

Natural Resource Conservation Needs

- Communities across Texas have ongoing needs in operating parks, nature centers, and natural areas and in providing educational outreach.
- With Texas' growing urban population often disconnected from the state's natural resources, there is an increasing need for public education on the benefits these resources can provide to all Texas residents.
- There is increased pressure on schools to include more science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education in classrooms and to incorporate higher-quality outdoor and nature experiences into education.
- Increasing concerns regarding a number of wildlife species and native habitat conservation needs have gone unaddressed because most state and local agencies lack the resources to address these needs.

AgriLife Extension's Response

- In 1997, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service developed the Texas Master Naturalist Program. The mission of

the program is to develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities.

- Since the program started, Texas Master Naturalist has grown to include 48 chapters and has trained more than 15,000 volunteers serving Texas communities in 213 counties.
- Volunteers design nature trails, conserve native habitats, set up birding stations, participate in science-based citizen data collection, plant wildscapes and butterfly way stations, and much more.

Economic Impacts

- Master Naturalist volunteers provided a total of 442,642 hours of service in 2021, or 213 full-time equivalents (FTEs).
- Using an hourly rate of \$28.54 to value the time contributed by volunteers, the monetary value of these volunteers is estimated at \$12.6 million for 2021.
- Program volunteers conducted projects that made an impact on 1,050 acres in 2021, and 228,400 total acres of habitat since the program's inception.

