

MINUTES
MID-COAST CHAPTER, TEXAS MASTER
NATURALIST FEBRUARY 14, 2026 GENERAL
MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The Mid-Coast Chapter, Texas Master Naturalist™, Inc. General Membership met hybrid remote, and in-person at 10:00 A.M. on Saturday, February 14, 2026, at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center, located at 1 Wildlife Circle, Austwell, TX 77950

Program

Patrick Hartigan 30 mins (10:00-10:30 with Q&A)

Subject: Ecoregions, Rare Plant Communities, and Species of Greatest Conservation Concern in the Texas Coastal Bend.

ANWR Park Ranger Viv Atkinson 30 mins (10:30-11:00 with Q&A)

Subject: ANWR

Business Meeting

The business meeting was called to order at 11:20 A.M. by President Steve Ferguson. Secretary Janet Cunningham recorded the minutes. The meeting adjourned at 1:30 for __2__ hours CB: Chapter Business plus individual travel time. The AT presentation was 1 hour, spanning from 10 am to 11 am.

TMN Business - The new TMN Bylaws were voted on by the chapter members. Bob Cunningham moved first to approve the bylaws and Ele Chew seconded the motion. The bylaws were approved by a unanimously.

Meeting Attendance

There was a total 33 attendees in person, of which all members were in good standing. 13 members participated via Zoom. Nine officers and directors formed a quorum.

Secretary's Report by Janet Cunningham

The Board of Directors meeting was held on January 10th, 2026, at the Aransas County Agrilife

Extension Office. The meeting was hybrid and called to order at 10:00 am. President, Steve Ferguson, presided at the meeting.

The minutes were posted on the chapter website on February 10, 2026.
The minutes were approved by consensus.

President's Report by Steve Ferguson, President

"It Was a Very Good Year" — A Review of 2025

2025 was an exceptional year for the Mid-Coast Chapter, marked by strong leadership, remarkable volunteer engagement, and record-setting results across multiple fronts.

Key highlights include:

- **Leadership and Board Transitions**
Smooth leadership changes and an engaged Board strengthened chapter governance and continuity.
- **The Class of 2025**
The Class of '25 has proven to be an outstanding cohort—energetic, committed, and already making meaningful contributions to the chapter.
- **Plant Sale Success**
Our annual Plant Sale exceeded all expectations, setting new benchmarks for both revenue and volunteer participation.
- **Expanded Outreach Initiatives**
The chapter continued to excel in community outreach, expanding both the scope and impact of our educational and conservation efforts.
- **Fundraising Achievements**
The ad hoc Fundraising Committee attracted more donors and generated more contributions than ever anticipated, significantly strengthening our financial position.

What's Ahead — New Possibilities for 2026

Looking ahead, 2026 presents exciting new opportunities for impactful service and strategic growth.

- **New High-Impact Conservation Projects**

We are exploring significant new service opportunities in partnership with **Powderhorn State Park** and **Aransas First**, following its acquisition of the Bailly Ranch in western Aransas County.

- **Aransas Pathways** has been designated as the Aransas County entity responsible for land-use management of the new County Park.
- Steve Ferguson was appointed by the Aransas County Commissioners Court to serve on the Aransas Pathways Steering Committee.

- **Naturalist–Student Partnership Program**

In partnership with Rockport-Fulton High School, the chapter has developed a new naturalist-student initiative aligned with the statewide Texas Master Naturalist Program Junior Naturalist effort.

- The program is titled **SEED — Students Engaged in Ecosystem Discovery**.
- SEED will officially launch in January 2026.

- **Planning for the Future**

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- Members of the Board of Directors and other chapter leaders will convene a long-range planning workshop this spring to focus on the next three to five years.
- Given the Mid-Coast Chapter’s large geographic footprint and the extraordinary diversity of ecosystems we serve, this effort will help us clarify priorities and identify where the chapter can make the greatest difference for both people and the natural resources of the Coastal Bend.
- We anticipate engaging a professional planning facilitator to support and guide this strategic conversation.
- **Presidential Transition Notice:** Steve Ferguson announced that upon the conclusion of his 2026 term—having served three years as Chapter President—he will not seek nor accept the position of president in 2027.

Report of the Past-President by Bob Cunningham

Chapter meeting: February 14, 2026

Mid-Coast Chapter, Texas Master Naturalist

The primary duties of the Past-President are twofold. First, to act as a resource for the current President. Second, to serve as Chair of the Nominating Committee pursuant to the Chapter Bylaws.

The Nominating Committee comprises the Chair and Chapter members appointed by the President:

D'Ann Williams, Linda Swickheimer, Gary Ward, and Chapter Advisor, and Chapter advisor, Amy Nowlin.

Election of Officers for 2026 by Chapter Membership

The Committee determined a slate of candidates nominated to serve as Officers for the one-year term in 2026. The recommended slate was presented to the Chapter membership via email notification at least 15 days prior to the last general membership meeting of the year. A majority of Members attending that November 8, 2025, meeting voted to approve the slate, without opposition.

Officers so approved for the 2026 term are: President, Steve Ferguson; Vice-President, Ele Chew; Treasurer, Julie Hejducek; and Secretary, Janet Cunningham. Their term runs for a single year, expiring after the annual election of Officers at the last meeting of Chapter membership in November.

Anticipated for 2026

President Steve Ferguson has specified an intent to resign at the end of 2026 after serving three years in that position. Upon his replacement, Steve would assume the position of Immediate Past-President in place of the current incumbent.

Vice President Ele Chew also has indicated her intention to resign at the end of her 2026 term.

Accordingly, the Nominating Committee will focus on seeking qualified Chapter members willing and able to serve as President and Vice-President in 2027. Additionally, the Committee may continue to consider candidates for the Secretary and Treasurer positions.

Candidates for Officer positions must be Chapter members in good standing at the time of election (or appointment by the Board for interim replacements during the term) and must be Certified Texas Master Naturalists. Good standing is defined as current in dues and in compliance with the Texas Master Naturalist Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct.

All Chapter members are asked to reach out to members who may be qualified and willing to serve as President—or who are interested in any other Officer position--and refer them to me or President Steve.

Bob Cunningham

Past-President, MCTMN

Treasurer Report

Mid-Coast Texas Master Naturalist Inc.

Chapter Meeting 02/14/2026

Aransas National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center located at 1 Wildlife Circle, Austwell, TX

Treasurer's Report as of: 01/31/2026

Financial Balances - Overview (as of 01/31/2026)

Contingency Reserves 01/31

Certificates of Deposit	\$13,584.12
Money Market Funds	\$7,153.22
Total Contingency Reserves	<u>\$20,737.34</u>

Bank Checking as of 01/31	<u>\$52,740.86</u>
Checking account balance as of 01/01	\$53,992.72
Less cleared items	-1,251.86
Less outstanding items	
Operating bank balance as of 01/31	<u>\$52,740.86</u>
YTD Total Revenue as of 01/31	\$ 428.86
Less YTD Total Expenses as of 01/31	1,223.44
Net Loss as of 01/31	<u>\$ -794.58</u>

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Treasurer's Report as of: 01/31/2026

- Recap from Page 1: \$52,740.86 in checking, and \$20,737.34 in contingency accounts (CD and MM). Total cash on hand: \$73,478.20. Revenue was \$428.86, and expenses were \$1,223.44. Net Loss as of 01/31 was \$-794.58.
- The Board will be conducting a strategic planning session soon.
- Three bank reconciliations and Quicken backup completed 02/01. COH states backup Quicken monthly. With the use of Online Quicken, COH will need revision with next update. Backup is not necessary with Online Quicken.
- Budget was discussed and reviewed at the January Board Meeting 01/10. The 2026 budget was approved unanimously 01/30.
- New signature cards need to be updated at Prosperity Bank with the new officers: Ele Chew as VP and Janet Cunningham as Secretary. Per Deborah Laird at Prosperity Bank in Rockport, signed copies of the minutes need to be delivered and signed by the *incoming*

Secretary. Minutes need to state that outgoing officers are to be removed (Brigid and Ele) and incoming officers are to be added (Ele and Janet). The minutes should reflect legal names since IDs will be required. Once Deborah has completed her updates, the incoming secretary and VP can go to the Rockport bank to sign new resolutions.

- State and city of Fulton sales taxes were paid 01/04 and IRS Form 990-N (e-postcard) was submitted 01/2; both were for tax year 2025.
- Regarding dues payments, as of 01/31, roughly 11% were Zelle, 25% were checks, and 64% were credit cards. Square fees from credit card paid totaled \$14.78.

Membership Director Report by Kimberly Ballard

As of January 31, 2026, our chapter has 141 members eligible to report hours. This count now includes the 20 new Members-in-Training.

Seventy-nine members have reported hours earned (56% of the total eligible) in 28 opportunities. These hours total 1283.25 VS and 55.5 AT, representing a value of \$30,791.25. The Members-in-Training contributed 49 VS and 12.5 AT.

Cumulative hours since inception in 2000 total 270,863.75 VS and 28,792.25 AT from 385 all-time members in 76 different opportunities. These hours represent a cumulative value of \$6,892,088 and will be updated on the website soon.

A new roster including the MCTMN Class of 2026 Members-in-Training is scheduled to be distributed this month. You may email hourskeeper@midcoast-tmn.org if you need it immediately.

We have received three new applications for Initial Training 2027, and currently have three potential deferrals.

IT Director — Tatum Dunn and Margaret Durst

Margaret & Tatum have been super busy as always :)). with Initial Training for 2026. We had a successful orientation, although a bit abbreviated due to weather.

Thank you to all of the Board members, presenters & chapter members who were able to make it & to meet our new trainees!!

We had a very successful first Zoom training on Geology of the Coastal Bend & introductions to Ecoregions of Texas, followed by a great first field day at the Museum of the Coastal Bend in Victoria.

Up next is our Zoom training on Upland Ecology, and our field day held at Welder Wildlife Refuge, ambassador'd by Miss Sally & Mr Greg!

AT Director - Bobbi Rankin

Since I started, this January 3 rd , 2026 as AT Director, I have processed 19 new AT opportunities.

There has been 8 additional AT ops available for 2026 previously approved by Debbie Kucera.

This does not include the TMN Tuesdays or “Brown Bag Lectures”.

AT input/research noted as “Chapter Business” for me since January 3 rd has been 12.5 hours.

Projects Director - 2026 Projects Budget

- Project expenditures should be somewhat proportional MCTMN volunteer participation or support our mission in a particularly advantageous manner (e.g., Chapter Visibility, Conservation Need)
- Ideally chapter partners should pay for material costs
- Volunteers should not have to pay out-of-the-pocket to volunteer\$3000 for Native Landscapes / Pollinator Gardens
 - Expenses should be limited to projects where MCTMN is responsible for planning and execution
 - MCTMN should be careful to not overcommit ourselves

- \$250 for Monarch Monitoring
 - Tags, nets, Public Outreach materials
- \$5000 for SEED Project (Steve Ferguson to address)
- \$5500 for unforeseen/unanticipated Project expenses • \$13,750
Total
 - **Upcoming Opportunities**
 - Great Backyard Bird Count is going on this weekend
 - Crab Trap Removal Program (coastwide), Feb 21 – Mar 1
 - Billy Sandifer Big Shell Beach Cleanup on PINS, Feb 28
(Contact Friends of Padre)
 - • McAlister Property Improvement, 2nd Wed of the
Month, Victoria area (Contact Wilfred Korth)

Native Plant Sale Manager – no report submitted

Chapter Advisor – no report submitted

Class Rep Report

Hello Janet and Ele, - The Class of 2026 seems to be off to a good start according to their hours reported. 16 of the 20 Volunteers as of January have logged 49 hrs of VS and 12.25 of AT hrs. Not bad!! - Nicole Reagan