

TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST LAND MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
(LMAP)

Subject: Program development to assist landowners in the naturally beneficial development of their property.

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The Texas Master Naturalist Hill Country Chapter has a program called LMAP (Land Management Assistance Program). LMAP has been in existence for over 20 years and was originally developed and administered by noted naturalist, Jim Stanley. Since its existence and through the end of 2024, it has conducted over 586 visits covering over 48,296 acres in the 10 Hill Country counties. The program is limited to property consisting of 10 acres or more. Visits average 82 acres, with most being 20 to 100 acres, and the largest being 795 acres. Jim Stanley retired in 2021, and Billy Guin currently coordinates the program. The program is contacted by landowners through the Chapter TMN website, through word of mouth, and by contact with the public at local seminars, presentations, and events.

Well-trained Texas Master Naturalist volunteers meet with and visit the landowners' properties and discuss their property goals, plans, and concerns. The properties are walked with the owners and/or driven, and:

1. Potential land use issues are identified, and possible solutions are discussed with the landowner and their concerns, issues, and misconceptions;
2. The TMN volunteer team helps survey and identify trees, shrubs, wildflowers, and grasses on the property;
3. Good stewardship practices that may apply to the property are explained; and
4. The visit is followed by a written report and a list of identified plants, including a list of experts who can provide additional information and assistance.

CONTENT OF THE PRESENTATION

The content of the presentation will be to explain the LMAP program and explain how local chapters can develop similar programs. An explanation of how landowner visits are conducted, and examples of materials provided to the landowner will be available for examination by the audience.

Typical subjects routinely explained to the landowners would include:

Erosion issues and how to correct them.

Oak Wilt and how to prevent it.

Ball Moss myths and misconceptions.

Release of liability of LMAP and HELM, Texas Parks and Wildlife, and Texas AgriLife by landowner.

Cedar – The good and the bad.

Invasive plants - (Natives and non-natives that spread quickly and cause harm) and exotics (non-natives that may not spread out of control, therefore not an invasive, unless they do spread out of control).

Browse lines and whitetails and exotics overpopulation.

Wildlife valuation tax advantages (rate based on productivity value versus market value); three of seven categories must be accomplished (habitat control, erosion control, predator control, providing supplemental water, providing shelters, conducting wildlife population census counts. See local appraisal district.

Protection of native plants – Caging, deer control, exclosures, enclosures, and brush piles.

Advantages of native plants – Drought resistant, insect, pest, and deer resistant.

Promotion of TMN classes

SUGGESTIONS FOR POTENTIAL NEW PROGRAMS

Property size limitations; LMAP is 10 acres or above;

Phone evaluations, suggestions, and advice in lieu of actual visit;

Referrals to other agencies – Texas Forest Service; local AgriLife agent for each county, Texas Parks and Wildlife, PGARP (Pollinator Garden Appreciation and Recognition Program);

Opportunity for landowner contributions to TMN to cover printing costs and material purchases.

HOW TO GET THE PROGRAM PUBLICIZED

Speak to new TMN classes

TMN website – description of program, how to apply, fill out application form

Word of mouth; talk it up

Rack cards at AgriLife and county courthouses

Booths at nature events, nature centers, NPSOT meetings, and speaking events

OTHER TIPS

Stay apolitical and away from controversial subjects

Be on time – early

Get good directions and gate codes

Do not guess – Be accurate

Get liability release signed by landowner

Prepare handouts and booklets for landowners

On large properties, ask if 4x4 is available for riding around the property

Mowing – Suggest to landowner not to mow prior to visit