



# Volunteer Management System Volunteer User Guide for Texas Master Naturalists



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## Read This Page First

**Background:** Samaritan is a web-based Volunteer Management Software (VMS) system in use by all volunteer groups sponsored by TPWD. TPWD is interested in getting more out of their software investment by using the software with the Texas Master Naturalist program. The VMS software is expected to help TPWD improve Master Naturalist federal grant reporting, and it is expected that the software will assist chapters with state reporting, recognition, and management of member and activity lists.

### **What you will need to begin reporting your hours with the VMS:**

- a computer (or ready access to one)
- a fairly robust Internet connection
- this guide, or training from your local chapter VMS administrator
- the URLs for creating a volunteer profile and for reporting your hours
- if not already done, create a TPWD volunteer profile
- a VMS user ID and password (created when you create your TPWD volunteer profile)
- have attended at least one of your chapter's initial training classes for new volunteers

### **Things you need to know before you start:**

- you may already be registered as a TPWD volunteer and, as a result, you already have a volunteer user ID and password, check with you chapter representative
- you have been pre-approved for most opportunities, so, all you have to do, in most cases, is take part in the opportunity, and then, enter your hours from the volunteer dashboard (no opportunity sign-up required)
- if you are not pre-approved for a chapter event and wish to be, contact your local chapter VMS contact hours must be entered in the VMS **within 45 days** of the date of the activity
- **no more than 14 hours may be entered for any one log book** entry regardless of the type
- service hours, advanced training hours, and Initial Training **hours must be entered within 45 calendar days** from the date of service or event
- **volunteers must enter their own hours** regardless of the type
- **do not create a log book entry for a date in the future**
- we cannot lump hours for multiple days together, even for the same opportunity; there is one exception
  - a Field Based Research (CoCoRaHS, Project Feeder Watch, etc.); Field Based Research opportunity hours may be combined over multiple days into one entry.
- your chapter may have a minimum amount of time that may be recorded for an opportunity in one day (eg. 0.5 hours, 0.25 hours, 0.1 hours, etc); you are encouraged to find out what that minimum daily reporting time is for your chapter
- in order for you to receive Master Naturalist credit for your hours, the opportunity for which you report hours must be in your chapter's list of approved opportunities
- before your log book entries will be aggregated into your hours summary display, they must be **approved by someone other than the person who entered the hours**

## Register as a TPWD Volunteer

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department requires that all Texas Master Naturalist volunteers register as a volunteer and obtain a Volunteer Management System (VMS) user ID and password. Before proceeding with this section, volunteers are encouraged to verify with their local chapter administrator that they are **not** already registered with TPWD. Only after confirming that you are not already registered in the VMS with TPWD should you proceed with this section.

The steps below will guide you through this process.

To begin, in your browser, navigate to the Texas Parks and Wildlife volunteer registration website at: <https://txmn.org/apply>

Click in the ‘Search by Keyword’ box and enter the word “Application” (no quotes) and then click on “**Search**”.

This will display the “<name of chapter> Master Naturalist Application” page. There is an entry for each chapter; scroll through the list and, when you locate the chapter you want to register with, click on the blue “**Click here for details or to sign- up**” text at the bottom of the display shown below; example below is with “brazos” entered.

**Brazos Valley Master Naturalist Application**

**Overview //**

Apply to volunteer with the Brazos Valley Master Naturalists - in the Brazos County - Bryan / College Station area.

We meet on the second Thursday of each month.

Visit our [website](#) for more information.  
For current events, check out our [facebook page](#).

**Program:** Brazos Valley Master Naturalists

**Contact Person:** Brazos Valley

**Contact Phone:**

[Click here for details or to sign up](#)

**Rio Brazos Master Naturalist Application**

The “sign-up” screen will display as shown below:

## Brazos Valley Master Naturalist Application

Description Location Contact Info

**Sponsoring Program:** Brazos Valley Master Naturalists

Apply to volunteer with the Brazos Valley Master Naturalists - in the Brazos County - Bryan / College Station area.

We meet on the second Thursday of each month.

Visit our [website](#) for more information.  
For current events, check out our [facebook page](#).

← Back to results

Print

View map

Sign Up

Click on the “**Sign-Up**” box and the login screen will display (as shown below):

## Volunteer Login

If you are already a Texas Master Naturalist volunteer, please log-in here.

User ID

Password

Log in

[Forgot your password?](#)

To login as Texas Master Naturalist Chapter Organization, please log-in [here](#).

or

Apply to become a volunteer

Since you do not yet have a VMS volunteer user ID, click on “**Apply to become a volunteer**” and the application forms will load. First, there will be waivers to read and agree to. During the registration process, you will be asked for some demographic data, and finally, you will be prompted to enter your choice for a VMS volunteer user ID and password. The user ID you select must be unique in the TPWD VMS system, so it may take a few tries to get a user ID that has not already been used by someone. Then, select a password that you can easily remember; it should be at least 8 characters in length and include one or more numerals. You can change the password in the future as you see the need.

Step 1 of 5

Continue →

Not yet a TPWD volunteer?

[Opportunity Search](#)[FAQ](#)[Log in](#)

## Waivers & Agreements

### Background Check

In connection with the evaluation of my suitability for volunteer service, I give my consent for TPWD to obtain criminal history information related to my application for volunteer service. I understand that criminal history information includes any criminal conviction records for deferred adjudication, misdemeanor or felony offenses at age 17 or older. Any such information will be used solely for volunteer-related considerations and not for any other purpose.

I authorize, consent, and grant permission to any person or entity to release to TPWD or its agent(s) any and all information regarding my criminal history. I waive any and all claims I may have with respect to providing such information. I understand that TPWD and its agent(s) are not responsible for the accuracy or completeness of the information contained in such reports. I release TPWD and its agent(s) from any and all liability, claims, and lawsuits with respect to the information obtained from any or all the sources used by TPWD and its agent(s).

I understand that this authorization is not an offer or acceptance of my volunteer service by TPWD and that any false or misleading information I have provided to TPWD may result in a refusal to accept or continue volunteer service. I also understand that this authorization is a continuing authorization and will remain valid until such time as I inform TPWD in writing that I revoke this authorization.

*Certain volunteer positions require us to conduct a background check. Answering "no" to the questions below will not preclude you from serving in positions that do not require a background check.*

I accept these terms  Yes  No

### Media Waiver

I agree to be photographed or videotaped as a TPWD volunteer. I authorize my likeness to be edited, duplicated, re-used, and distributed in whole or in part for all informational and promotional purposes through any media worldwide.

I understand that Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, its employees, subcontractors, and agents, have no obligation to air or use my likeness. Without any compensation to me, I authorize the rights granted herein. I understand that my appearance in photographs or videotapes confers upon me no rights of use, ownership, or copyright.

I release Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, its employees, subcontractors, and agents, from all liability for any

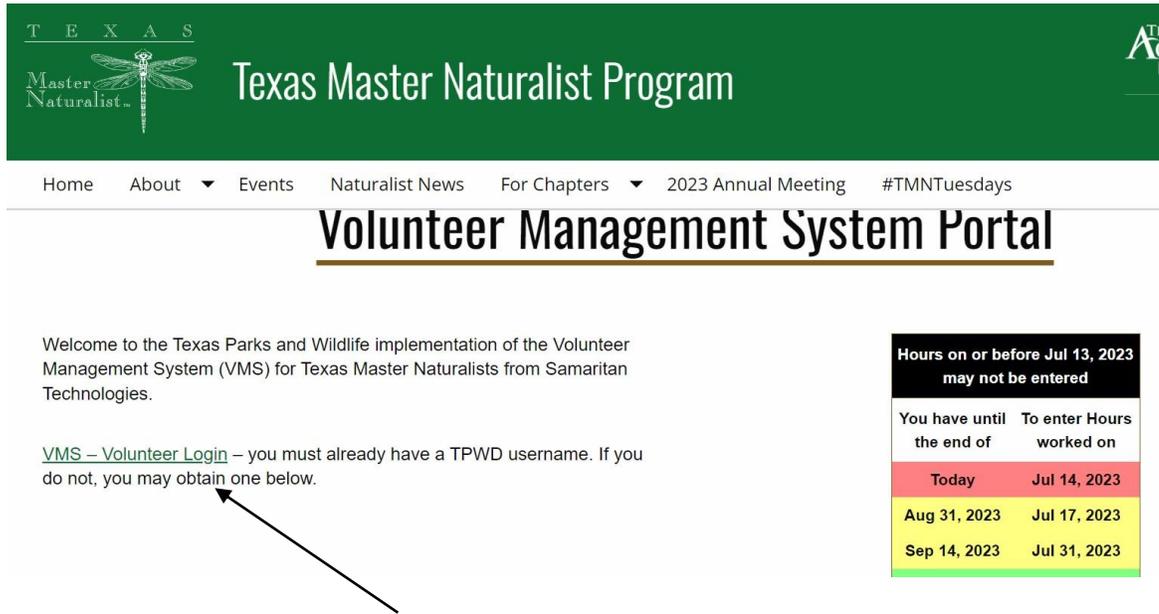
There will be several pages displayed for you to read and complete; the first page is waivers (background check, media waiver, and alternate workforce waiver) that you must agree to in order to be a TPWD volunteer; the remainder are requesting information about you for the system. Several data items are required for TPWD to run the required background check; TPWD now requires a passed criminal background check updated in the VMS for all volunteers. Required items are marked with an asterisk; if they are not completed, the process will prompt you that the item must be completed. When you have finished, click on "Submit" and your selected volunteer user ID and password will be active and you should be able to log in

(URL: <https://txmn.org/hours>)

**Important Note About User ID's:** Your volunteer user ID and password **must only be used by you.** You are encouraged to periodically change your password. If you feel your user ID or password has been compromised, you should immediately change your password. If the problem recurs, you should contact your chapter VMS administrator or a member of the TMN VMS Support Team at [tmnvms @ gmail.com](mailto:tmnvms@gmail.com)

## Login as a registered TMN Volunteer

Once you have registered as a TPWD volunteer, received a VMS user ID, and attended Initial Training, worked at an opportunity or advanced training, you should login as a TMN Volunteer to begin reporting your hours. The URL to log in is <https://txmn.org/hours>. Your personal opportunities (service, AT, and Initial Training) will appear in a drop- down list on your dashboard. An image of the [VMS Volunteer Web Portal](#) appears below:

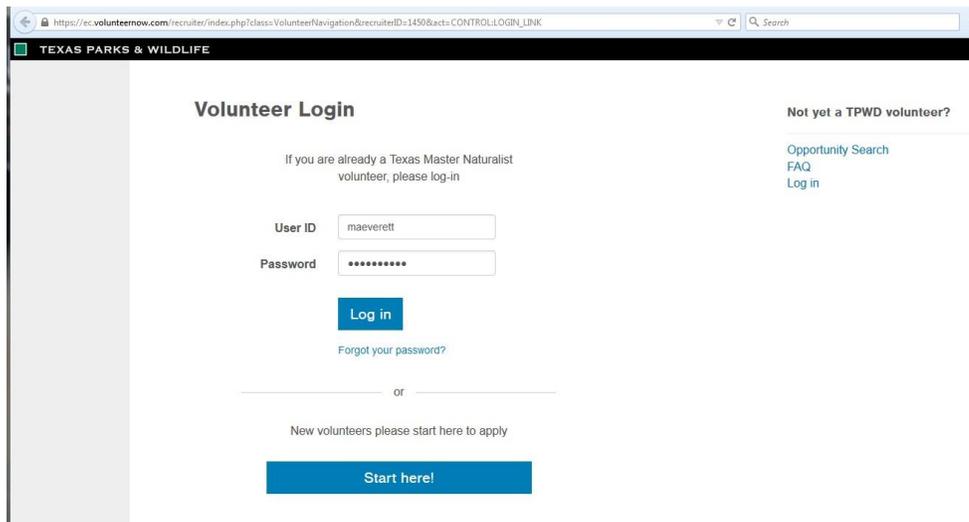


Welcome to the Texas Parks and Wildlife implementation of the Volunteer Management System (VMS) for Texas Master Naturalists from Samaritan Technologies.

[VMS – Volunteer Login](#) – you must already have a TPWD username. If you do not, you may obtain one below.

Hours on or before Jul 13, 2023 may not be entered	
You have until the end of	To enter Hours worked on
Today	Jul 14, 2023
Aug 31, 2023	Jul 17, 2023
Sep 14, 2023	Jul 31, 2023

Click on the word ‘[VMS – Volunteer Login](#)’ to go to the secure VMS login site (shown below).



**Volunteer Login**

If you are already a Texas Master Naturalist volunteer, please log-in

User ID:

Password:

[Log in](#)

[Forgot your password?](#)

or

New volunteers please start here to apply

[Start here!](#)

Not yet a TPWD volunteer?

[Opportunity Search](#)

[FAQ](#)

[Log in](#)

Enter your TPWD VMS user ID and password (note that the password is case sensitive and will not display). If you have difficulty logging in, first contact your chapter VMS administrator. If the issue cannot be resolved at that level, create a ticket on the [TMN VMS Help Desk](#) ([txmn.org/help](https://txmn.org/help)) and one of the support team will assist you.

Please see the TMN VMS Help Desk Guide (at [txmn.org/help](https://txmn.org/help)) for additional information about creating tickets.

It is important to know that the VMS will assign your hours to the **TPWD program that created the opportunity**. For example, many Master Naturalists are also Angler Ed volunteers and/or State Park volunteers, and if you want to receive Angler Ed credit for an Angler Ed event, you must enter those hours under the Angler Ed program opportunity and **not** the Master Naturalist opportunity. Similarly, if you attend an Angler Ed event but want to receive Master Naturalist hours credit, you must do the log book entry under the TMN opportunity. **All TMN opportunity titles will be followed with the “TMN” designation such as “TMN Report Hours”.** Once hours are entered for a particular program and they are approved, those hours cannot be transferred to another program.

Note: Angler Education was used here as an example; this process would hold true for other non-TMN TPWD activities.

## How to Edit your Volunteer Profile

This section covers how you can edit your profile. You would need to edit your profile (a) if you did not create your user ID but it was created for you and assigned to you by your chapter, (b) any of your personal information (address, phone, email, emergency contact, etc) changes, or (c) anytime you need to change your volunteer password.

1. Open <https://txmn.org/hours/> in the browser of your choice. Tablets or desktops are fine, but cell phones may or may not work quite as well and can be difficult to navigate and enter data
2. Login using your VMS User ID and Password (recall the password is case sensitive)
3. Click the *Edit My Profile* icon in the bottom left of the volunteer Dashboard.
4. Edit the five pages of the profile as follows and click *Continue* to go to the next page  
A red asterisk (\*) by a field or selection in the online profile pages indicates a mandatory item

- a. Page 1 – Waivers and Agreements (it is only necessary to update these the first time)
  - i. Background Check (TPWD now requires all volunteers submit to a background check) Note: Select YES, if you select NO, you may not volunteer with any TPWD opportunity; you must have entered a valid date of birth
  - ii. Media Waiver - Agree or Disagree
  - iii. Alternate Workforce Waiver - You must agree – as far as TPWD/TMN is concerned you are a member of an alternate workforce – i.e. a Voluntary Work Force
  - iv. Master Naturalists are required to be 18 or over

### Personal Contact Information

- i. User ID and password – you may change the password whenever you like; you may also change your user ID
- ii. Your date of birth  
Please make sure **your birth date is entered correctly** – the default may be an early date like 3/1/1900; your birth date is required to run a background check; you will be contacted if the date of birth entered in your profile is before 1940.
- iii. Address and Contact Information – complete at least the required fields. You should complete all information as your local chapter will use this information to communicate with you.

c. Page 3 – Emergency Contact Information

This information will be used in the event of an emergency involving you as a volunteer.

e. Page 5 – Click *Accept and Finish*

- f. You can change any of this information at any time, but you will have to click through the preliminary pages to get to the one you want. Once you get to the page you want, edit it and click the ***Save*** button at the bottom.

If you have problems or questions, please submit a help desk ticket at <https://txmn.org/help>.

## Changing Your TMN Volunteer Password

You may wish to change your volunteer password for any number of reasons. To do so, log in to your TMN VMS volunteer user ID using your current password. Once logged in, locate the “[Edit My Profile](#)” item at the bottom of your dashboard. Click on “[Edit My Profile](#)”.

**Welcome, Dale Hughling**

**Summary**

**Volunteer Hours**

Month: 0  
Year: 0  
Lifetime: 0

**Find Opportunities**  
Look for ways to serve on a one-time or regular basis.

**View My Schedule**  
See the shifts where I have signed up.

**Report my Service**  
Submit volunteer hours.

**View My Log Book**  
View my volunteer transaction history.

**My Placements**  
View opportunities I have applied for that have been approved.

**My Referrals**  
View opportunities I have applied for that are pending approval and placement.

[Edit My Profile](#) [Enable Login Using...](#) [Log out](#)

You will think you might have gone to the wrong place, as your application as a volunteer displays. Continue to click on the word “Continue” to your personal information as shown on the :

When your personal information is displayed, you will see your user ID and dialogue boxes for your password. Click in the \*Password box, press the backspace/delete key on your keyboard and enter your new password, press the TAB key and reenter your new password (the two password entries will need to match exactly or the change will NOT take effect).

← Back [Save](#) [Continue](#) →

Step 2 of 5

**Volu**

[Volur](#)  
[Searr](#)  
[FAQ](#)  
[Log c](#)

**Login Information**

\*User ID

\*Password

\*Password Verify

**Personal Information**

When you are satisfied with your password change, click on “**Save**” to save the changes, then click on either “**Volunteer Dashboard**” or “**Logout**”. Watch for any displayed messages that may indicate there was a problem with your password entry or selection. The next time you log in to your volunteer user ID, the new password will be required. If you forget your password, your chapter’s VMS administrator can reset it for you or you can click on “Forgot your password” and a temporary password may be emailed to your email address you have provided in your profile (please keep your email address up to date in your VMS profile).

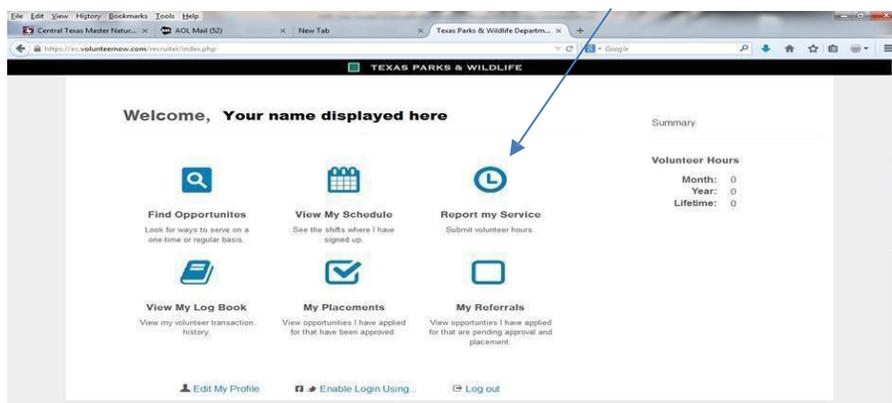
## Submitting Your Service/AT Hours

1. **After** working an opportunity, attending advanced training(s), or Initial Training sessions, you will want to record your hours (do not create log book entries for dates in the future). To create a log book entry, log in to the VMS system ( <https://txmn.org/hours>) as shown below. Most chapter opportunities are pre-approved and require no sign-up; for all opportunities, **your VMS administrator must approve you for the opportunity before you can report hours** for it.

Remember, you only have **45 days** from the date of the event to log your hours in VMS; this is true for service, advanced training and for initial training hours. Hours that are more than 45 days old must be approved by the chapter President as “**extenuating circumstances**” before they can be entered. The chapter has the option of not accepting any hours that are more than 45 days old.

**Do not enter more than 14 hours** on one log book entry; it will be rejected by the auditors.

2. Click on the phrase “VMS – Volunteer Login” to go to the secure login, enter your TPWD user ID and password (remember, the password does not display and is case-sensitive), then click on “**Login**”.
3. After you have successfully logged in and can see your dashboard, select (click on) “**Report my Service**”.



4. Select the opportunity from the drop-down list for which you need to report hours. The name and description of the opportunity and the appropriate survey will be displayed. The survey shown below is for service hours; the new surveys are specific to the type of opportunity (initial training, service hours or advanced training) so that you no longer need to select the type of hours. Additionally, those opportunities in your dropdown that award Master Naturalist credit, all, are followed by “TMN...”. **If the opportunity does not have TMN after it, it is not a TMN opportunity.**

Please select from the following survey(s):

Earth Day Activities:TMN Report Hours ▼

**Federal Category:** Public Outreach (Indirect)

### Opportunity Description:

All Master Naturalist (includes those by AgriLife and TPWD) sponsored outreach activities relating to Earth Day - lead hikes, lead interpretive tours, staff a TMN information booth, support activities, etc.

**Service Date:** 02/17/2019

### Volunteer Hours

How many hours did you volunteer?

(To the nearest quarter hour, including travel time)

You must put in service hours

Describe your service or training:

This activity qualifies for the following specialization:

Texas Waters Specialist

For your personal records....

What was the total number of miles you drove round trip?

Do you have impact data to add to the opportunity? No ▼

Completing the survey is how you report your hours (AT or service or Initial Training). If your opportunity does not appear in the display, it likely means that you have not yet been approved to that opportunity; contact a chapter VMS Administrator and ask that you be approved to the opportunity (see the section in this manual "Opportunities that are not in Your Drop-Down List").

If you are a project coordinator for a “Direct or Indirect Outreach” event, you are responsible for entering the “impact data” for that opportunity. Select “Yes” at the question “Do you have impact data to add...”. If you are working on the Texas Waters Specialist and the event qualifies, check the box for “Texas Waters Specialist”.

5. Once you select the opportunity you would like to report, the associated “Survey”, or service report time sheet, will appear as shown above.

Complete the fields requested as they pertain to your work on the opportunity for that date

The date that appears automatically defaults to today’s date; change the date to the actual date of your service/attendance by selecting the calendar icon next to the date box; the system will not permit you to report hours for dates that are more than **45 calendar days in the past**.

If you worked/attended multiple days for the same opportunity, do NOT lump your hours for multiple days together; (except as noted: hours for **Field Research opportunities such as CoCORaHS may be combined over multiple days**, the time period is determined by your chapter). For all other opportunity types, report the hours for each day, by day, (that is, if you worked a multi-day opportunity on January 10 for 3 hours and on January 12 for 2.25 hours, you would complete the survey twice (once for 3 hours on January 10 and once for January 12 for 2.25 hours). The Federal auditors have indicated they will disallow the hours that are lumped together over multiple days (except as noted for Field Research).

**Important Note: Do not report your travel time to and/or from Advanced Training sessions or for Initial Training. Travel time may only be reported with service hours.**

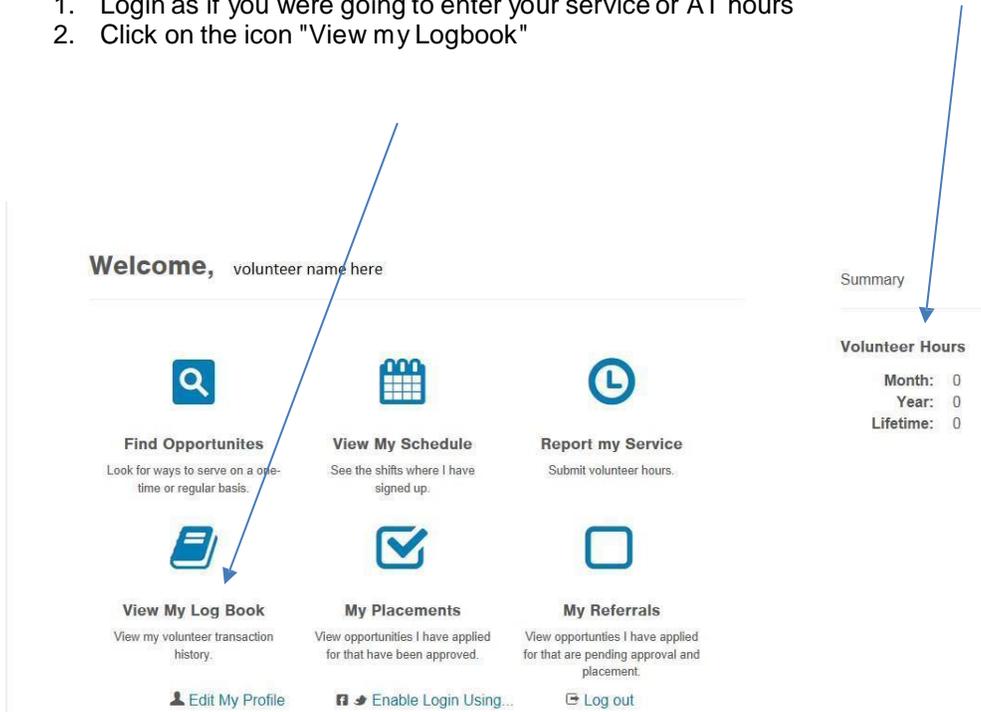
6. You should include your travel time to and from a **volunteer service project** location along with the hours actually served in the box labeled “How many hours did you volunteer?” Each chapter may have their own policy regarding the maximum number of hours that may be reported for travel time; a general rule of thumb is the roundtrip travel time should not exceed the total number of hours served. (**Travel time must not be included for AT nor for Initial Training**).
7. If the opportunity is a water related topic or issue and you have signed up for the Texas Waters Specialist program, click in the box associated with “Texas Waters Specialist”.
8. Unless you are the project coordinator, click on “No” for the three questions at the bottom of the survey regarding Impact Data. If you click yes, a new set of questions will pop up for you to respond to.
9. By clicking on “OK”, your hours will be submitted to the Hours Keeper for final review and approval or disapproval. The hours you submit may be edited or deleted up until the approver has approved them. Be careful to select the correct opportunity title from the drop-down list. If you entered your hours under the wrong Opportunity Title, the only solution at this time is to delete the entry before it is approved and reenter it under the correct title.

## Viewing your Service/AT Hours

Once your hours have been submitted, you may view them at any time.

Log in using your VMS user ID. Once you are logged in, you will see the volunteer dashboard.

1. Login as if you were going to enter your service or AT hours
2. Click on the icon "View my Logbook"



3. To view lifetime hours change the upper-right start date to some early time (1986 in this example) and confirm that the end date is the current day, alternatively, to view the current calendar year hours, set the Start and End dates to January 1, current year and December 31, current year respectively
4. In either case, press the GO button after setting the dates

Start Date: Aug 11 1986  
 End Date: Aug 11 2015

5. Scroll down to the very bottom of the page to the "Log Book Summary". Rows to display All of 55

Log Book Summary	
Opportunity Type	Advanced Training: 1
	Chapter Administration: 41
	Service Project: 3
TMN Hours	2973
AT Hours	150
Service Performed	N/A
Mileage round trip	177
Trail Miles	0
Admin Activity	Website & Social Media: 11
	Board/Committee Work: 7
	President Duties: 2
	Samaritan VMS Rollout: 21

This section shows the # OF ENTRIES, not the number of hours for the time period selected in Steps 3 & 4

This section shows the # OF HOURS for the time period selected in Steps 3 & 4

This section shows the # OF EACH TYPE OF ADMIN ENTRIES, NOT the number of hours, for the time period selected in Steps 3 & 4

## Proposing a New Opportunity (AT or Service)

Depending on your chapter's policy, you, as a chapter member may submit a new service or AT opportunity for approval. You may submit the opportunity before or after the date(s) the opportunity took place (again, that depends on chapter policy), however, it is to your benefit to submit the proposed opportunity **before** you attend so you know if it will be approved by your committee. There is a TPWD restriction placed on entering hours or opportunities more than 45 days in the past. If it is after the fact and the opportunity is not approved by your chapter, the hours you spent at the opportunity would not count for TMN milestones, certification, nor for recertification.

Your chapter may have a specific procedure for volunteers to submit new opportunities; please continue to use the procedure in place in your chapter.

## Opportunities that are not in Your Drop-Down List

There may be opportunities, both service and advanced training, that you might wish to attend which are not in your drop-down list. You should check with your VMS administrator to see if the opportunity has been approved for your chapter. If it has been approved, ask them to approve you to it. If it has not been approved, you may, depending on your chapter's policy, submit a request for a new opportunity using your chapter's procedure for doing so.

## Attending Opportunities from Neighboring Chapters

There may be opportunities (service and/or AT) that are offered by neighboring Texas Master Naturalist chapters that you would like to attend. To be assured of receiving TMN credit for the activity, you should follow your chapter's procedures for submitting a new opportunity proposal to your home chapter. If your proposal is approved, you should approach the neighboring chapter about your attending.

After attending the event, you should be able to post your hours against the opportunity as though it were a your local chapter's activity.

### **Important Notes for Administrators:**

Once the neighboring opportunity has been approved, it must be entered in your chapter list and your appropriate volunteers approved to it.

## Remove Yourself from an Approved Opportunity

You may remove yourself from an opportunity for which you are approved at any time by using the instructions below. Removing yourself from the opportunity has no effect on hours you have posted against the opportunity and does not prohibit you being approved for the same opportunity in the future. One reason for removing yourself from opportunities is that it will shorten your drop-down list.

1. Log in using your volunteer user ID and password
2. From the volunteer dashboard, select "My Placements"
3. Scroll through the list of opportunities for which you are approved until you find the one you wish to remove and click on the line "Click here for details or to remove yourself"
4. On the resulting screen, click on the Red button containing the prompt "Remove Me".
5. A confirmation window will display with the prompt "Are you sure you want to unassign from this opportunity?" Click the OK button to confirm or click "Cancel" to cancel the action.
6. Return to the Volunteer Dashboard.

## Log out of your VMS session

Once you are finished using the system for this session, you should always logout of your session. To logout of your session, you need to be on the Volunteer Dashboard page and click on "Log out" at the bottom of the display.

## Important URL's

<a href="https://txmn.org/hours">txmn.org/hours</a>	to log in to your VMS profile
<a href="https://txmn.org/help">txmn.org/help</a>	to submit a help desk ticket to the TMN VMS Support team
<a href="https://txmn.org">txmn.org</a>	Texas Master Naturalist State Program website