

MINUTES
MID-COAST CHAPTER, TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST
JULY 11, 2026 BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MEETING

The Mid-Coast Chapter, Texas Master Naturalist™, Inc. Board of Director's met on Saturday, July 11, 2026 at 10:00 AM at the Aransas County Agrilife Extension Service Office at 892 Airport Road, Rockport, Texas 78382.

Business Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 AM. President Steve Ferguson presided at the meeting and Mid-Coast TMN Secretary Dee Mahaffey recorded the minutes. The meeting adjourned at 1:00 PM for 3 hours + Travel Time CB: Chapter business/Chapter Meeting.

Meeting Attendance:

A total of 30 members were present. Board members consisted of 10 in-person and 1 using the OWL/Zoom chat function, constituting a quorum. In addition, 19 members in standing were in attendance.

Awards:

Initial Certification enamel dragonfly & plaque—Presented: Petra Hockey, Julie Kay, Maggie Luebben, Denise Middleton, Carl Ruschhaupt, **Jennifer Besinaiz**. Not presented: Frank Solis, Mark Croudy, Brianna Hanselman, Mary Wilkins, Sally Crofutt, Larry Green, Martha McLeod

Milestone Awards

250-hour bronze dragonfly—Presented: Linda Daley Not presented: Sandra Garcia, Tatum Dunn,

Linda Daley, **Denise Middleton**

Silver 500-Hour Milestone dragonfly—Not presented: Janet James, Scott Swanson, Debbi Roskey

Gold 1,000-Hour Milestone dragonfly –

Polished Silver 2,500-Hour dragonfly – Not presented: Bob Friedrichs

Gold/Ruby 4,000-Hour dragonfly –

Gold/Diamond 5,000-Hour dragonfly –

Leadership Award –

Recertification Pins

2023 TX Ecoregions—Not presented: Kayla Clark

2024 Rattlesnake—Presented: Not presented: Chris Andersen, Laura Andersen, Kayla Clark, Judy

Goodner, Martha McLeod, Scott Swanson, Gary Ward

2025 Roadrunner – Presented: Kathryn Geer-Miller, Chelsea Watson. Not presented: Bobby

Garner, Melissa Guthrie, Jarrett Kernen, Martha McLeod, Shirley Richardson, Steve Simmons,

Frank Solis, Marilyn Stewart, Scott Swanson, Gary Ward, Vickie Wilson

2026 Bobcat – Presented Amy Nowlin, Jim Case, Linda Daley, Petra Hockey (awarded June 6th),

Cindy Hielscher, Nicole Reagan, Carl Russchaut (awarded June 6th – Not yet earned). Not

presented: Patrick Hartigan, Margaret Durst, Kimberly Ballard, **James Black, Wilfred Korth,**

Barbara Mathis, Janet McCrea, Debbi Roskey, Scott Swanson

Reports:

Vice President Report:

Presented by Ele Chew, Vice President.

Meeting Locations:

August 8 General Meeting – City of Palacios Pavillion – Kirk Feuerbacher, Texas Nature Conservancy on Refugio-Goliad Prarie Pro9ject and Attwater Prairie Chicken and Jim Case, MCTMN on Backyard Birding

November 14 General Meeting – VEG Pavillion, 283 Bachelor Dr., Victoria TX – Member Spotlight

2027 Reservations:

BOD for January, April, July, October at Coastal Oaks Garden, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension-Aransas County, 892 Airport Road, Rockport, Texas 78382

GM February and May at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, 1 Wildlife Circle, Austwell, Texas

It was discussed that the Vice President budget is \$400, but that most locations require a refundable deposit and the budget number is not enough to cover multiple deposits and honorariums for speakers. For 2026, the VP was unable to give honorariums to speakers as the funds were being used for deposits, and she had to write personal checks for some of the deposits and hope that a full refund would be given. Suggested that the Vice President's budget be increased for 2027 to accommodate the deposits.

Secretary's Report by Ele Chew:

Minutes read by Ele Chew for Dee Mahaffey

The Mid-Coast Chapter of Texas Master Naturalist™, Inc. held a meeting at the Aransas County Agrilife Extension Office on April 11, 2026. The meeting was called to order at 10:00 AM, with President Steve Ferguson presiding. Secretary Janet Cunningham recorded the minutes. A motion to adjourn was made by Ele Chew and seconded by Kim Ballard. The motion was approved by a vote, and the meeting was officially adjourned at 12:05 PM. The minutes of the meeting were posted on the MCTMN website on June 29, 2026.

Minutes approval

Moved by Bob Cunningham

2nd by Bill Burge

Approved through acclamation

Treasurer's Report:

Presented by Julie Hejducek, Treasurer

Mid-Coast Texas Master Naturalist Inc.

Aransas County AgriLife Extension Service Office

892 Airport Rd, Rockport, TX 78382

Dated 07/11/2026, Treasurer's Report as of: 06/30/2026

Financial Balances - Overview (as of 06/30/2026)

Contingency Reserves 06/30

Certificates of Deposit \$13,707.96

Money Market Funds \$7,188.56

Total Contingency Reserves \$20,896.52

Bank Checking as of 06/30 \$45,858.23

Checking account balance as of 06/01 \$46,865.44

Less cleared items **-1,007.21**

Less outstanding items

Operating bank balance as of 06/30 \$45,858.23

YTD Total Revenue as of 06/30 \$ 1,817.87

Less YTD Total Expenses as of 06/30 9,335.90

Net Loss as of 06/30 **\$-7,518.03**

☐ Three bank reconciliations completed 07/07. No Quicken back ups necessary with updated

Quicken. COH will be updated soon.

☐ 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/Prosperity has completed her updates, the incoming secretary and VP can go to the Rockport bank to sign new resolutions.

□ The Prosperity debit card expired in June, and a new card was issued and picked up at

Prosperity Bank. Payments were updated for Kool Storage, Microsoft, Intuit and AIT on 05/19.

□ The Chapter received a letter from the IRS stating that the Chapter must begin withholding

FIT from an employee (name and SS withheld here) because a W2 was filed using our EIN.

The Chapter does not have employees, and the IRS was called on 5/19. This is fraud; the

social security number has been flagged and an investigation has been launched by the IRS.

No further action is necessary for the Chapter.

Projects Director:

Presented by Greg Simmons, Projects Director.

-San Antonio Bay Partnership Shoreline Clean-up

-Monarch Tagging with Patrick Hartigan

-Monarch Madness @ Fennessey Ranch

-Citizen Science Vegetation Survey @ Fennessey Ranch

-Possibly participate in the restoration of Rookery Island

Communications Director:

Presented by Steve Ferguson on behalf of D'Ann Williams, Communications Director.

July 11, 2026 – MCTMN Communication Report

Website:

- Added new Outreach Inventory purchased to the *Members Only* page
- Continue to improve links and fix tweaks
- ***If anyone finds something to add or fix, let me know.
- ***I need someone with Square access to fix the \$10 Phytoplankton donation button, all other work.

\$7MM Milestone:

- Created a large yellow, 8'x4' banner with Ele's help for chapter members to use the rest of the year at events celebrating our milestone!

- Had a photo taken of our chapter at the graduation celebration
- Sent a press release out
- Boosted a post on Facebook, etc., about it.
- ***Banner is in the AgriLife Shed along with a new indoor-use PVC banner stand for indoor use for you to use in your works.

Press Releases:

- Rockport Pilot ran a full article on both S.E.E.D. Program and \$7MM milestone.
- ***Editor Len Hayward reached out and wants to come out and do stories with us while we are out in the field.

Hooks Game:

- Reached 4700+ fans!
- Great opening intro with Hooks' emcee, Mary Pearl Meauth, our President Steve Ferguson and South Texas Chapter President
 - o Mary Pearl threw out the first pitch again!
- Created a fan-favorite nature Photo Booth for chapter members to use at your events!
 - o Has Male vs. Female Sea Turtles, Monarchs, and Adult Whooping Cranes on photo sticks, we can create more sticks to match events!
 - o The King's Save the Bees Packets were popular and led to great discussions!
 - o Placed very good quality nature tattoos on kids and adults – we still have a lot.
- ***Was concerned about the lack of help for the booth. Going forward, I will not do a large event like this again unless I get at least 6 chapter members to sign up.

Public Outreach:

- Palacious Lions Club July4th Booth: Assisted Cindy Baker and 2 Palacious members in organizing a really nice outreach table for the event.
- I purchased over \$2000 of new *budgeted* engagement items for our members to use!
 - o 450 lb. capacity double-decker beach wagon – in AgriLife shed
- Interactive Watershed Model – in Kool Storage
- Comprehensive Animal Track Bundle from Nature Watch – in Kool Storage
- Comprehensive Local Sea Life Bundle – Sharks, Sea Turtles, Blue Crabs – Kool Storage
- 2 fitted custom tablecloths with our Chapter Logo on both sides of table in Green and Brown - 6'
- I still have a lot of King's Save the Bees seed packets for members to give out at events.
- ***Do we still want to have a secondary shed placed for the northern chapter counties to use with duplicate inventory? It is in the budget!

Membership Director:

Presented by Kim Ballard, Membership Director.

138 Members eligible to report hours as of June 30, 2026

JUNE: 73 members reported hours in 28 opportunities

- 1,139.25 Volunteer Service
- 150.5 Advanced Training
- \$29,664.25 Value

YEAR-TO-DATE: 104 members (75%) reported hours in 48 opportunities

- 8,085.5 Volunteer Service (778.25 from IT Class of 2026)
- 813.75 Advanced Training (225 from IT Class of 2026)
- \$204,682.75 Value

CUMULATIVE: 376 all-time members reported hours in 76 opportunities

- 277,139.75 Volunteer Service
- 28,983 Advanced Training
- \$7,040,823.25 Value

IT CLASS OF 2027: 8 New Applicants and 4 Deferrals

Class of 2026 graduation was held on June 6, and as of June 30 the group had achieved 840-6.5 initial training hours, 778.25 volunteer service hours, and 225 advanced training. There were 17 members in training that met the requirements for graduation, and the next step is to become certified. There are currently six members that have achieved initial certification, and two members have already recertified with their additional 40 volunteer hours and eight advanced training hours, and Tony Sanchez has been selected as the 2026 class representative.

Plant Sale Manager:

Report was submitted and read to attendees.

—Our current major focus has been the plant signs. Patrick has been working on the new plant signs which will have Ecoregion maps on the back. This will help customers and Master Naturalist as well. We hope to be able to educate the public about

ecoregions and their importance. Both Patrick and Ernie have been great resources in learning more about native plants and ecoregions, they have worked very hard to update list and signs and I cannot thank them enough. Sample sign attached, they will be half sheet.

—Ernie Shertz and Jennifer Besinaiz have been working on offering a class to anyone who plans to volunteer for the sale. It will cover a majority of if not all of the plants that will be available at the sale.

—Liz Smith has sent out an updated list of plants that can be propagated. Mid July and August she has requested that anyone who is propagating plants for the sale update her with a list and count of what they have. This will streamline the ordering process and allow for us to not have too much or too little of any particular plant. List is attached.

—The booth spaces have been officially secured and they are the same spots as last year. The total was \$1130. Receipt attached.

—One potential planning hiccup is when and where to have the plants delivered. As of now we cannot use the space outside the convention center until Thursday morning. In the past the plants have been delivered elsewhere on the Wednesday before and then moved on Thursday to the convention center, a large task that took most of the day.

There are a few options: We could rent outside the convention center for Wednesday, the website says that this is \$100 per day with a \$50 deposit. However, I plan to ask if we can use the space outside for free the day before since we would not need to interfere with the convention center itself. Another option is to see if we can get the delivery person to deliver the plants on a set a date, that date being Thursday morning.

Technology Director:

Presented by Jennifer Besinaiz, Technology Director.

❖ WIP:

- Updating all communication, point-of-sale, meeting, and social media platforms to a non-profit status. Access to all needed information, either given by Ele or on DropBox account under Technology
- Updating all training/ general meeting presentations on the YouTube channel
- Transferring Instagram account to MCTMN instead of Kirkwood's personal account
- Collaborating on MCTMN Plant Sale Volunteer Native Plants training for three sessions, exploring options for more volunteers, and placing it on the YouTube channel for future use as well. The collaboration is with Ernie Schertz, who is creating the deck, and I will attend each training session to ensure Zoom meetings run smoothly.

❖ 2027 Look Ahead

- Budget increase to replace aging technology (OWL) or to use a Cloud project-based platform so all members can see 1 calendar and a Kanban/Gantt chart of projects led by leadership throughout the year. This provides a real-time update if members have ideas or questions, and we keep it all in one place. It could replace multiple platforms.
- AI Strategization - how much is MCTMN wanting to use in our chapter?
- Mentorship- working with a 2027 training class member to see if someone wants to mentor with me to learn as a backup and a succession plan.

Class Representative:

Class of 2025

16 Members/ 2 still working towards initial certification/ 13 Certified with 10 of those 13 having recertification for 2025.

Class of 2026:

17 Members graduated from 2026 Initial Training/. 5 initial Certifications/ 1 recertification

Past President:

Presented by Bob Cunningham, Past President

Report of the Past-President

Board of Directors meeting: July 11, 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.

Current Officers for 2026

Officers elected by Chapter membership for the 2026 term are: President, Steve Ferguson; Vice-

President, Ele Chew; Treasurer, Julie Hejducek; and Secretary, Janet Cunningham.

*The resignation of Secretary, Janet Cunningham, was announced to Chapter membership at its general meeting on May 9th.

The Bylaws, Art. V.G, specify regarding Vacancies that: If any officer or other member of the board of

directors resigns or is unable to fulfill the duties of the office, the president shall select a candidate

qualified to fill the vacancy for the remaining term of the board position and present the candidate to

the full board for approval. A majority vote of the board members shall be considered approval.

*On May 11, 2026, the President proposed Dee Mahaffey to serve the remainder of the term as

Secretary. She was elected via "reply-all" emails by a majority of the Board members, without dissent, as

acknowledged by the President via email to all Board members on May 13th.

Officer Vacancies Anticipated for 2027

*President Steve Ferguson has specified his intent to resign at the end of the 2026 term 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 has focused on seeking qualified Chapter members willing and

able to serve as President and Vice-President in 2027. To date, no such candidates have been identified.

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. See, Bylaws, Art. VI.A.4.

Other Directors Appointed in 2026

*Technology: In the course of the same May email voting electing an interim Secretary, a majority of

the Board also approved the appointment of Jennifer Besinaiz as Technology Director.

*Training Class Director: Pursuant to Bylaws, Art. V.E.2, the Board also is charged with appointing a

Training Class Director upon the completion of the chapter's Initial Training course, which concluded

upon graduation on June 6, 2026.

The 2026 Training Class director, Tatum Dunn, declined to continue in that position. Likewise, her

assistant, Margaret Durst, has declined an interest in assuming the role.

The Board will discuss and consider potential candidates for the Training Class director position at this

July 11 meeting, with newly appointed training class directors assuming their duties immediately upon confirmation.

*Pursuant to Bylaws, Art. VI.A.4, non-Officer directors must be members in good standing at the time of election or appointment, but without a requirement of certification.

Action Items

As specified in the Agenda for this July 11th meeting, the Board will address critical upcoming vacancies for

(i) President and Vice-President to stand for election by the general membership in November

and serve for the 2027 term, and

(ii) to fill the current vacancy in the Training Class director position, to be filled as soon as possible.

All Chapter members are asked to reach out to members who may be qualified and willing to serve in

any of these capacities and refer them to me or President Steve.

President:

Presented by Steve Ferguson, President.

The New Business Item of discussion on officers, directors and key leaders succession planning was discussed.

-how to facilitate a mentorship type transition of leadership positions, possibly having each role agree to a 2 year term, with the 2nd year a training/assistant for the successor

-discussed issues with the 2026 Initial Training program and the need for mentorship and support for the directors as well as the need for ambassadors for each session and oversight and support for the ambassadors as well

-discussed how to tap into the skillset of the newest members to keep them active in the chapter. Suggested following up with the new members/mentoring them and helping them get involved in projects.

-Agreed to continue charging \$150 for Initial Training and limiting the class size to 20 trainees.

Old Business:

It was noted that the review/revision of the Chapter Operating Handbook for 2026 is underway. It was also noted that VMS is implementing changes that the hours reporting system may look different.

Adjourn

A motion was made at 1:00 PM by Steve Ferguson to adjourn the meeting and it was seconded by Bill Burge, all were in favor.