



Missouri Master Naturalist Program Chapter Chartering Guidelines

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Missouri Master Naturalist is a community-based, adult natural resource education and volunteer service program

The mission of the program is to engage Missourians in the stewardship of the state's natural resources through science-based education and community service.

At the state level, the Missouri Master Naturalist program is sponsored jointly by University of Missouri Extension and the Missouri Department of Conservation. Chapters also partner with local organizations that help plan and coordinate trainings, provide the Master Naturalists with service opportunities, and benefit from local service projects that the Master Naturalists perform.

Chapters are community-based and self-governed, with at least one Chapter Advisor who works for one of the sponsoring agencies. Volunteers develop and maintain a chapter board and committees.

What is involved in becoming a Certified Master Naturalist?

- **Education and Training**
 - 40 hours of initial training in natural history and natural resources management
 - covers ecological concepts, preservation, restoration and management techniques, and interpretation skills, with classroom as well field experience.
 - customized to focus on the local ecosystems
 - taught by local subject matter experts
 - course material is made up of over 60 publications that are supplied by the Missouri Department of Conservation
 - 8 hours of advanced training annually- you choose the topic(s)
- **Service**
 - 40 hours of volunteer service annually
 - outreach and education
 - citizen science and research
 - stewardship
- Participants must pass annual background checks

Overview for Establishing a Master Naturalist Chapter

Phase I

Interested person(s) contact local representatives of sponsor agencies about starting a Master Naturalist chapter. They form a local Chapter Coordinating Committee that includes 1-2 advisors (local representatives of the sponsoring agencies) and at least 5 petitioning new members. The Chapter Coordinating Committee submits petition to the State Program Coordinators **by Oct. 31** with:

1. volunteer enrollment forms of all Chapter Coordinating Committee members
2. letter from representatives of the sponsoring agencies agreeing to support the chapter, and at least one, preferably two of them, agreeing to serve as Chapter Advisors
3. chosen name of chapter and community in which the chapter will be based
4. list of partners and statement about the need for a chapter in that community
5. agreement of at least 3 Committee members (including at least 1 Chapter Advisor) to attend the Coordinators' Training Course **in January of the following year**

State Program Coordinators review the petition and notify petitioning chapter of approval. Representatives attend training in January.

Phase II

Petitioning chapter submits syllabus for initial training course and preliminary list of possible service projects to the State Program Coordinators by **60 days prior** to the start of the training course for review and approval.

State Program Coordinators review the petition and approve or make recommendations for changes.

Phase III

Petitioning chapter has a minimum of **15** people sign up for training, and a minimum of **10** people graduate and become active volunteers.
Petitioning chapter elects a slate of officers.
Petitioning chapter provides the State Program Coordinators with names, contact information, and position of everyone involved in the chapter.

State Program Coordinators review materials and approve or make recommendations for changes.

Petitioning chapter receives Chapter Charter Certificate.

Phase I: Initiating Chapter Development

As the Missouri Master Naturalist program grows, new chapters will be added each year in new communities. The location of new chapters will depend on several factors: (1) a demonstrated need for volunteers in the community to conduct service related to conservation and management of natural resources, (2) interest from community members in participating in the program, (3) willingness of some community members to serve on a local Chapter Coordinating Committee to do the groundwork to build the chapter, and (4) interest from potential partner organizations in supporting the chapter in the community. Completing the first phase of the chapter chartering process demonstrates that these needs and interests exist in the community. Below are descriptions of each item needed for this phase of the process.

Chapter Coordinating Committee

For this first phase of the process, you will need to assemble a minimum of 5 people to form a Chapter Coordinating Committee. In most cases, these individuals will be volunteers, but also may be staff members of one of the sponsoring agencies or local partner organizations. The task of the Chapter Coordinating Committee is to guide the chapter through its beginning stages.

Its responsibilities include:

1. identifying chapter advisor(s),
2. gaining approval of the MU Extension's county program director,
3. identifying and talking with potential local partners,
4. recruiting participants,
5. planning and organizing the first volunteer training course,
6. planning and organizing service opportunities for the first volunteers,
7. keeping the initial records of participation and activities.

This is a significant list of responsibilities, and Coordinating Committee members should be enthusiastic about the program and have the time and energy to make it happen. A complete job description for the Chapter Coordinating Committee is included in Appendix I. The State Program Coordinators will provide assistance to help you succeed.

Deadline: The list of Chapter Coordinating Committee members (composed of staffers and at least 5 volunteers) are **due October 31**, and the chapter will start training the following year. The State Program Coordinators will review the list to ensure that the potential new chapter has sufficient volunteers to coordinate the chapter in its beginning stage.

Chapter Advisor(s)

The Chapter Coordinating Committee should identify at least one, ideally two chapter advisors and obtain and submit a letter of support from each. The Chapter Advisors should be one of the following: a regional specialist from the University of Missouri Extension and/or a member of the Missouri Department of Conservation field staff. The Advisor's roles are described in Appendix II. In addition, at least one Chapter Advisor is expected to attend the Coordinators' Training Course, along with other selected committee members. Once identified, Chapter Advisors become members of the local Chapter Coordinating Committee and assist in further chapter startup activities. Please contact the Program Coordinators if you are having difficulty finding an appropriate advisor; we can assist you in your search. However we cannot guarantee staff will be available in your area at this time.

Deadline: A letter of support must be submitted to the Program Coordinators by the Chapter Advisors of one or both of the sponsoring agencies by **October 31** for chapters that will start training the following year.

Extension Sponsorship

The Chapter Coordinating Committee should approach the County Program Director in the local Extension office to gain a signed letter of agreement to sponsor the chapter. In sponsoring the local chapter, the local Extension office agrees to process the annual background checks, as well as handle volunteer registration fees.

Deadline: The letter from the County Program Director is **due October 31** for chapters that will start the following year.

Community Support and Partners

The local Chapter Coordinating Committee should work together to describe the need for natural resource volunteers in the community and why they think the community is a good location for a Missouri Master Naturalist chapter. Natural resource-related government agencies, local parks, land conservancies, environmental education centers, and citizen monitoring groups are all potential local partners that could help provide volunteer projects and trainings. Now is a good time to establish communication with these partners and involve them in the process.

Deadline: The list of potential partners for the chapter and a description of why that community has a need for a Master Naturalist chapter are **due October 31** for chapters that will start the following year.

Chapter Name and Location

The Chapter Coordinating Committee should choose a name for the chapter. Ideally, the name should be locally relevant and have the potential to be long-lasting. The name may be geographical, natural history-based, or descriptive of the community in which the chapter is based. The name should continue to be appropriate over time, regardless of whether new chapters form in nearby communities. Names that refer to expansive geographic regions that might include many chapters in the future are not good choices.

The Chapter Coordinating Committee should also identify the community in which the chapter will be based. This community may be a town or city, but is not limited to such. It can also be a county or other geographic area, such as a local watershed. The community will be the locality in which most trainings and meetings are held and will be the focal area for service projects. Identifying this locality certainly does not prevent a chapter from accepting members from nearby localities or from assisting those members in finding service projects in their communities. Rather, this identification emphasizes the community-based nature of the program and communicates to interested citizens where the trainings and meetings are likely to be held.

Deadline: A statement describing the name of the chapter and the community in which it will be based is **due October 31** for chapters that will start the following year. This information may be included in the letter of support from the Chapter Advisor(s).

Coordinators' Training Course

Three representatives of the local Chapter Coordinating Committee must attend a coordinators' training course held in **Jefferson City** in the **January** following submission of the chapter application. This course is designed to provide chapter leaders with the background knowledge and understanding of the Master Naturalist program in order to equip them to recruit participants, plan volunteer trainings, train adult learners, and organize chapter activities. At this training, the State Program Coordinators will provide resources such as sample syllabi, potential readings, ideas for service projects, and the coordinator and officer manuals.

The three representatives must be members of the Chapter Coordinating Committee. At least one of the representatives must be a chapter advisor. The other two representatives can include a second chapter advisor, but can also include volunteers as well as staff members of the chapter's local partners.

Deadline: The names and roles of the three Committee representatives that will be attending this training course are **due October 31** for chapters that will start the following year. Training will be held the following January.

Submitting

The following may be submitted via email:

- list of Chapter Coordinating Committee members
- Chapter Advisor letter(s) of support
- description of potential partners and community support
- chapter name and location
- names of the representatives attending training

Original, hard copies the following must be mailed, as they are signed documents:

- the Committee's volunteer enrollment and background check forms
- letter of support from the County Program Director at the local MU Extension office

All materials should be sent to: Master Naturalist Program Coordinator
Missouri Department of Conservation
P.O. Box 180
Jefferson City, MO 65102
E-mail: Master.Naturalist@mdc.mo.gov

Phase II: Developing the Chapter's Activities

The second phase of the chapter chartering process requires some significant work by the local Chapter Coordinating Committee. However, completing these elements by their respective deadlines will help the chapter run much more smoothly over the next 6-12 months. The State Program Coordinators are here to assist you in completing these tasks and to help ensure some consistency among chapters while still allowing for local control.

Syllabus and Course Information

Purpose: The basic training course is one of the first big responsibilities of the chapter. It will set the tone and expectations for the new chapter members. Although chapters will differ in their approach to the training, some consistency statewide will help ensure that all Missouri Master Naturalists have a basic set of skills and knowledge to bring to their volunteer service.

Deadline: The syllabus and other information for your chapter's first training course should be submitted **60 days before the start of the course.**

Criteria: The State Program Coordinators will be reviewing the syllabus to make sure that the core curriculum topics are covered. Will the trainees finish the course with the basic knowledge and skills that are a part of being a Missouri Master Naturalist? We will also be checking that at least 25% of the course time is spent in the field. Finally, we will be looking to see that the chapter has appropriate instructors for each topic. If you are having difficulties locating an instructor for a particular topic, please let us know and we will help you contact someone in your area. For reference, representatives of your Chapter Coordinating Committee will receive example syllabi from trainings of established chapters at the Coordinators' Training Course in January.

Format: Please include the meeting dates and times for the course, the amount of the course fee with a short justification for that fee, and the process by which people may apply to take the course and join the chapter. If you have created a questionnaire to supplement the program enrollment form, please include it. List the topics that will be covered at each session and the instructors who will be teaching those topics. Include locations and topics for field trips. If you will have some on-going activities, such as reporting nature observations or field journaling, please describe those activities as well. We understand that this is a draft syllabus and that some things may change during the course.

Project Proposals

Purpose: It is important to demonstrate that there is an established need for Missouri Master Naturalist volunteers in your community. Some participants will want to start their volunteer hours before completing the training course, so it will help the chapter to have some projects already in place.

Deadline: Potential volunteer project information is due at the same time as the course syllabus, **60 days before the start of the course.**

Format: List each project and provide a short description (time, place, activity, etc.). If your chapter has developed your own project proposal form, please include copies of that form filled out for each potential project. Alternatively, there is a template for a project approval form available in the coordinator manual, and you may adapt it as needed.

Criteria: Keeping good communication between the Chapter Coordinating Committee and your contacts at the local partner organizations is the easiest way to find out about service opportunities. There is no requirement for the number of projects, but you should keep in mind the range of interests and abilities the volunteers will have. The State Program Coordinators will be looking for projects that fall into each of the three categories (education/outreach, citizen science, and stewardship). We will be evaluating the proposals to determine whether they fit the program's mission. It will not be necessary for chapters to submit all proposals for future projects to the State Program Coordinators, but we would like to see some examples so that we may help any chapters that are unsure of appropriate projects and partners.

Our state parks and conservation areas are all in need of volunteers for projects ranging from trail building and maintenance to environmental education and interpretive programming to monitoring and species inventories. Please keep these possibilities in mind as you are planning projects. Lists of some of possible local partner organizations and examples of service projects are included in Appendix III.

Website

(Not required, but encouraged)

Purpose: A website is a great way to publicize your chapter and to provide information to the people who want more information about your chapter, such as where and when trainings will be held. The Missouri Master Naturalist website gets many visitors and we would like it to be a "one-stop shop" for information about the program, especially about the goings on in the local communities.

Deadlines: If possible, please set up your website and send us the link when you send your syllabus, or earlier.

Format: You should include any information that you would like to share with the public about your chapter, such as the training schedule from your syllabus. Also include any information you have on how to enroll. If you'd like, you can post the enrollment form, or simply provide visitors a person to contact for more information. Pictures of natural areas, representative species, or ecosystems in your community would be a nice addition as well, if you have digital images. Images that can be part of the public domain and do not require copyright permission are preferred. (Remember to keep file sizes small for people with dial-up internet access.)

Once established, your chapter's website will be linked to from the main Missouri Master Naturalist website.

Criteria: None. For inspiration, visit the websites of the existing Missouri Master Naturalist chapters at www.monaturalist.org.

E-mail the link to your website to: Master.Naturalist@mdc.mo.gov

Phase III: Completing the Process

After approval of the items submitted for Phase II, the chapter is ready to hold its first training. A minimum of **15** people must be enrolled, having passed the required background check, in order to hold the training course. A minimum of **10** people must graduate from the training and begin acquiring volunteer service hours in order for the chapter to qualify for its charter. Near the end of the training, the chapter should elect officers according to the program bylaws (found in the coordinator manual, given out at the Coordinators' Training Course). At this point, the role of the Chapter Coordinating Committee ends and the newly elected Board of Directors takes over leadership of the chapter. A list of all chapter members, their elected office (if applicable), and their contact information must be submitted to the Program Coordinator **upon completion of the course** for the chapter to receive its certificate of charter.

Appendix I: Checklist for Submitting Information

BY OCTOBER 31, submit the following to the State Program Coordinators:

- The names of 5 people from the community who are interested in initiating a Missouri Master Naturalist chapter (the Chapter Coordinating Committee)
- A letter of support from a local staffer of Missouri Department of Conservation AND/OR a University of Missouri Extension regional specialist, indicating their agreement to serve as Chapter Advisor(s) [Having 2 Chapter Advisors is strongly encouraged]
- A letter of support from the University of Missouri Extension County Program Director, which says that the local Extension office agrees to sponsor the chapter by processing annual background checks and handling volunteer registration fees
- A list of potential local partner organizations
- A description of the need for a Master Naturalist chapter in the community
- The chapter name chosen and a short description about it
- The community where the chapter will be based (town, county, watershed, etc.)
- The names of the 3 representatives who agree to attend the Coordinators' Training Course (at least 1 must be a Chapter Advisor)

60 DAYS BEFORE THE START OF THE TRAINING COURSE, submit the following to the State Program Coordinators:

- Syllabus with meeting dates, times, locations, and the names, job titles and place of employment of the instructors
- Course fee with a short justification for that fee
- Outline of the application process
- All other supplemental information, if any
- Potential volunteer project information
- Link to your chapter's website (optional)

WHEN TRAINING COURSE IS COMPLETED, submit the following to the State Program Coordinators:

- List of all graduated members with their contact information and elected offices

Appendix II : Chapter Coordinating Committee Job Description

Goal: The Chapter Coordinating Committee builds the chapter and guides it through its beginning stages to complete requirements for chartering. The committee plans and conducts the first basic volunteer training course for the chapter and works with partner organizations to develop volunteer service projects.

Place of Work: Meeting locations in homes or in the community as determined by the local Chapter Coordinating Committee.

Qualifications: Chapter Coordinating Committee members should have enthusiasm about the Missouri Master Naturalist program and a strong desire to see the program succeed in their community. They should possess good organizational and communication skills. Some knowledge of natural resources and of potential partner organizations in the community is helpful.

Duties: As a committee and with help from the Chapter Advisor(s):

- determine the chapter's name and the community in which it will be based.
- Plan the first training course by developing a syllabus and reading list, scheduling instructors, and determining logistics such as a location for the course.
- Develop an initial set of volunteer service projects by working with partner organizations in the community, such as parks, schools, non-profits, and state agencies.
- Develop and execute procedures for recruiting and communicating with chapter members.
- Keep the chapter's initial records on chapter members, training hours, and volunteer hours.
- Handle course fees and chapter funds using standard bookkeeping practices.

These duties may be divided among the Coordinating Committee members. Three Coordinating Committee members (at least one must be a chapter advisor) must attend the January coordinators' training course presented by the State Program Coordinators.

Time Required: The Chapter Coordinating Committee's responsibilities begin when the committee is formed and end when the chapter has completed its first volunteer training course and elected a Board of Directors to continue the leadership of the chapter. This process generally lasts 9 to 15 months. After that time, the volunteers on the Coordinating Committee may choose to run for and participate in the chapter's Board of Directors.

Benefits: The Coordinating Committee leads the effort to establish the Master Naturalist program in a new community and has the opportunity to set the tone and direction of that

chapter. Committee members develop leadership, management, and communication skills. They network with staff of state agencies and partner organizations involved in the conservation and management of natural resources in the community. When a chapter has more qualified applicants for the initial training course than available spaces, the volunteers on the Chapter Coordinating Committee receive high priority for that training, as they are deeply involved in the growth of the chapter.

Supporting Resources: The Chapter Advisor(s) will assist the Chapter Coordinating Committee in its tasks and decision making. The State Program Coordinators will provide in-depth training to three committee members on the Missouri Master Naturalist program and how to coordinate and advise a chapter. These committee members can then share what they have learned with the rest of the committee. Written resources, including the coordinator manual, the officer manual, and sample training syllabi will be provided at the training.

Impact and Reporting Procedures: The Chapter Coordinating Committee is responsible for regularly communicating with the State Program Coordinators to ensure the chapter development process is going smoothly and according to program and agency policies. The committee must meet several important deadlines over the course of the chapter's development. These include (1) submitting for review by the State Program Coordinators the local Chapter Coordinating Committee roster, volunteer enrollment and background check forms, the chapter name, and the chapter's base location, (2) submitting for review by the State Program Coordinators a draft syllabus and other details regarding the training course, plans for volunteer service projects, and chapter by-laws, and (3) submitting records showing the completion of the first training course and contact information for elected Board of Directors so that the chapter may receive its charter.

The committee also must keep records on chapter membership, attendance, and service hours and be able to report that information when requested by the State Program Coordinators.

Advisor/Supervisor: The Chapter Advisor(s) work with the local Chapter Coordinating Committee on all duties. The State Program Coordinators provide additional support and supervision.

Appendix III: Chapter Advisor Guidelines

After the staff members from the Chapter Coordinating Committee have comfortably transitioned to chapter advisors, their role is to:

1. Give advice, make recommendations, inform and notify the chapter on appropriate business in a professional way.
2. Participate in the service hour and advanced training approval process.
3. Advisors should not be managers of the chapter business or activities. They are to be chapter supporters and available to advise, recommend, inform and notify the chapter and/or its members on and of appropriate and professional matters.
4. Know and communicate the goals, activities and mission of the program.
5. Meet with the officers of the chapter to discuss expectations for roles and responsibilities.
6. Assist the organization in maintaining the original goals, mission, vision and operational framework set forth by the local Chapter Coordinating Committee, as well as assist in further developing realistic goals with the chapter's executive board that are within the parameters of the statewide Missouri Master Naturalist program.
7. Facilitate opportunities for Master Naturalist volunteers to exercise initiative and judgment within proper measure of autonomy when coordinating chapter events and activities. In keeping with this approach, advisors should participate in event planning and attend events when possible or when identified as necessary through the planning process.
8. Be aware of the chapter's financial status via review of financial statements and approval of expenditures. The local Extension office may choose to be the repository of chapter funds.
9. Be aware of the state Missouri Master Naturalist policies and guidelines and other agency or organization guidelines that establish expectations for volunteer requirements, behavior, and activities. Ensure that the group and its officers know where these policies and guidelines are published, what the rules are, why they exist and the consequences for choosing to operate outside their parameters. Advisors are expected to report violations or potential violations to the appropriate Master Naturalist program and/or agency official.
10. Be ready to assist the Master Naturalist state program and state advisory committee (SAC) as needed, as they may be called upon to implement regulations or policies from time to time.
11. Be responsible for notifying the chapter officers and the SAC regarding chapter concerns.

The chapter-advisor relationship is not a one-way street: the chapter and its leaders also have responsibilities. These responsibilities include an appropriate level of communication, providing opportunities for advisor interaction, and a commitment to the success of the organization as a whole.

Appendix IV: Volunteer Opportunities

There are many opportunities for Missouri Master Naturalists to volunteer. The project needs can range from activities requiring a lot of manual labor but less expertise to less labor-intensive projects that require strong naturalist skills. They also range from activities that include very little interaction with the public to activities focused on public education and outreach. Every site and agency is unique, so project needs will vary among locations. Chapters should contact sites, regional offices, or the contacts listed here to develop more specific project proposals.

Suggested Agencies to contact (federal, state, and local government):

- Missouri Department of Conservation
- University of Missouri Extension
- Missouri Department of Natural Resources
- US Environmental Protection Agency
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- US Forest Service
- US Geological Survey
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- National Park Service
- North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE)
- Missouri Environmental Education Association (MEEA)
- Resource Centers (Universities and affiliated Extension Services)
- Regional Planning Commissions
- National nonprofit natural resource organizations (eg. Audubon)
- Any local nonprofit organizations whose missions are compatible with the Missouri Master Naturalist program

Examples of volunteer opportunities:

- Trail maintenance
- Assisting with prescribed burns
- Invasive species control
- Habitat enhancement: planting stream buffers, creating wildlife food plots
- Riparian work: stream enhancement, buffer planting
- Being a presence on the trails, reporting problems
- Developing and maintaining demonstrations of conservation practices
- Developing site-specific species lists for plants, birds, and other groups of organisms
- Developing interpretive trail guides and other interpretive materials
- Developing and/or delivering interpretive/educational programs on-site or in schools
- Creating or compiling educational materials for Nature Discovery Centers in parks

- Organizing and co-hosting special events (bio-blitzes, birding events, etc.)
- Staffing a booth at a special event
- Monitoring populations of rare species (particularly plants)
- Assistance with outreach programs for local community and school groups
- Education/outreach work with forest landowners
- Tagging/banding wildlife

Appendix V: Contacts of the State Program Coordinators

If you have specific questions about the chapter application process, please contact us for assistance. Remember, we're here to help, and we want you to succeed!

Email address: Master.Naturalist@mdc.mo.gov

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