

August 11, 2020

Training Directors Meeting, on Zoom, 1:30-2:45

Attendance:

Mary Meuth, Michelle Haggerty (hosts), Sheila Endres, Mary Beth Lampe, Shelli Ellerbe, Glenda Kelly, Maryann Matthews, Beverly Guthrie, Jean Suplick, Randy Beehn, Rena Sutpin, Nancy Angell, Debra Jones, Karen and John Gardner, Kippra Hopper, Marsha Stephens, Nancy Phillips, Michelle Darnell, Becky Gullette, Janet Mason, Carol Hawkiins, Jeanette Geiman, Nelda Tuthill, Kay Murphy, Amber Grubb, Shannon Westveer, Lena Zappia, Mary Ann Melton, Mary Schwartz, Regina Dale, Joni Gillis, Scott Ball, Zoe Roscoe, Sheryl Pender

Sheila Endres taking notes

After going over some tips for the online meeting, such as muting your microphone unless speaking to the group, Mary announced this meeting would not be recorded but presentation slides, notes and other related materials will be sent to all participants after the meeting.

The first item on the agenda was the newly announced return to service guidelines. Full details were sent to all chapter presidents, but the essential point was group in-person meetings of 50% or less capacity of the space are allowed as long as social distancing can be practiced and with a maximum of 50 people. We interpret this guideline to apply indoors as well as outside. Face coverings are required unless the county is exempt per Gov. Abbott's orders.

The state has provided several training sessions for the new Webex regional accounts and attendance has been good. If your chapter still needs Webex training, please put in a Help Desk ticket and they will arrange training for you.

The Webex accounts use the regional gmail accounts for login.

ID: [Region#TMN@gmail.com](mailto:Region#TMN@gmail.com)

Pwd: Naturalist#!

Where # is the number of the region your chapter is in. For example, if your region is 2, then the ID would be [Region2TMN@gmail.com](mailto:Region2TMN@gmail.com) and the password would be Naturalist2! The map of regions will be added to the presentation slides.

Webex meetings hosted through these regional accounts have a maximum of 2000 participants and no time limit.

If you find that another chapter has reserved your regional account at the same time you need it, contact Michelle Haggerty. She has other accounts that can be used to host meetings if needed.

Another source of training that might be useful to those chapters planning online classes is being offered this Thursday, Aug 13, from 1:30-2:30. "Let's Take This Online: Virtual Training Design/Facilitation Workshop" will be led by professional online trainers and designers and will offer advice on how to organize classes for distance learning, how to keep learners involved in their training, etc. Several of this meetings attendees have already registered for the workshop and everyone is encouraged to sign up. The registration link will be sent to all attendees after this meeting.

The state program is organizing ways to share resources for online training. Mary has a press release that will be sent out today or tomorrow. Some ways you can help:

- Put your basic training schedule on your website
- If you are recording your classes, post the presentation on the TMN YouTube channel. Please do any editing of your recording before posting.
- Share upcoming advanced training dates on the state calendar
- Encourage your members to look at the state calendar for advanced training opportunities. Of course any advanced training through other chapters would need pre-approval from your local chapter before entering those hours in VMS.

The following training topics are more universal and their content might be more easily shared among chapters:

Land Stewardship  
Historic Naturalists  
Ecological Regions  
Ecological Concepts  
Texas Water Resources  
Citizen Sciences  
Laws and Ethics  
Interpretation/Volunteers as Teachers

Questions regarding online classes? How are the numbers of registrants compared to in person training? Balcones Canyonlands said their numbers are good and participants seem to really like that classes are online. Cross Timbers said they have had good response and they are at near maximum capacity. South Texas chapter reported only 13 were willing to take the classes online, which is fewer than normal.

Are there pros and cons to having more or fewer online trainees? We don't know but that would be a great question to pose during the workshop on Thursday.

Mary said she would send all the attendees a link to SLACK which is a discussion option tool. It allows document sharing and a discussion board for groups based on topics.

Betsy Palkowsky said her committee is gathering activities for trainees and would post to the state website. Jean Suplick, also on the committee said their training completed this week. A favorite activity was Tree identification. They took a group of ten to a site and divided into smaller groups, social distancing and masked, to identify trees. They also hosted a virtual version of this activity that eight people chose to participate in.

Amber Grubb commented that their first class was August 4<sup>th</sup>. They are a small chapter (Bluestem) and have 10 participants in the training, which is normal for them. What they have noticed is this group is predominately younger than normal and many are teachers. She said turning off your own video has helped in bandwidth issues a great deal.

Can field trips be shown live only, or can they be prerecorded with live Q&A? Mary Meuth commented that she thought both options were acceptable as long as trainees were able to ask questions and relevant discussion was conducted.

Regarding taking or making-up classes through other chapters, Mary commented that as long as the other chapter was in the same general area, she didn't see it as a problem. The point of the training is to educate people about the specific area they are trying to support. Therefore it would need to be evaluated whether that chapter's training session would be applicable to your area. This alternative would be better used for one of the more universal topics.

The Annual Meeting will be held online this year, Wednesday through Saturday, Oct 14-17, with some additional offerings during the weeks prior to the meeting. Registration is \$55 and is open to non-TMNs. For couples, you only need one registration to view the various presentations. However, if you want to watch one topic at a certain time and your partner wants to view a different topic and the same time, you would need separate registrations to view both. FAQs are on the meeting website:

<https://txmn.tamu.edu/2020-annual-meeting>.

There are two other events being planned for the annual meeting: a Field Sessions day and a Virtual Fun Run. Mary said she didn't have all the plans finalized yet, but plans to send the details out to all the chapters.

An online webinar on Other Ways to Earn Volunteer Service Hours is scheduled for Sept 2, 9-12 am. Volunteer service specialists from Texas A&M and Texas Parks and Wildlife will each have 5-10 minutes to present a volunteer activity and how to sign up for it. The intent is to provide an online service fair that concentrates on volunteer projects that can be done at home through a computer. The "Save the Date" email is going out to all chapter presidents today or tomorrow that will include a schedule. You will be able to view a single project, for example, at 9:15, or you can watch the entire presentation.

This event is not replacing the Volunteer Fair that is part of the annual meeting.

During the wrap-up of the meeting, Shannon Westveer suggested it is a good idea to have a practice session with your trainees before classes start so all participants can test out their equipment and get a better feel of the online meeting application.

Michelle added that if you have not registered for Thursday's Virtual Training Workshop, please do.