

General Guidelines for the Establishment, Operation, and Rescission of Chapters within the Texas Master Naturalist™ Program

The following guidelines are promulgated as guidance for the creation and operation of a chapter chartered by the State Advisory Committee of the Texas Master Naturalist program (hereafter referred to as the State Committee). Provisions are also issued for the dissolving or revoking of an issued charter.

Phase I

I. Establishment of a Chapter

- A. Definition of a Chapter. A chapter is a geographically defined unit of the state organization. Generally, a unit is associated with an urban area and/or a county. The purpose of the chapter is to advance the Texas Master Naturalist program's goals and objectives throughout its designated area.
- B. To obtain a charter for the creation of a chapter requires the submission of a petition to the State Committee. The petition must contain the following information and meet the minimum standards cited.
 1. Clearly define the geographic boundaries that enclose the area to be served by the requested chapter. If this boundary extends into an already existing chapter area, then submit a letter from the existing chapter that it concedes the area to the petitioning chapter. If the chapter does not wish to concede the area, then submit a letter from it that states its agreement that the area will be mutually served by both chapters.
 2. Submit a letter(s) from the local Texas Cooperative Extension County Agent and/or a local Texas Parks and Wildlife Department employee (of any division) demonstrating their acknowledgement of having been contacted to determine their interest in the development of a local chapter. The letter should state that a Texas Master Naturalist chapter would be viable in the area.
 3. A petitioning chapter must provide a list of Chapter goals and the goals of any local agencies and organizations in which the chapter intends to form partnerships. State the goals and objectives of the partnership(s) and any timelines for partnership action. Partnerships within the Texas Master Naturalist program are important and have proven to be the keystone to the successful development of a chapter. They are *strongly* encouraged.
 4. Provide the names and signed Local Coordinating Committee Volunteer Policy forms (attached with this document or obtained from the Texas Master Naturalist Program Office) of at least five petitioning new members who will be the chapter's Local Coordinators-- generally referred to as the "Local Chapter Coordinating Committee" or "Local Coordinating Committee". At least two of these members must be willing and able to attend the Local Chapter Coordinators' training program sponsored annually by

the Texas Master Naturalist Program and its State Committee. These volunteers must be selected carefully for they will be the nucleus and driving force behind the establishment of the chapter.

5. State what will be the official name of the chapter and include the Chapter's chosen logo from the list of available Texas Master Naturalist drawings as described in the Texas Master Naturalist Marketing and Identity Guide under 'Graphic Design Guidelines' (publication MKT-3342). or as found on the Master Naturalist website at <http://masternaturalist.tamu.edu>

Phase II

- C. After the State Committee has given written notification to the petitioning chapter of its Phase I approval and the Local Chapter Coordinators have been trained, the second phase of the chartering process may proceed.
 1. The petitioning chapter must submit its training curriculum and anticipated teaching agenda for review and approval by the State Committee. This curriculum must contain a minimum of 40 hours of Texas Master Naturalist training as specified by the curriculum guidelines.
 2. A petitioning chapter may not conduct their initial Texas Master Naturalist training until its training agenda has been reviewed and approved by the State Committee, and it has received written approval from the Texas Master Naturalist program office.
 3. A petitioning chapter must also submit a general preliminary list of possible/anticipated volunteer opportunities in the local area. This list should also include possible/anticipated natural resources related volunteer service opportunities with the partnering local agencies and organizations.
 4. The above must be submitted to the State Committee for review and written approval. The State Committee may make suggestions or additions to the petitioning chapters' items. In this case, the State Committee recommends that the petitioning chapter amend portions of this phase and resubmit for written approval.
- D. The petitioning chapter will become official when the following final criteria has been met, submitted to, and approved (in writing) by the State Committee:
 1. A minimum of 10 members must have completed the initial 40-hour training course.
 2. The petitioning chapter has established its local bylaws and has elected a slate of officers.
 3. The petitioning Chapter provides the state program office with its primary Chapter mailing address and the name, contact information, and position of all chapter officers, committee chairs and advisors (this form may be obtained from the Texas Master Naturalist Program Office).

4. The State program office must have received the information requested in Phase II, D1-D3. The program office will then review all materials and submit a recommendation to the State Committee for approval. Upon review the petitioning chapter will be notified via letter with (A) their Chapter Charter Certificate for their acknowledgement as an official Texas Master Naturalist Chapter or (B) further recommendations by the State Committee for Chapter Charter approval. The date in which the notification is written is the official acknowledgement and Charter of the new Texas Master Naturalist Chapter.

II. Operation of a Chapter (see the Texas Master Naturalist Program Management Guidelines available from the Texas Master Naturalist Program Office).

III. 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.

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