's next class training period.
3. The transferee must agree to adhere to all the rules and policies of the new chapter--even if they are more stringent than those of the old chapter.
4. The new chapter should accept all volunteer service and advanced training hours certified in the transfer letter from the old chapter. This includes, but is not limited to dues, volunteer service, training and advanced training requirements.

### **Membership in Multiple Chapters**

It is not permitted for Texas Master Naturalist volunteers to carry membership in multiple chapters. As an alternative, it is recommended that Master Naturalist Chapters within similar ecoregions work together to offer the same benefits a volunteer may be seeking through membership in a chapter other than the organization in which they were trained.

### **Texas Master Naturalist Title**

The title, Texas Master Naturalist™ or Master Naturalist (in Texas) is a trademark of the Master Naturalist program and is to be used **only** by individuals trained through their local recognized Master Naturalist Chapter. This membership includes all approved programs that are officially affiliated with, and operating under the certification, training, and curriculum policies established by the Texas Master Naturalist State Advisory Committee. The Texas Master Naturalist title **may not** be used for advertising or other business, personal or professional purposes. The Texas Master Naturalist program is a public service program operated by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and TPWD to provide accurate, unbiased natural resources information. The Texas Master Naturalist title **may not** be identified with any particular political viewpoint and **may not** be used by groups or individuals as they participate in political advocacy. The title is to be used **only** when doing unpaid volunteer work associated and approved by the program. When Texas Master Naturalists speak

before groups on natural resource subjects they may accept unsolicited reimbursements or gifts.  
***Violation of the policy concerning the use of the title of Texas Master Naturalist is grounds for removing the certification of a member or possible grounds for revoking the charter of a chapter.***

Administrators of the Texas Master Naturalist program, the Statewide Advisory Committee members and members of Texas A&M AgriLife and TPWD who are in a direct supporting role may show or wear the Texas Master Naturalist logo thus supporting, promoting and/or advertising the program. However, they may not promote themselves as a Master Naturalist, Texas Master Naturalist or Certified Master Naturalist unless they have completed their training and all certification requirements.

A chapter may, and is encouraged to provide shirts, nametags and other wearable items for their volunteers with the expectation that the chapter include at least a Texas Master Naturalist logo and the "Texas Master Naturalist" text with the Trade mark (™) symbol. The volunteer's name and chapter identifier text should be similar to the "Texas Master Naturalist" text (See the Texas Master Naturalist Marketing and Identity Guide, MKT-3342 for further information).

### **Policy and Procedures for the Disciplining and/or Removal of Members:**

**1. General Policy.** As a policy, in all efforts, the Texas Master Naturalist Program remains fair, objective, accurate and comprehensive. When it becomes obvious that an individual or group of individuals participating in any capacity of the program is misrepresenting the program and its written objectives, then that individual or group of individuals may be asked to step down from positions of leadership and/or participation in the program. Such a action could result in the revoking of a Texas Master Naturalist's participation, certification and/or the Chapter Charter.

**2. Background.** It is important to review the founding principles of the Texas Master Naturalist Program before addressing inappropriate behavior. The mission statement and the Texas Master Naturalist Chapter Management Guidelines contain the primary tenets of the program.

a. **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.

b. **Key Elements of the Chapter Management Guidelines** (Review Management Guidelines for further detail)

- Maintain the program as an unbiased public service.
- Recognize ones responsibilities as a Texas Master Naturalist.
- Recognize the autonomy of the various partners when coordinating or implementing projects and other chapter events.
- Keep accurate records.
- Present a positive public image that speaks well of the Texas Master Naturalist Program.
- Actively participates as a team member with other individuals of the Texas Master Naturalist Program.

Local Chapters should be instrumental in making members aware of these key elements and their own bylaws, policies and procedures. Chapters shall be vigilant and responsible for ensuring members and affiliates are following policy.

**3. Applicability.** All Volunteers, Coordinating Committee Members, Advisory Committee Members, Local Chapter Executive Board Members, Chapter Committee Chairpersons, and State Advisory Committee Members are subject to the same level of conduct.

**4. Procedures for disciplining and/or dismissal.** The subsequent procedures are to be followed on the occasion of disciplining and/or dismissing an applicable member of the Texas Master Naturalist Program.

a. **Informal Initial Step.** When any member of the Texas Master Naturalist Program and/or public thinks an infraction of the tenets, policies, written rules or guidelines of the State or Chapter has occurred, that person should confront the offending party and state what violation they think has occurred and why. This simple act with resolve or preclude most problems an organization will encounter. Not all members are fully aware of the regulations of the program and may be just acting out of ignorance and not malice. It is important for individuals and officers/boards/committees to know that their actions are being noted with regard to the other tenets of the program. If this informal approach is unsuccessful in resolving the problem then proceed to the formalized procedure.

**b. Formal Process**

(1). In order to demonstrate grounds for this action, the case must be presented in writing. If the case involves a volunteer, committee member, or committee, then the written case must be submitted to the Chapter Executive Board. If the infraction involves a Chapter Officer, Executive Board member, or a member of the Chapter Advisory/Coordinating Committee, then the written case must be submitted to the Chapter Advisory/Coordinating Committee. If the case involves the Chapter Advisory/Coordinating Committee as a group, then the written case must be submitted to the Program Coordinator. Chapter Advisory/Coordinating Committee membership consists of TPWD, Texas A&M AgriLife or other previously acknowledged state-level leaders and points of primary contact.

(2). A case may be brought to the attention of the local Chapter by:

- general public, non-affiliates of the Texas Master Naturalist program
- partnering organizations of the chapter or state program
- member(s) of the chapter
- member(s) of the chapter executive board
- member(s) of the chapter Coordinating/Advisory board
- member(s) of the State Advisory Board

(3) The offending individual(s) shall be notified of the allegations within 7 days after the written case has been submitted. The individual(s) shall have 30 days to respond in writing to the case details before suggestions toward disciplinary action are made.

(4). The Chapter Advisory/Coordinating Committee and/or the Chapter Executive Board shall review the documented case and make recommendations toward disciplinary action and submit this information in writing to the State Program Coordinator. The submitted documentation must include a statement(s) from the offending person(s) and the original written case submitted to the committee(s). The Program Coordinator may contact all involved parties regarding the case prior to taking the case to the Statewide Advisory Committee. The Program Coordinator will notify (in writing) to the petitioners with the

acceptance or non-acceptance of the outlined grounds and recommendations on the further process of disciplinary action.

(5). The person(s) affected by the documented allegations and disciplinary action shall also be notified by the Program Coordinator of the case and the final disciplinary action.

c. **Appeal Process.** The individual(s) have 30 days to respond or appeal to the Chapter Advisory/Coordinating Committee. No response indicates an acceptance of the case recommendation and disciplinary action unless otherwise stated within the disciplinary course of action. In the case of an appeal the Chapter Advisory/Coordinating Committee shall make a recommendation and resubmit the case to the Program Coordinator for final resolution. Circumstances that may warrant reconsideration requests may include substantive error or omission of information that was submitted to the Program Coordinator.

### **Additional Chapter Management Recommendations:**

A Chapter may also establish local awards as seen fit. An example of such an award might include "the most hours served" or "Chapter Texas Master Naturalist™ of the Year".

### **Rescission of a Chapter**

There are several scenarios under which a chapter can be dissolved or revoked. Possible scenarios include (1) A chapter may, for untold reasons, lose the interest of its members. (2) None or only a few members are meeting the annual requirements. This type of chapter is not meeting the goals and objectives of the Texas Master Naturalist program. At the other end of the spectrum is a chapter that does not comply with State Committee policies or overtly contravenes the guidelines and policies. For the overall health and welfare of the program these issues must be addressed and resolved.

A. A chapter can be dissolved or revoked under the following conditions.

1. A chapter may self-dissolve by a 2/3 vote of its legitimate active members present and voting at a regular chapter meeting or special meeting where all members have been appropriately notified. A letter must be submitted to the State Committee stating the results of the vote and why the chapter chooses to dissolve.
2. If a chapter fails to comply with guidelines and policies as set forth by the State Committee, then a letter of warning will be issued. The chapter will have six months from the date of the warning letter to amend its actions and begin complying with guidelines and policies. If the chapter does not conform at the end of the six-month probation period then its charter shall be revoked.
3. If a chapter overtly contravenes the program's guidelines and policies, then it should immediately have its charter revoked.

B. When a chapter is dissolved, its records should be transferred to the State Committee. Any funds remaining should be given to local non-profit charity(s) as recommended by the chapter members and agreed on by the State Committee. The members should also submit

their recommendations to the State Committee as to the disposal of any other chapter items or property.

### **Additional Information**

For any point not yet addressed by the state guidelines, or for any issue that arises that may need development of formalized procedures, please inform the State Texas Master Naturalist Program Coordinator. Issues will be brought forth and reviewed by the State Committee. When possible and appropriate, guidelines will be developed and amended to the current statewide Chapter Management Guidelines. It is the responsibility of the local chapter representatives to inform the state coordinator of such issues.

### **Additional Materials Available for download at: <http://txmn.org>**

- Texas Master Naturalist Marketing and Identity Guide (MKT-3342)
- General Guidelines for the Establishment, Operation, and Rescission of Chapters within the Texas Master Naturalist™ Program
- Template Bylaws for Chapters of the Texas Master Naturalist Program
- Template Operating Handbook for Chapters of the Texas Master Naturalist Program.
- Texas Master Naturalist Code of Ethics and Conduct

## **Appendix I Advisor Guidelines**

The Advisor's roll is as follows:

1. Give advice, make recommendations, inform and notify the chapter on appropriate business in a professional way.
2. The advisor should not be the manager of the chapter business or activities. They are to be a chapter supporter and available to advise, recommend, inform and notify the chapter and/or its members on and of appropriate and professional matters.
3. Be familiar with the goals, activities and mission of the organization.
4. Be willing to meet with the officers of the organization to discuss expectations for roles and responsibilities.
5. Assist the organization in maintaining the original goals, mission, vision, and operational framework set forth by the organizers of the chapter as well as assist in further developing realistic goals with the chapter's executive board that are within the parameters of the statewide Texas Master Naturalist program.
- 6. Facilitate opportunities for Master Naturalist volunteers to exercise initiative and judgement within proper measure of autonomy when coordinating chapter events and activities. In keeping with this approach, advisors should participate in event planning and attend events when possible or when identified as necessary through the planning process.**
7. Be aware of the chapter's financial status via review of financial statements and approval of expenditures.
8. Be aware of the Texas Master Naturalist State policies and guidelines and other agency or organization guidelines that establish expectations for volunteer requirements, behavior and activities. Ensure that the group and its officers know where these policies and guidelines are published, what rules are, why they exist, and the consequences for choosing to operate outside their parameters. You are expected to report violations or potential violations to the appropriate Master Naturalist program and/or agency official.
9. The advisor should be ready to assist the Master Naturalist State Program and Advisory Committee as needed as they may be called upon to implement regulations or policies from time to time.
10. The advisor is responsible for notifying the chapter officers and the State Advisory Committee regarding chapter concerns. The chapter officers are responsible for notifying the State Advisory Committee regarding advisor problems or concerns.

The chapter-advisors relationship is not a one-way street, in that the chapters 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.

**Texas Master Naturalist™ Program Office**

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