

## TPWD Guidance for Texas Master Naturalists and Teaming With Wildlife

Revised 25 Sept 2014

The Teaming With Wildlife Coalition: True To Texas is a coalition of organizations interested in advancing nongame wildlife conservation. Coalition activities are likely to provide diverse opportunities for involvement by Texas Master Naturalists, including communication, education/outreach, coalition building, development of briefing papers, and providing information to elected officials.

The purpose of this briefing paper is to communicate to Texas Master Naturalists the difference between volunteering for, and providing information on behalf of the Coalition, and "lobbying," which is not a sanctioned Texas Master Naturalist activity.

Lobbying, as defined by the Texas Master Naturalist program, is the act of taking a position on proposed legislation or local ordinance. It is also defined as requesting that an elected official or voter take a specific action related to legislation or local ordinance. The prohibition on lobbying does not preclude a TMN member from providing support to the Coalition. As with any TMN service project, service hours in support of Teaming With Wildlife should be related to conservation, or an otherwise approved subject matter by the TMN chapter/Program.

Nothing in this document or in TMN regulations prohibits a Texas Master Naturalist, acting in an official capacity as a TMN, from providing factual information to elected officials or voters about the factual impact or effect of a particular piece of legislation, as long as the volunteer is not requesting specific action be taken related to that ordinance or legislation, or expressing their personal opinion about that legislation.

Lobbying is prohibited if the volunteer is, at the time of the action, acting as a Texas Master Naturalist, or as a representative of the TMN Program or their local chapter. The TMN program is proud to create well informed citizens that are active in advancing conservation in their private lives. **There are no restrictions** on volunteers acting as private citizens who are exercising their right to speak with elected representatives and not connecting themselves to the TMN program/chapter/sponsoring agencies.

### Examples of allowed and prohibited activities for Texas Master Naturalists:

A TMN member volunteers for the Coalition to recruit organizations to join the Coalition (allowed)

A TMN volunteer is asked to provide support for the coalition by building a general website about the coalition (allowed)

A TMN volunteer is asked to create a brochure or website about the effects of legislation (allowed, **ONLY as long as the material is limited to factual information about the issues and factual impacts of the legislation**)

**Prohibited:** A TMN volunteer is asked to build a website that encourages people to call their representative in favor of or against legislation (**prohibited as a TMN volunteer because of this specific call to action**). TMN Volunteers could, as a TMN volunteer, build a website or brochure that does not request legislative action or does not voice an opinion for/against legislation.

A TMN volunteer is asked to give a presentation about the coalition to a group of businesses, volunteer group, or an advocacy group (allowed)

A TMN member is asked to speak to an elected official or voter group about a specific piece of legislation (allowed, **ONLY if the TMN does not advocate for or against the legislation, or request that the audience take action such as voting for or against the bill.** (Information presented will likely center around the facts of an issue and/or the factual impacts of the bill.) If a TMN member is acting as a private citizen, and wishes to advocate for or against legislation, they are prohibited from doing so as a Texas Master Naturalist.

A TMN volunteer would like to introduce Coalition members to each other or to Coalition employees or volunteers (allowed)

**Prohibited:** A TMN volunteer is asked to put out yard signs in his/her community in support of a proposed bill or law (**prohibited**)

A TMN volunteer, acting on their own time as a private citizen wants to put out yard signs on his/her own property, or in their community (allowed, but may not request service hours or represent the TMN program in any way, such as clothing or nametags).

A TMN volunteer would like to request that their elected representative vote for or against a bill that provides funding for nongame wildlife (NOT allowed as a TMN. Allowed as a private citizen)

**Prohibited:** A TMN volunteer would like to write a letter to the editor about proposed legislation, and mention that they are TMN certified. (**prohibited. The volunteer may do so as a private citizen, but may not identify themselves as a TMN**)

A TMN volunteer accompanies a voter/constituent to a meeting with an elected leader. (Allowed as a TMN volunteer, as long as the TMN volunteer provides only factual information and does not take a position on legislation or request that the official takes any action)

A TMN volunteer, acting as a private citizen, without identifying themselves as a TMN, meets with an elected leader and requests that leader take action to support specific legislation. (allowed, but volunteer may not request service hours)