

# CHAPTER OPERATING HANDBOOK

(Adopted August 7, 2008)



## Galveston Bay Area Chapter Texas Master Naturalist Program

# CHAPTER OPERATING HANDBOOK

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# **GALVESTON BAY AREA CHAPTER**

## **CHAPTER OPERATING HANDBOOK**

### **PURPOSE OF CHAPTER OPERATING HANDBOOK**

This Chapter Operating Handbook (referred to as "Handbook") and the Galveston Bay Area Chapter - Texas Master Naturalist Program Bylaws (referred to as "Bylaws") together govern the operation of the Galveston Bay Area Chapter - Texas Master Naturalists (referred to as "Chapter"). Material within this Handbook modifies, clarifies and expands upon material contained in the Bylaws and corresponds, wherever possible, to sections of the Bylaws. Chapter Bylaws and Chapter Operating Handbook should be viewed together as a single document by those seeking guidance in governance of the Chapter.

### **STATE PROGRAM COORDINATOR (Bylaws, Article III)**

The State Program Coordinator serves as the sponsor advisor for the State Program. Under the direction of the State Advisory Committee, the Coordinator maintains the State Program Office and is responsible for day-to-day operation of the State Program. The Coordinator and other State Program staff members are available to provide advice and counsel to the Chapter and its members on operation of the Chapter.

### **STATE VOLUNTEER REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL (Bylaws, Article III)**

The State Volunteer Representative Council is comprised of representatives of each Chapter within the State Program. The Council serves as a communication link between the State Program, each Chapter, and the general Texas Master Naturalist membership.

### **CHAPTER SPONSORS AND PARTNERS (Bylaws, Article IV A and B)**

A list of current Chapter sponsors and partners may be found on the Chapter's website <http://gbamasternaturalist.org/>, or can be obtained from the Volunteer Service Director.

- Sponsors - The Chapter Sponsors are: AgriLIFE Extension Service Galveston County, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Texas SeaGrant College Program, the County of Galveston, Texas
- Partners - An organization may become a partner if they meet the criteria stated in the Bylaws, are willing to provide the Chapter with a benefit in return for volunteer service on selected naturalist projects, and are approved by the Chapter's Board of Directors (referred to as "Board").

### **TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST TITLE**

The titles Texas Master Naturalist and Texas Junior Master Naturalist are owned by the Texas Master Naturalist Program (referred to as State Program) and are to be used only by individuals trained through recognized Texas Master Naturalist chapters. The Galveston Bay Area Chapter-Texas Master Naturalist is officially affiliated with, and operating under certification, training, and curriculum policies established by the State

Program. The Texas Master Naturalist title may only be used when doing volunteer work associated with the Program and may not be used for political advocacy, business purposes or personal gain.

### **MEMBER CATEGORIES (Bylaws Article V B3)**

To become certified through the Chapter, an individual must complete the Chapter Training, 8 hours of approved Advanced Training and 40 hours of approved Volunteer Service within 15 months following the first day of Training Class and be current in dues.

To maintain Certification, an individual must meet requirements of 8 hours of approved Advanced Training and 40 hours of approved Volunteer Service between January 1 and December 31 of the current year Class and be current in dues. The certification remains in force until December 31 of the following year.

### **MEMBER TRANSFER (Bylaws Article V D)**

The Chapter welcomes transfer of membership from another Chapter under conditions stated below:

- The transferee brings a letter from the previous Chapter stating he or she is a member in good standing and current in dues, the status of membership (trainee, certified member or member), and the number of Volunteer Service and Advanced Training hours accrued during the current year and since joining the program.
- The transferee agrees to adhere to this Chapter's Bylaws and Operating Handbook, even though these may be more stringent than those of the previous Chapter.
- The transferee completes and signs required Chapter documents.
- It is strongly recommended that a transferee complete training that is specific to the Chapter's ecosystems during the next Training Class. Such sessions may be counted as Advanced Training.

### **DUES**

Annual Chapter membership dues of \$20 are due in January and are delinquent in February, except for students in a Fall Class whose dues for the following year are included in their training fees.

### **DOCUMENTS REQUIRED OF MEMBERS**

All Chapter members must complete and sign the following documents which are in the Forms Compendium:

- Hold Harmless Agreement
- Release for Use of Image and/or Voice
- Youth Protection Standards Program – Direct Volunteer Registration Form or Refusal Form

## **TRAINING CLASSES**

A trainee is expected to attend all sessions, including associated fieldwork, and to complete any assigned work. A trainee may begin to accumulate Volunteer Service and Advanced Training hours as of the first day of class.

A trainee may miss one (1) session during a given Training Class and still meet the Chapter's class attendance requirements. Any additional sessions missed must be made up within 12 months of the absence by attending an approved alternative training opportunity. It is the trainee's responsibility to consult with the Training Class Chairperson to identify and obtain approval for a make-up session. Examples of alternative sessions include a Chapter-sponsored Advanced Training workshop, the same session offered in the Chapter's next Training Class or a session on the same subject offered by a chapter within the same eco-region. The make-up session may not count as Advanced Training. Completed makeup sessions must be reported to the Membership Director.

## **ADVANCED TRAINING**

Advanced training should provide specialized instruction or experiences that further knowledge and understanding of a subject that meets the Chapter's purpose. Advanced training on a subject that is included in the Chapter's Training Class should provide more in-depth material or a different perspective on the subject.

All Advanced Training must meet the following criteria:

- Promote continued learning and development of naturalist skills
- Provide Master Naturalists with knowledge and skills to work in volunteer efforts
- Provide Master Naturalists an opportunity to focus their interest on one or a few specific topics
- Build on the core curriculum initially provided by the Chapter
- Be applicable to Texas and its natural resource management issues

Advanced Training may be in any of the following naturalist (or closely related) fields:

- Archeology
- Astronomy
- Botany – as it pertains to native plants
- Climate and weather
- Conservation and environmental issues
- Earth sciences
- Ecology
- Ecosystems
- Endangered species
- Geology – as relates to ecosystems
- Geography
- Habitat management and/or restoration

- Hydrology
- Natural history
- Soil – as it pertains to habitat or as a natural resource
- Water – as it pertains to habitat or a natural resource
- Chapter management

Watching an educational TV program, movie or video on a naturalist subject does not count as Advanced Training except when viewed during the course of an approved lecture or training program.

Training sessions that meet the criteria and are sponsored by the Chapter or its sponsors or partners, or by the State Program or its sponsors are approved for accumulation of Advanced Training hours.

All other Advanced Training must be pre-approved by the Chapter Training Director. The Advanced Training Pre-Approval Request form is in the Forms Compendium and on the Chapter website <http://gbamasternaturalist.org/>. It may be submitted by mail or electronically. The member should allow adequate time before the event for the form to be processed. The member will be notified of approval or denial by e-mail or telephone. Hours reported without pre-approval may be denied.

### **VOLUNTEER SERVICE**

Volunteer service hours are those hours that meet the Chapter's purpose and for which no financial compensation or salary is received. Volunteer service is time spent on:

- Education
- Resource management projects
- Chapter development and management (i.e. serving as a Board or committee member)
- Preparation time directly related to planning and coordinating Advanced Training or Volunteer Service
- Travel to and from Advanced Training or Volunteer Service locations that does not exceed the amount of time dedicated to the training session or volunteer effort

Volunteer service should meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Corresponds to the goals, practices and teachings of the Texas Master Naturalist Program
- Addresses a pressing need for meaningful service in education, natural resource management or management of the Chapter or the State Program
- Is manageable within the Chapter's available volunteer resources of time and training
- Is located within the Chapter's service area

- Creates Chapter visibility, identity, cohesiveness or serves as a recruitment mechanism
- Has measurable results

Programs or projects that meet the criteria and are sponsored by the Chapter or its sponsors or partners, or by the State Program or its sponsors are approved for accumulation of Volunteer Service hours.

All other Volunteer Service must be pre-approved by the Volunteer Service Director. The Volunteer Service Pre-Approval Request form is in the Forms Compendium and on the Chapter website <http://gbamasternaturalist.org/> and may be submitted by mail or electronically. The member should allow adequate time before the event for the form to be processed. The member will be notified of approval or denial by e-mail or telephone. Hours accumulated without pre-approval may be denied.

The pre-approval of Volunteer Service projects and opportunities is important to:

- Ensure that volunteers are covered by the sponsoring program's insurance
- Provide a comprehensive listing of service opportunities for volunteers of the Chapter
- Ensure the needs of the Chapter and its partners are met
- Avoid mistaken assumptions regarding credit to be received, as hours reported without pre-approval may be denied.

### **REPORTING OF HOURS**

Hours accumulated and reported by Chapter members are important in the following ways:

- Maintaining Chapter sponsorship and support (Service hours are a measurable result that justifies continued sponsorship and dedication of resources, including the services of our Sponsor Representative by Galveston County AgriLIFE Extension Office. Each year Galveston County Commissioners are presented with a "check" representing the value of Volunteer Service dedicated by Chapter members.)
- Service hours and any training class make-up sessions may be used as an in-kind match in seeking grant funds
- Maintaining the State Master Naturalist Program

Chapter members are responsible for tracking and reporting their Advanced Training and Volunteer Service hours to the Chapter Membership Director. The Hours Reporting Form is in the Forms Compendium and may be downloaded from the website <http://gbamasternaturalist.org/>. It is recommended that members report their hours on a monthly basis either by mailing the completed form or completing and submitting it electronically.

For certification purposes, Volunteer Service and Advanced Training hours “expire” on December 31<sup>st</sup> and are not carried forward to the next year. The hours are added to lifetime totals for various milestone achievement awards.

### **MEETINGS (Bylaws Article VIII)**

All Chapter meetings are open to Chapter members and to the public. Meeting notices shall be posted on the Chapter website <http://gbamasternaturalist.org/>, and mailed and e-mailed to members. Robert’s Rules of Order shall be used as a guide in conducting meetings.

- Chapter Board of Directors meetings shall be held each month. A majority of the Board members shall constitute a quorum for regular or special Board meetings.
- Chapter meetings shall be held bimonthly; 25% of the voting membership shall constitute a quorum for Chapter meetings.
- Annual Membership meeting shall be held in December; 25% of the voting membership shall constitute a quorum for the Annual Membership meeting.

### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS (Bylaws Articles VI and VII)**

As specified in the Bylaws, the officers of the Chapter are: President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. As specified in the Bylaws, the Past President and Advisors are also Board members.

#### **Appointed Board Members**

- Membership Director
- Chapter Training Director
- Volunteer Service Director
- Training Class Representatives

#### **Non-Voting Participants in Board Meetings**

- Committee Chairpersons - On occasion one or more committee chairpersons will be invited to report to the Board and/or to participate in Board discussion pertinent to their committee.
- Other Chapter Members - Any Chapter member who wishes to bring a matter directly to the Board shall submit a written request to the Chapter President a minimum of one week prior to the next scheduled Board meeting. Likewise, a member in attendance at any Board meeting may seek recognition of the presiding officer in order to ask a question or offer a comment pertinent to a matter under discussion. In either instance, participation may be limited due to time constraints.
- Invited Guests - On occasion a non-member guest may be invited by the Board to make a presentation or request to the Board or to serve as an advising consultant in discussion of matters that come before the Board.

### **SPECIAL BOARD APPOINTMENTS (Bylaws Article VI F)**

Since the position of Past President is limited to a single year, an alternative position, Nominations Director, shall be appointed by the Board in those instances where the current president wins election for a second or third term.

Each training class selects two representatives from the class for appointment to the Board for a term of one year. The term of office for the Fall class will be from December to November, Spring will be June to May.

### **TERMS AND LIMITS (Bylaws Article VI G)**

Board members shall serve a maximum of three (3) consecutive terms in any one Board position. A Board member shall serve a maximum of six (6) consecutive years on the Board.

### **DUTIES OF BOARD MEMBERS AND STANDING COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS**

All Committee Chairpersons shall be appointed by the Board. Any Board member may propose the formation of a committee to address a Chapter concern or to manage a Chapter program or project; likewise, any Board member may propose an individual to serve as chairperson for such a committee. Standing Committee Chairpersons shall be proposed by the Board member to whom they report.

#### **President**

- Preside over Chapter and Board meetings
- Prepare agendas for Chapter and Board meetings
- Arrange and notify Board and Chapter members of meetings
- Represent the Chapter at the state level
- Represent the Chapter to the public
- Sign all Board approved documents that may be legally binding on the Chapter, or the Corporation
- Co-sign checks and drafts for the Chapter
- Maintain the President's correspondence and documents, and convey these to the succeeding President
- Prepare and present an annual report at the first Chapter meeting following the close of the fiscal year
- Together with the Membership Director, prepare the Chapter's annual report to the State Program and submit the report by January 31 of the following year.
- Notify the State Program of concerns involving the Chapter's Advisor brought forward by the Board or by individual members

#### **Vice President**

- Act in the absence of the President
- Assist the President when required
- Schedule speakers for the Chapter meetings
- Survey membership at the Annual Meeting for interests and potential speakers
- Maintain resource list of speakers

- Co-sign checks and drafts for the Chapter when needed
- Serve as State Representative (Duties outlined in the Bylaws Article VI C1)
- Maintain Chapter calendar of events
- Assist in planning and conducting regional meetings and events
- Prepare an annual report of the activities of this office and submit the report to the Board a minimum of two weeks prior to the first Chapter meeting following the close of the fiscal year

#### **Communication Chairperson reports to Vice President**

- Develop and maintain the Chapter web site
- Develop the newsletter and coordinate its distribution
- Notify members of Volunteer and Advanced Training opportunities
- Maintain an e-mail notification system to serve members

#### **Host Chairperson reports to Vice President**

- Coordinate Chapter meeting activities including set up/break down, refreshments, and educational displays
- Coordinate chapter social events (i.e. picnic, regional meeting, regional fair, trips)

#### **Treasurer**

- Keep all financial records including a budget
- Collect, deposit and disburse Chapter funds
- Maintain the Chapter bank account(s) and a petty cash fund
- Co-sign checks and drafts for the Chapter
- Present a report at each Chapter meeting and Board meeting comparing budget to actual activity
- Provide financial records for review at the end of fiscal year
- Develop and monitor the Chapter budget
- Maintain and monitor the Chapter inventory of supplies, equipment and other Chapter assets
- Provide information to the Chapter Audit Committee as requested
- Prepare an annual report of the activities of this office and submit the report to the Board a minimum of two weeks prior to the first Chapter meeting following the close of the fiscal year

#### **Chapter Sales Chairperson reports to Treasurer**

- Maintain an inventory of sales items
- Submit a list of items to be purchased for Board approval
- Create a duplicate receipt for each item sold
- Provide treasurer with report of items sold, receipts and money
- Establish and maintain Budget for the Chapter Store

## **Secretary**

- Record, publish to the membership and preserve the minutes of all Board and Chapter meetings
- Record, publish to the membership and preserve documentation of all Board actions taken outside of a scheduled meeting.
- Record attendance at Board meetings
- Bring to each meeting the Minutes Book, the Bylaws, the Chapter Operating Handbook, a list of all committees and a copy of Robert's Rules of Order
- Maintain and bring to each Board meeting the Compilation of Past Board Actions.
- Maintain a collection of the Corporation documents
- Maintain the Bylaws, Chapter Operating Handbook and Forms Compendium as they are amended
- Prepare an annual report of the activities of this office and submit the report to the Board a minimum of two weeks prior to the first Chapter meeting following the close of the fiscal year

### **Historical Archives Chairperson reports to Secretary**

- Maintain the historical records of the Chapter.
- Historical records include but are not limited to those associated with: training classes, projects, recognitions, events, elections, meetings, Chapter newsletter archives and scrapbooks.

## **Past President**

- Assist the President
- Perform the functions of the Nominations Director
- Provide continuity from prior Board of Directors
- Prepare an annual report of the activities of this office and submit the report to the Board a minimum of two weeks prior to the first Chapter meeting following the close of the fiscal year

## **Advisors (Bylaws Article VI B - Advisor Duties)**

- Support the Chapter
- Assist the Chapter in maintaining the original goals, mission, vision, and operational framework set forth by the organizers of the Chapter and assist the Board in further developing realistic goals that are within the parameters of the State Program
- Advise, make recommendations, inform and notify the Chapter and its members as appropriate on State Program and State and Chapter Sponsor matters
- Meet with the officers of the organization to discuss expectations for their roles and responsibilities
- Facilitate opportunities for Master Naturalist volunteers to exercise initiative and judgment when coordinating Chapter events and activities
- Be aware of the Chapter's financial status, review financial statements and expenditures

- Assist the Master Naturalist State Program and Advisory Committee as needed to implement regulations or policies
- Notify the Chapter Board of Directors and the State Advisory Committee regarding any concerns about the Chapter's operation
- Participate in event planning and attend events when possible or when identified as necessary through the planning process

### **Membership Director**

- Maintain a roster of the Chapter's member names including in-training members plus addresses, phone numbers and Internet/email addresses
- Maintain a record of Volunteer and Advanced Training hours and class training attendance
- Notify the Board of members meeting certification and threshold hour achievements
- Order and maintain the member certification and recognition awards (e.g. shirts, name tags, certificates, business cards, pins)
- Together with the President, prepare the Chapter's annual report to the State Program and submit the report by January 31 of the following year
- Ensure members have completed all required membership documents
- Prepare an annual report of the activities of this office and submit the report to the Board a minimum of two weeks prior to the first Chapter meeting following the close of the fiscal year

### **Chapter Training Director**

- Work with committees to facilitate training sessions
- Assure training activities are submitted to appropriate parties for inclusion in member communication venues (i.e. calendar, e-mail, newsletter)
- Approve/reject Advanced Training Pre-Approval Requests submitted by members, seeking consult as necessary with the Training Class and/or Advanced Training Chairpersons
- Prepare an annual report of the activities of this office and submit the report to the Board a minimum of two weeks prior to the first Chapter meeting following the close of the fiscal year

#### **Training Class Chairperson reports to Chapter Training Director**

- Recruit committee members and oversee activities of the Training Class Committee to schedule, plan, manage and maintain records of Training Class sessions
- Organize the running of the Training Class with sponsors and speakers
- Train volunteer corps to assist with training sessions
- Submit Training Class schedule, notices, and information to appropriate parties for inclusion in member communication venues (i.e. calendar, e-mail, newsletter)
- Oversee the daily workings of each class

- Track class attendance, and training hours and submit report to Membership Director when the Training Class is completed
- Monitor participant feedback
- Prepare an annual report of Committee activities and submit the report to the Chapter Training Director a minimum of three weeks prior to the first Chapter meeting following the close of the fiscal year

#### **Advanced Training Chairperson reports to Chapter Training Director**

- Recruit committee members and oversee activities of the Advanced Training Committee to schedule, plan, manage and maintain records of Advanced Training activities
- Seek out, suggest and/or present Advanced Training opportunities for the membership
- Notify Chapter membership regarding Advanced Training opportunities using the Chapter website and bi-monthly mail-outs
- Prepare an annual report of Committee activities and submit the report to the Chapter Training Director a minimum of three weeks prior to the first Chapter meeting following the close of the fiscal year

#### **Volunteer Service Director**

- Work with committees to facilitate Volunteer opportunities
- Assure Volunteer Service activities are submitted to appropriate parties for inclusion in member communication venues (i.e. calendar, e-mail, newsletter)
- Maintain the list of Chapter Sponsors and Partners
- Approve/reject Volunteer Service Pre-Approval Requests submitted by members, seeking consult as necessary with the Stewardship and/or Education and Community Outreach Chairpersons
- Prepare an annual report of the activities of this office and submit the report to the Board a minimum of two weeks prior to the first Chapter meeting following the close of the fiscal year

#### **Stewardship Chairperson reports to Volunteer Service Director**

- Recruit committee members and oversee activities of the Stewardship Committee to schedule, plan, manage and maintain records of monitoring, restoration and preservation activities
- Provide opportunities pertaining to conserving, preserving, monitoring and restoring natural resources in the Galveston Bay Area and when possible provide Advanced Training in conjunction with the opportunities
- Cooperatively work with partners, sponsors, and natural resource groups to determine stewardship responsibilities for each opportunity
- Provide stewardship opportunities when possible as Project of the Month.

- Notify Chapter membership regarding Volunteer Service opportunities using the Chapter web site and bimonthly mail outs
- Track the annual amount of acreage impacted by Chapter stewardship volunteers
- Prepare an annual report of Committee activities and submit the report to the Volunteer Services Director a minimum of three weeks prior to the first Chapter meeting following the close of the fiscal year

### **Education and Community Outreach Chairperson reports to Volunteer Service Director**

- Recruit committee members and oversee activities of the Education and Community Outreach Committee to schedule, plan, manage and maintain records of external education and outreach activities
- Maintain a library of education and outreach materials and a list of presenters
- Coordinate Community Education Programs
- Staff outreach booths
- Create and maintain a Chapter brochure
- Acquire and maintain a Chapter display board
- Develop and provide a speakers bureau
- Encourage members to prepare articles or participate in interviews for public media
- Review and, in consult with the President, approve articles written for release to public media
- Notify Chapter membership regarding Education and Community Outreach Volunteer Service opportunities using the Chapter web site and bimonthly mail outs
- Prepare an annual report of Committee activities and submit the report to the Volunteer Services Director a minimum of three weeks prior to the first Chapter meeting following the close of the fiscal year

### **Nominations Director**

- Office to be filled only under provisions outlined in "Special Board Appointment" above.
- Assist the President
- Chair the Nominating Committee
- Prepare an annual report of the activities of this office and submit the report to the Board a minimum of two weeks prior to the first Chapter meeting following the close of the fiscal year

### **Training Class Representatives**

- Assist another Board Member of their choosing in carrying out his or her duties.

- Prepare an annual report of the activities of this office and submit the report to the Board a minimum of two weeks prior to the first Chapter meeting following the close of the fiscal year

#### **AMENDMENT OF CHAPTER OPERATING HANDBOOK**

- Any proposed amendment to this Chapter Operating Handbook must be approved by a majority vote of the Board before being submitted to the Chapter's general membership for a vote.
- Notice to the membership of any proposed amendment shall include the date, time and place of consideration and shall be presented in written form via conventional mail, email or other equivalent means to members at least 30 days prior to consideration by the membership.
- In order to pass, each proposed amendment requires a two-thirds vote of members constituting a quorum at a duly called and convened Chapter meeting