

# CHAPTER OPERATING HANDBOOK (COH)

Revised May 9, 2017



**Alamo Area Chapter**

**Texas Master Naturalist Program**

# **CHAPTER OPERATING HANDBOOK**

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# CHAPTER OPERATING HANDBOOK

## Alamo Area Chapter

### Texas Master Naturalist Program

(A nonprofit, public benefit corporation)

#### Article 1 Name and Headquarters

- 1.01 Name.** The name of this corporation is the ALAMO AREA CHAPTER OF THE TEXAS MASTER NATURALISTS, INC. as set forth by the Articles of Incorporation filed with the Office of the Secretary of State of Texas, January 25, 2000.
- 1.02 Address.** The current mailing address of this organization is P.O. Box 160543, San Antonio TX 78280.

#### Article 2 Purpose and Nonprofit Status

- 2.01 Purpose.**
- (a) The purpose of this organization shall be as stated in its Articles of Incorporation filed with the Office of the Secretary of State of Texas, Charter No. – 01568810-01.
  - (b) This Chapter Operating Handbook adapts the TMN Bylaws and Chapter Operating Handbook to the specifics of The Alamo Area Chapter, Texas Master Naturalists.
  - (c) In addition to this handbook and the TMN Bylaws, the chapter’s Board and members will be guided by the current versions of the State Chapter Operating Handbook, the TMN Program Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, the TMN Standards of Conduct and the TMN Code of Ethics. (See TMN Website, Members Resource Section: <http://txmn.org/resources/chapter-bylaws/>)

**2.02 Nonprofit Status**

This organization is a tax-exempt, charitable corporation exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law), and shall be nonprofit, nonsectarian and nonpolitical in all its policies and activities and not organized for the private gain of any individual or entity. For additional applications, restrictions and limitations see IRS Publication 557, “Tax-Exempt Status for Your Organization.”

## **Article 3 Membership**

### **3.01 Membership Requirements.**

- (a) Membership requirements will be those set forth in the Bylaws Article IV. A. Membership is open to qualifying individuals 18 years or older regardless of race, sex, religion, disability or national origin.
- (b) Establishment of Membership Dues. The Board of Directors may, with approval of a majority of members present at a duly called and convened general membership meeting, set and change the amount of an initiation fee, if any, and the annual dues, if applicable, payable to the chapter. The Board of Directors must notify all voting members 30 days prior to the general meeting that the subject of dues will be brought before the convened general membership for action. The Board of Directors under special circumstances may waive individual membership fees, on a case-by-case basis, if approved by a majority vote of the Board of Directors.
- (c) Dues Schedule. Dues shall be payable in advance of the first day of January in each fiscal year.
- (d) Categories of membership are as specified in the Bylaws Article IV. B.

**3.02 Active Membership.** Active members are those members in good standing (see Bylaws Article IV. C.) who (1) have completed the required training schedule as established by the TMN Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, (2) are current in their annual dues, (3) have a current liability waiver on file, and (4) have a current background check on file. Dues shall be paid and required liability waivers and background checks shall be signed in advance of the first day of January in each fiscal year.

**3.03 Privileges of Active Membership.** Active members have the right to vote, have the right to report hours and to receive recertification and milestone pins, have the right to serve on the Board of Directors, and receive volunteer liability coverage at approved chapter activities and events.

**3.04 Inactive Membership.** Inactive members are those who do not meet one or more of the requirements for active membership. Inactive members forfeit all privileges of active membership. Inactive members may petition for reinstatement to active status immediately following completion of all requirements in 3.02.

## **Article 4 Board Members and Responsibilities**

### **4.01 Elections and Assumption of Board Duties.**

- (a) AAMN will elect its officers during the chapter's general meeting in November.

- (b) Persons for Director positions, the State Representative and the Historian/Archivist will be presented to the incoming president by the nominating committee. The incoming president will then recommend persons for these positions, each to be confirmed by a majority vote of the newly elected officers, immediate past-president, and advisors (See Bylaws Article V. F. 3a. & 3b and article 4.08 (b) below).
- (c) The new Board of Directors, except the New Class Training Director, shall assume their duties January 1st of the following calendar year.
- (d) The New Class Training Director is recommended by the president and confirmed by the sitting board following the last formal training class session of each year (Bylaws Article V. F. 2.).
- (e) New Class Representative(s) and alternates(s) will be selected from and by members of each training class to serve as liaison to the Board of Directors.

**4.02 The Board of Directors and Voting Privileges.**

- (a) The Board of Directors shall include the elected board members (Officers), the state advisors (from Texas Parks & Wildlife Department and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service), and the other Board Members listed in Section 4.05.
- (b) All members of the Board of Directors have full voting privileges.

**4.03 The Executive Committee.** The Executive Committee shall include the Officers of the Chapter as stated in the Bylaws Article VI. B. 1.

**4.04 Elected Board Members are the Officers:**

- (a) President
- (b) Vice President
- (c) Treasurer
- (d) Secretary

**4.05 Other Board Members are:**

- (a) State Representative
- (b) New Class Training Director
- (c) Membership Director
- (d) Activities Information Director
- (e) Programs Director
- (f) Media and Technology Director
- (g) Community Outreach Director
- (h) Hospitality Director

- (i) New Class Representative(s)
- (j) Historian/Archivist
- (k) Immediate Past President
- (l) State Advisors

**4.06 Terms and Limits.**

- (a) All elected Officers and Board members shall serve a term of 12 months and, with the exception of the New Class Representative(s), are eligible for re-election or re-appointment.

**4.07 Duties of Board Members and Committees.**

(a) President

- 1) Serves as chief executive officer of the chapter.
- 2) Presides at all meetings of the chapter.
- 3) Chairs the board of directors.
- 4) Develops and publishes the agenda for board and general membership meetings.
- 5) Serves as an ex-officio member of all committees.
- 6) Recommends a State Representative, Historian/Archivist and a slate of Directors for approval by a majority vote of the Officers, Immediate Past President, and Advisor(s) as stated in Bylaws Article V. F. 3b.
- 7) Signs board-approved documents that may be legally binding on the chapter.
- 8) Reviews the chapter's annual report addendum to the TMN state office prior to submission.
- 9) Co-signs checks with the Treasurer for amounts over \$1,000.
- 10) Becomes Immediate Past President upon completion of the term of office.

(b) Vice President

- 1) Assists the president and officiates in his/her absence.
- 2) Serves as a member of the ad hoc Annual Financial Examination Committee.
- 3) Compiles the State annual report addendum in coordination with the Membership Director.
- 4) Selects and secures the venue for monthly chapter meetings for the following year.
- 5) Performs other duties as assigned by the President.

(c) Treasurer

- 1) Develops and maintains an annual operating budget for the Chapter with input from and approval by the Board.
- 2) Monitors execution of and recommends changes to the annual operating budget.
- 3) Keeps organized in binders all income, expenses, disbursements and other

financial documents, for seven years plus the current calendar year.

- 4) Receives all dues, fees, donations and other monies belonging to the chapter and expeditiously deposits them in the chapter bank account.
- 5) Keeps a record of all donated or purchased inventory, equipment or other property belonging to the chapter with an initial purchase price or current market value of \$250.00 or more.
- 6) Pays all bills upon receipt of a duly authorized and approved written statement or receipt.
- 7) Signs/co-signs all checks, drafts or other instruments for payment of money or notes in accordance with the financial controls stipulated in the Bylaws, Article IX. B.1.
- 8) Issues receipts to individuals or businesses for all cash donations over \$5.00 and non-cash donations.
- 9) Provides a Texas Sales and Use Tax Exemption Certificate to chapter members making authorized purchases on behalf of the chapter.
- 10) Makes a financial status report at or prior to all scheduled board and general membership meetings.
- 11) Presents the financial records to the annual Financial Examination Committee in October.
- 12) Submits annual financial records and audits as required by federal, state and local law and the TMN Bylaws, and provides input to the annual chapter report.
- 13) Insures that all applicable legal documents, including all tax returns, are filed on a timely basis.

(d) Secretary

- 1) Keeps a hard copy record of all official chapter correspondence.
- 2) Records, publishes and preserves a hard copy of the Minutes of all meetings of the board of directors, general membership or other official groups.
- 3) Provides draft Minutes to the board of directors for approval and has the approved copy posted on the chapter website.
- 4) Keeps a record of board member attendance, presence of a quorum and Minutes of each board meeting.
- 5) Brings to each board and general meeting all current fiscal year Minutes, a copy of the AAMN Chapter Bylaws, the Chapter Operating Handbook, the Chapter Management and Operations Protocols and copies of the TMN Standards of Conduct and the TMN Code of Ethics.

(e) Immediate Past-President

- 1) Provides continuity from the prior Board.
- 2) Chairs the annual nominating committee. (See Bylaws Article V. E. 2a.)
- 3) Leads an annual review and update of the Chapter Operating Handbook.
- 4) Assists the President.

- 5) Assumes the duties and responsibilities of the State Representative if that position is vacant.
- (f) State Representative
- 1) Represents the chapter in state-level matters of the Texas Master Naturalist program.
  - 2) Attends the State Volunteer Representatives Council meetings, if called.
  - 3) Keeps the board and chapter membership informed of changes to the TMN Bylaws, Chapter Operating Handbook, Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, and ~~non-~~ training activities & information communicated on the TMN listserv.
  - 4) Assists the immediate past-president with the annual review and update of the Chapter Operating Handbook,
- (g) Director, New Class Training Committee
- 1) Selects committee members and forms necessary subcommittees. May delegate to a committee member one or more of the committee's tasks.
  - 2) Conducts oversight of the chapter's New Class Training Committee.
  - 3) Establishes training requirements for new members of the Alamo Area Chapter, Texas Master Naturalists consistent with the TMN Management and Operations Protocols found on the TMN website.
  - 4) Plans, implements and evaluates the chapter training curriculum and develops a training calendar.
  - 5) Develops the training budget and recommends class tuition to the board.
  - 6) Is accountable for maintenance of New Class Training Committee budget control and records.
  - 7) Serves as the point of contact for training applicant inquiries and application process.
  - 8) Selects presenters and makes arrangements for class locations, presentations and field trips including prepared/furnished materials, handouts, and audio-visual equipment as needed.
  - 9) Arranges for class training manuals and materials.
  - 10) Arranges for speakers' and presenters' gifts, travel & lodging needs, and thank you letters.
  - 11) Appoints the Class Representative Mentor.
  - 12) Arranges class graduation ceremonies.
  - 13) Collects and analyzes surveys of presenters to maintain/improve training quality and trainee experience.
  - 14) Maintains training information and data for annual report addendum input and chapter records.
- (h) Director, Membership Committee
- 1) Selects committee members and forms necessary subcommittees.
  - 2) Maintains current rosters of the chapter's members, including in-training members



and pledges, containing addresses, phone numbers and email addresses.

- 3) Oversees member use of the TMN Volunteer Management (VMS) System and each member's annual and cumulative volunteer and advanced training hours.
- 4) Ensures new members/trainees receive training to use VMS.
- 5) Presents annual recertification and cumulative-hour pins for members at general meetings.
- 6) Certifies that all candidates for board Director are members in good standing at time of election or appointment.
- 7) Orders and maintains a stock of member recognition awards.
- 8) Recommends additional and special awards for recognition of sustained or one-time outstanding performance.
- 9) Provides required VMS reports to the State office.

(i) Director, Activities Information Committee.

- 1) Selects committee members and forms necessary subcommittees.
- 2) Chairs an activity review sub-committee that reviews AAMN Activity Approval Application submissions for volunteer service and/or advanced training activities or events and recommends approval or disapproval.
- 3) Encourages AAMN MNs to develop service opportunities and promote them as AAMN Chapter-sponsored program and events.
- 4) Establishes points of contact with other organizations' volunteer coordinators, e.g., San Antonio Parks and Recreation to (1) learn of volunteer service opportunities and (2) promote volunteer recognition events and awards
- 5) Uses the recommended criteria found in the Texas Master Naturalist Program Management and Operations Protocols to review volunteer service and advanced training opportunities.
- 6) Disseminates activity information to the chapter web calendar, to the chapter newsletter, or to members through direct email messages.
- 7) Provides input to the annual state report addendum.

(j) Director, Programs Committee

- 1) Selects committee members and forms necessary subcommittees.
- 2) Develops and schedules, as appropriate in accordance with the current Chapter Management and Operations Protocols, chapter programs and special advanced training classes having secured the approval of the Activities Information Committee.
- 3) Provides brief description of programs to the chapter website and monthly newsletter.
- 4) Ensures speaker(s) are appropriately recognized with a gift card(s) not to exceed \$50 per monthly chapter meeting.
- 5) Provides input to the annual state report addendum.
- 6) Routinely coordinates with the Hospitality Committee and other committees as appropriate.

(k) Director, Media and Technology

- 1) Oversees the positions of newsletter editor, webmaster, and calendarist.
- 2) Promotes the AAMN chapter in the local media.

(l) Director, Community Outreach Committee

- 1) Selects committee members and forms necessary subcommittees.
- 2) Plans, schedules and conducts chapter outreach activities, to include establishing relationships with the community, private businesses, service clubs, city and county public organizations and other local volunteer organizations.
- 3) Stores and maintains chapter outreach equipment and supplies.
- 4) Arranges for the distribution of AAMN literature, brochures and student recruitment material at public events throughout the city and surrounding areas.

(m) Director, Hospitality Committee

- 1) Selects committee members and forms necessary subcommittees.
- 2) Is involved in the planning and organizing of chapter social functions and events.
- 3) Promotes member attendance at social events.
- 4) Provides and/or coordinates refreshments at general membership meetings, the New Class Training sessions, and other chapter functions.

(n) Historian/Archivist

- 1) Selects assistants as necessary to accomplish documentation tasks.
- 2) Compiles a simple directory listing which official records are maintained for the chapter by the Treasurer, Newsletter Editor, Secretary, and Membership Director, among others.
- 3) Documents chapter activities and initiatives, especially newspaper/magazine stories pertaining to the AAMN, photos of volunteers performing service with our major partnering groups, speakers and social events.
- 4) Maintains printed and electronic documents whenever possible.
- 5) Solicits from the Board of Directors and other chapter members an ongoing collection of documented events and activities.
- 6) Produces and presents to the Board of Directors at the October meeting an annual report of (1) events and activities and (2) an inventory of physical and electronic records and their location.

(o) New Class Representative(s)

- 1) New Class Representatives are expected to attend Board meetings and keep members of their class informed of Board actions and chapter events and programs.
- 2) New Class Representatives will serve a full term as Board Members beginning January 1<sup>st</sup> of the year following the year in which they completed their training.

- 3) Upon completion of each training class, the New Class Representative will serve on the New Class Training Committee for the subsequent training class.
- 4) For the year in which the New Class Representative(s) serve(s) on the Board of Directors, the New Class Representative(s) will serve as members(s) of the *ad hoc* Annual Financial Examination Committee.

**4.08 Ad Hoc Committees.** Ad Hoc committees are formed for a particular and specific purpose.

- (a) An Annual Financial Examination Committee is responsible for conducting periodic examinations of the financial records of the chapter to ascertain they accurately reflect the organization's financial activity.

Such examination would include (1) examining the supporting documentation for completeness and proper inclusion in the summary financial records, (2) ascertaining all items in the summary financial records are supported with documentation and (3) identifying any issues requiring attention.

Members will be appointed by the president and approved by the board but must include the Vice President, New Class Representative(s), and the Secretary or an Advisor. A summary of the examinations will be submitted to the Board at the last general meeting in November.

- (b) The Nomination Committee is responsible for recommending the annual slate of officers and slate of committee directors. The past president will chair the committee with two or more members appointed by the president with Board approval. The committee will present the slate of officer candidates to the sitting president, who must publish the officer slate to the general membership in writing 15 days prior to the election of officers at the general meeting in November.

The incoming president will review the slate of committee directors and recommend candidates for the appointed positions to the officers, immediate past president and advisors.

- (c) Other Ad Hoc Committees may be formed for specific tasks or purposes.

## **Article 5 Amendment of the Chapter Operating Handbook**

**5.01 Changes and Amendments.** Changes and amendments may be made by the Board of Directors at a regular Board meeting with a two-thirds vote of the Board members in attendance, subject to the quorum requirements found in the Bylaws, Article VII--Meetings.

**5.02** The general membership must be notified in written form of the proposed changes or amendments ten days before the next Board meeting and be given an opportunity at the Board meeting to voice any concerns about the changes or amendments. Written form may be via conventional mail, e-mail or other equivalent means.

**5.03** At the next general meeting a majority vote of the members in attendance serves to ratify the revised Chapter Operating Handbook.

**5.04** State Office Notification. Once a Chapter has adopted a revised and/or amended Chapter Operating Handbook, an electronic copy must be sent to the State office.

## **Article 6 Chapter Rules of Order**

**6.01 Procedures.** The current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* shall govern the meetings of the chapter insofar as those rules are not inconsistent with or in conflict with the Bylaws, the Articles of Incorporation, and the laws of the State of Texas or other adopted rules governing agenda, motions and related matters.

# Appendices

## 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.

**Updated July 2015**

## **Texas Master Naturalists – 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 others' 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.

**Updated July 2015**

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## **Texas Master Naturalists – The Advisor's Role\*:**

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 Texas Master Naturalist volunteers to exercise initiative and judgment 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, protocols and other agency or organization guidelines and protocols that establish expectations for volunteer requirements, behavior and activities. Ensure that the group and its Officers know where these policies, guidelines and protocols are published, what the 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 Texas Master Naturalist Program and/or agency officials.
9. The Advisor should be ready to assist the Texas Master Naturalist State Program and TMN State 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 Program Office and Committee regarding Chapter concerns.

The Chapter Officers are responsible for notifying the State Program Office and TMN State Committee regarding Advisor problems or concerns. The Chapter Advisor relationship is not a one-way street, in that the Chapters and their 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.

\* Source document: TMN website: Appendix I of the "Chapter Management and Operations Protocols" (June 4, 2015; Page 23)