

A Roadmap -- Governing Documents for TMN Chapters: What They Are and How to Use Them

The Texas Master Naturalist™ Program governing documents for a chapter are the

- *Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct*
- *Bylaws*
- *Chapter Management and Operations Protocols (CMOP)*
- *Chapter Operating Handbook (COH)*

Chapter Bylaws for the Texas Master Naturalist (TMN) Program must be adopted verbatim by each chapter with only two allowable changes, as with every Chapter Bylaws update done in the past. Chapters may choose between one year or two years for the term of officers/directors and may choose to include an Addendum for 501 (c) (3) Chapters. Once adopted, the Bylaws establish the rules of the road for the chapter. Chapter Bylaws only change under one of the following circumstances: the state office publishes a revised version of the document, or the chapter chooses to change the term of office or add or remove the Addendum. [Reference the most current version of the Bylaws template available on the TMN Program state website.]

- Not editable by TMN Chapters
- Operationally effective at the state level on January 1, 2023
- Adoption Process & Timeline:
 - **Form** – Chapters fill out form with 2 Options: Terms of Office and 501.c.3 Status
 - Using the form below provides a state office pre-approved document
 - Goal – by October 8th
 - **Template Bylaws** – The TMN Program provides a template for all chapters to use to adopt Chapter Bylaws.
 - Will send this state approved Bylaws to Chapter Advisors for approval
 - Advisors will send to Chapters once approved
 - Goal – by October 15
 - **Notification** – Chapters will notify members at least 15 days in advance of Membership Meeting where vote will happen
 - Notice must be in written form via conventional mail, email, or other equivalent means and must include the date, time, and place of the meeting.
 - Scenario Timeline – Established with a November chapter membership meeting in mind
 - **Chapter Membership Meeting**
 - Vote occurs and Chapter Bylaws adopted with two-thirds vote of members constituting a quorum
 - **State Office** – Chapters notify state office of adoption via form on website
 - Chapters will submit their adoption notice to the TMN state office with a copy of their chapter meeting minutes documenting the vote record within 30 days of membership vote.

The **Chapter Management and Operations Protocols (CMOP)** documents all the procedural requirements for managing and operating a TMN chapter. The *Bylaws* set the rules of the road; the *CMOP* gives specific directions and instructions. All chapters must comply with and adhere to the procedures defined in the *CMOP*. [Reference the most current version of the *CMOP* available on the TMN Program state website.]

- Chapters must adhere to the CMOP at least by January 1 2023,
- Not editable.
- No adoption process.

The **Chapter Operating Handbook (COH)** is a document tailored to the individual chapter while also providing a consistent statewide framework for standard operations across the state. It is intended to assist the chapter in structuring and defining in detail its local operational procedures and practices. The *Chapter Operating Handbook Framework* document provided by the state office assures compliance with the *Bylaws* and the *CMOP* while allowing flexibility for the chapter to adapt its *COH* to local needs and resources. [Reference the most current version of the *COH* “framework” available on the TMN Program state website.]

- Operationally effective at the state level on January 1, 2023
- Editable by Chapters in sections where { } brackets and *italics font* are in place.
- Chapters must work off the state offered 2023 COH Framework document and may edit based on the sections in brackets and italics.
- Adoption Process:
 - **Revisions** – Revisions can be made following State Framework in sections noted by { } brackets and *italics font*.
 - While not required, Chapters are encouraged to send substantial changes to state office early in the process (prior to board or membership vote) for a compliance review with Bylaws and CMOP.
 - **Board** – Revisions must be approved by a two-thirds vote of the board members in attendance, either in person or remotely/virtually, at a regular board meeting
 - **Notice** – General membership must be notified in writing (conventional mail, email, or other equivalent means) of the proposed amendments or revisions at least 15 days before the next chapter meeting, with notice that the ratification vote will be held at that meeting.
 - **Discussion & Vote** – The general membership will have the opportunity to discuss the changes at the meeting. Approval requires a majority vote of those in attendance, either in person or remotely/virtually.
 - **State Office** – Once a chapter has adopted, revised, or amended the COH, an electronic copy must be sent to the TMN state office within 30 days.
 - Submit via state website form

All members of the TMN Program must adhere to the *Code of Ethics* and *Standards of Conduct*. Those two documents establish the values and principles upon which the TMN Program is built and provide clarification when questions arise about member behavior and intentions for the program. [Reference the most current versions of those two documents available on the TMN Program state website.]

New members of the TMN Program shall be provided with copies of all these basic governing documents to learn how the program and the chapter functions. Chapter members elected or appointed to board positions shall review all these documents to gain familiarity with their respective responsibilities.

To access all these documents provided by the TMN state office (and others relevant to TMN chapters), visit <https://txmn.tamu.edu/chapter-resources/chapter-documents/> .