# Training Director Round Table

October 24, 2026

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# Housekeeping

Photo: Sheila Ellwood, Capital Area Chapter

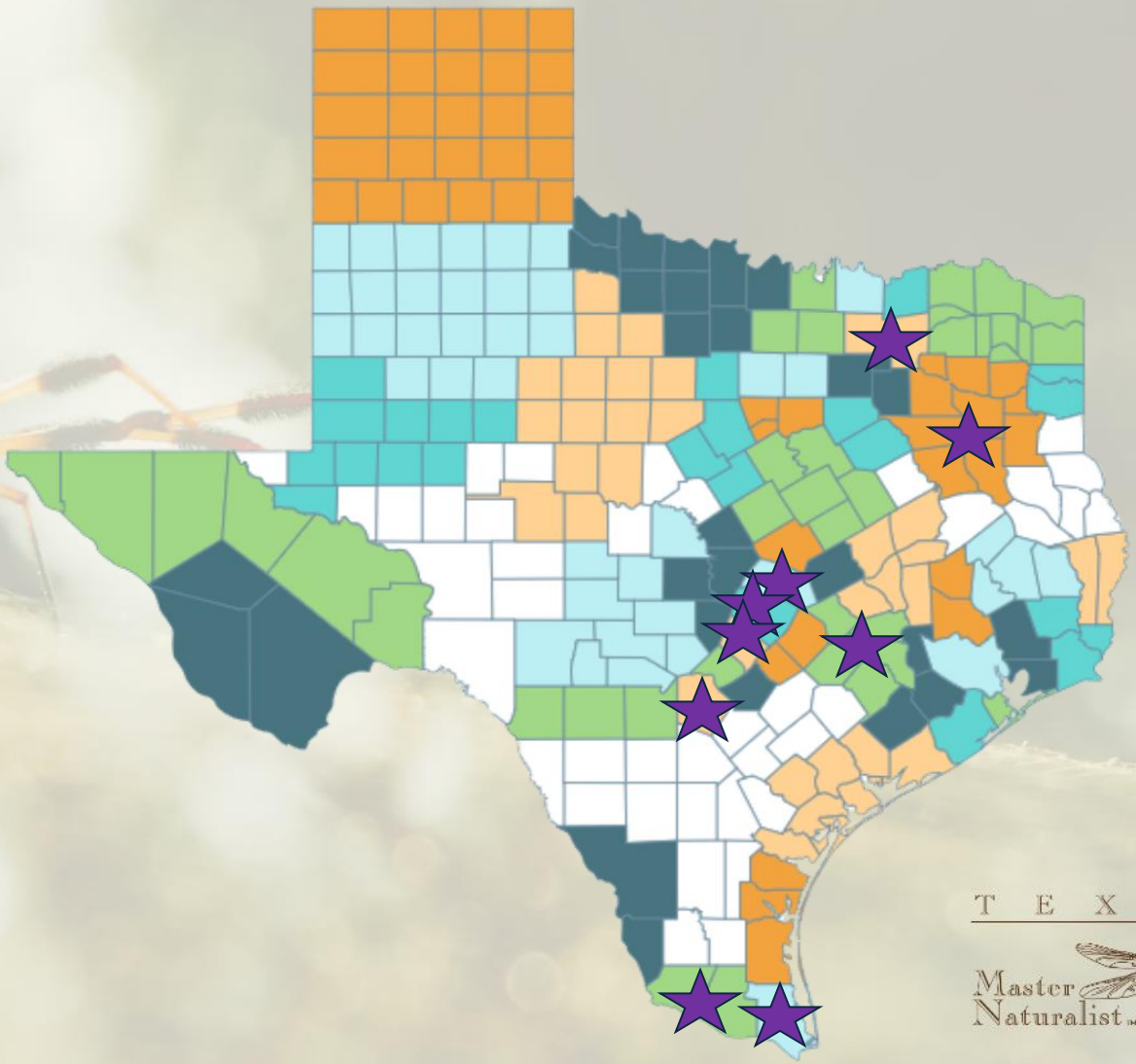
- The recording will be uploaded to the Naturalist News page
- The next round tables will be in 2027 (TBA)
- Note Taker: _____

# Fill out the 2027 Training Class form to have your fall classes added to the website!

https://txmn.tamu.edu/blog/2027-volunteer-training-courses/

**10** chapters with classes starting in January or later!

Alamo Area
Balcones Canyonlands
Blackland Prairie
Capital Area
East Texas
Gideon Lincecum
Good Water
Hays County
Rio Grande Valley
South Texas Border



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# #TMNTuesday Commonly Asked Q's

- Are 2026 TMNTuesdays available for AT hours for trainees?
  - Yes! AT hours from TMNTuesdays within the same year can be applied to initial training.
- Are previous year's TMNTuesdays available for 2026 AT hours?
  - No. Only calendar year TMNTuesdays can be counted for AT. But you can watch them for your own education/entertainment!
- How long after I watch a #TMNTuesday video can I log my AT hours?
  - You can log it right away! However, in order to stay within the 45-Day rule for logging AT hours, you will need to log your hours at most 45 days after watching the video. Because you can view the video after the live event, please report the day you view the video, not the original date the video aired.
- Will the #TMNTuesday events be recorded?
  - Yes! These will be recorded each month and shared to this website by the following day.
- Do I need to register for the #TMNTuesday each month?
  - Yes, but you can register for the whole year's series with one page - https://txmn.tamu.edu/tmntuesdays/

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# VMS Updates

Photo: Anna Mallam, Balcones Canyonlands Chapter

# NEW Trainee/volunteer Impacts of the VMS Updates ("Onboarding" Workflow)

## "Onboarding" for new trainees/volunteers rolled out in VMS 9/28/26

Onboarding includes all of the same steps:

working through setting up a profile

signing waivers

agreeing to background checks, etc.

And (NEW) watching the video series (7-8 videos)

Watching a series of videos totaling ~1 hour:

**ADA Training Video 13:41**

**Customer Service Training Video 7:41**

Safety Video 7:29

Social Media Video 2:51

TPWD Overview Video 9:11

Volunteering with Children Video 7:44

**EEO, Sexual Harassment & Discrimination Training Video 9:55**

**Conduct & Ethics Training 10:32**

- All of our chapters currently training had members in the system before the roll out date.
- New trainees being accepted now for January training classes are working through the new onboarding process.

# NEW Trainee/volunteer Impacts of the VMS Updates ("Onboarding" Workflow)

**Impacts to New volunteers AND Chapters:**

Front end training applications at the Chapter level stays the same:

1. interested volunteers apply to the chapter **(usually paper application/other online process)**
2. chapter makes class selections and vets list with VMS Help Desk
3. trainee sets up profile in VMS and completes Onboarding workflow

- Chapters may have to add a touchpoint with their new trainees before training actually starts ***(think orientation meeting, mentor meeting pre-training) (Strategic Planning Survey feedback highlighted this as a need too!)

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# NEW Trainee/volunteer Impacts of the VMS Updates ("Onboarding" Workflow)

## Impacts to New volunteers AND Chapters (continued):

- New Volunteers MUST complete and PASS the background check stage BEFORE training starts – Ideally, ALL trainees complete the Onboarding workflow before training starts else, they will not be able to report hours of any kind (i.e. they are noncompliant).

  Chapters may need to reconsider their application periods and timelines (closing applications earlier and giving enough front end time for new volunteers to complete the new onboarding process)

- Know that the background check stage can sometimes take up to 2 weeks (but is usually less)

- Once "compliant" in the system Trainees/New volunteers can track up to 1 hour of AT Hours for completing the entire video series.

  NOTE: *"Onboarding" is a work in progress in the live system with the VMS company- It is bumpy right now and there's a lot we're still learning and working through daily

  Work with your local Chapter TMN VMS Admins

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# Group Discussion

Photo: Jim Walker, East Texas Chapter

**Serve as friendly face and motivator:**

- Make personal contact with mentee whenever at events whenever possible
- Acknowledge trainees' accomplishments
- Inform mentee of specific opportunity that mentee might enjoy

**Serve as information resource:**

- Explain and remind about course/graduation requirements
- Provide information about volunteer opportunities
- Answer any other questions or refer mentee to appropriate person

**Serve as record tracker:**

- Touch base with trainee after each absence
- Keep up with mentees' required site visit attendance
- Communicate about hours as needed when hours reports come out
- Remind mentees of 45-day deadline to report AT and Volunteer hours

**Tasks:**

- Call or email each mentee once acceptance letters go out for introductions/welcoming
- Get to know mentees as soon as possible and visit with them during classes and events
- Help mentees create carpools as needed
- Help mentees connect with appropriate volunteer projects
- Touch base with mentees at least once a month to keep lines of communication open
- Touch base with mentee after each absence
- Keep track of each mentees volunteer/AT hours when reports come out. Encourage or applaud them as needed.

**Mentor Guidelines used by the Hays County Chapter. What would you add?**

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# What are some highs you experienced during this year's training course(s)?

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Thank you!