

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ANROSP & PROGRAMS

FAQs ABOUT ANROSP:

What is the purpose of ANROSP?

ANROSP focuses on enhancing existing volunteer natural resource programs and facilitating the development of new programs to fulfill its mission to promote awareness and citizen stewardship of natural resources through science-based education and service programs. ANROSP envisions healthy ecosystems and communities through citizens who learn, teach, and practice natural resource stewardship.

What membership does ANROSP serve?

ANROSP is targeted primarily at natural resource outreach & service programs such as

Master Naturalist, Watershed Stewards, Coverts, etc. Member programs are represented by the natural resource professionals who administer and coordinate the programs, including extension specialists, natural resource agency staff, and university faculty. Individuals who wish to support the mission and goals of the Alliance are also eligible to join.

What benefits does ANROSP provide to member programs?

- Increased opportunities for networking and information exchange with colleagues
- Increased program marketing & recognition
- Bibliography of articles and publications on or about Master Naturalist-type programs
- A downloadable presentation that can be used to explain the structure, operation, and impact of natural resource outreach & service programs and the Alliance to potential program partners and collaborators.
- Additional programmatic resources are currently under development, including mentoring teams, start-up packets, templates for commonly used documents, curriculum outlines, a venue for publishing white papers on best practices for programs, and program manager listserv
- Overviews and case studies of different program models
- Interactive map with links to member programs & coordinators in other states
- Membership directory
- Best practices guidelines, workshops, annual conference, and conference proceedings
- Access to national survey data

What are the membership requirements?

Programmatic membership requirements include: programs must have a natural resource focus; offer a minimum of 20 hours of service-oriented education and training; include a field component, either self-study or expert-led, as part of that education; and may not be a for-profit organization. Each member program has a

single vote in the alliance. New membership applications are subject to a Board committee review to ensure that the program meets the mission and criteria of the Alliance. A Friend membership is open to anyone who supports the goals and mission of the alliance; this category does not have voting rights, however. And does not participate in mentor calls and other program benefits.

Does a program have to be implemented at the state level to qualify for membership?

No. Although a majority of member programs are state-level, member programs may be organized at the local, regional, state, or national level.

Can only Master Naturalist groups join ANROSP?

No. Membership in the Alliance is open to any program that meets the requirements, regardless of what the program is called.

Who should submit a programmatic membership application?

A program coordinator/administrator should submit the application. Up to 3 contact names may be listed on the program membership form; all 3 contacts will have access to members-only areas of the web site and will receive ANROSP information. Contact individuals must designate one person to cast that member program's vote, when needed.

To what extent have managers of natural resource volunteer programs been involved in the development of ANROSP?

100%. The Alliance was developed and is governed by natural resource program coordinators from a variety of organizations. To ensure that the Alliance is meeting the needs of member programs, an annual member survey may be administered.

What has ANROSP accomplished so far?

ANROSP, which began development as the National Master Naturalist Initiative in 2003, has organized national planning workshops for program development, and has host eight national-level best practices conferences. Many new and developing programs credited these workshops as being instrumental in their program development, providing invaluable resources and ideas. Board members respond to direct inquiries for resources and contacts on a weekly basis.

FAQs ABOUT PROGRAMS:

What type of training do member programs provide?

There is no single hard-and-fast model of how to establish a curriculum; diversity and adaptability are program hallmarks. In general, "basic" training in a variety of natural resource concepts is given across a 10-14 week period. Participants usually receive 40 hours of training, although this can vary from 30 to 120 hours, depending on the specific program. Training covers a broad range of natural science topics; main themes include an overview of basic ecology; terrestrial & aquatic ecosystems and their associated flora, fauna, and conservation issues; interpreting for the public; invasive species; watersheds & streams; and management issues. Each

program tailors training to fit the local ecosystems and program goals (i.e. some programs have a greater focus on volunteer stewardship, others are targeted more towards environmental education, or professional development). Courses have a classroom and field component, so participants experience and practice what they learn immediately. Several programs also require a final project or “capstone” that allows trainees to synthesize and apply what they learned. Following training, volunteers may be expected to provide a set number of hours of service annually on approved projects, generally to equal the number of hours of basic training. Because “basic” training covers a huge amount of information in a relatively short period, most programs require some form of advanced training or continuing education, to explore particular topics or concepts in greater depth. State-level conferences for program participants are often a venue to deliver a variety of advanced training opportunities.

Who can be an instructor in a program?

Individuals who deliver training are considered to be experts in their field. In some programs, individuals affiliated with a natural resource organization who are interested in becoming instructors apply to the program and go through an instructor training workshop that details the program and its expectations, after which they are eligible to deliver course content and recruit/train additional instructors for their local program. In some programs, each topic is taught by a different specialist, with instructors recruited from local universities, fish & wildlife agencies, botanical gardens, nature preserves, native plant societies, national wildlife refuges, etc.

When training is administered by a variety of instructors at different sites throughout the state, program coordinators develop a set of overall learning objectives to guide instructors.

How do I find partners for my program, and what role do they play?

Program partners come from a variety of organizations that share a natural resource education and stewardship ethic. Many state-level programs are developed and administered via partnership between university extension and the state fish and wildlife agency, but additional partners may include National Wildlife Refuges, The Nature Conservancy, Audubon Society, Forestry Service, soil & water conservation districts, city parks & recreation, natural history museums, botanical gardens, and nature centers. Partners can provide resources, web site servers, ideas, instructors, training sites, and service project opportunities, as well as assisting with funding and marketing a program.

How are programs funded?

Most programs are funded through a mixture of course fees, partner agencies & organizations, and grants. Because programs provide many resources, workbooks, and handouts, there is generally a course fee that at least partially funds the program. Depending on the type of partners and support a program has, and how extensive the training is (some programs have more intensive education modules that may be used for college credit), the fees range from around \$75-\$300 per person. Some portion of the fee may be returned to the chapter, or to the hosting organization of an instructor. Because the fee may be a barrier to potential program audiences, a

program may develop “scholarship” funds (generally via donation) to aid those who cannot afford the full program fee.

Do all member programs have a volunteer service requirement for participants?

No. Many programs do require some level of volunteer service after training, often equal to the number of hours of training received, but this varies depending on the program and its goals. However, even in programs that don't require volunteer service, graduates who pursued training as a part of their professional development frequently put their new skills to work as volunteers in their communities.

What are some of the different program models out there?

There are three major different Master Naturalist program models:

1. Instructor-based, as exemplified by the Florida Master Naturalist Program
2. Chapter-based, as exemplified by the Texas Master Naturalist Program
3. Instructor-based/chapter-based hybrid, as exemplified by the Minnesota Master Naturalist Program

Instructor-based Model:

- State-level coordinating organization is involved more directly in initial training
- “Train-the-trainer” workshops - instructors with environmental science background attend two-day training session that provides an introduction to the program, description of core curriculum & teaching tools (PowerPoint Presentations, videos on 3 major biomes, instructor & student workbooks), and connection to support services offered by the statewide program (web site, marketing, etc.)
- Classes - trained instructors then organize classes at their nature-based centers; the state organization coordinates registration
- A portion of registration fees is returned to instructor's organization

Chapter-based Model:

- Individuals in a specific geographical region organize a Master Naturalist chapter, which operates under the guidelines of the state organization
- Each chapter coordinates initial training sessions and provides volunteer service opportunities to their members
- Chapter is self-governing but receives guidance from state organization/state advisory committee - learning objectives, training guidelines, marketing, curriculum resources, advanced training opportunities

Instructor-based/chapter-based Hybrid Model:

- Includes elements of chapter-based and instructor-based programs
- Initial training is similar to instructor-based approach, with “train the trainer” workshops and state-wide curriculum materials for courses on 3 major biomes
- Chapters for Master Naturalists to join after they have completed the initial training are developed Are there benefits to organizing a program to have local chapters?

- Chapters are often a natural outgrowth of a program, and may make the job of a state-level coordinator easier. Chapters of a state program generally have oversight from one or more advisors from the program partner organization(s), but are in effect self-governing. Chapter officers and committees may plan new class training, solicit instructors, approve new volunteer service activities, track volunteer hours (if required), publish newsletters, arrange advanced training opportunities, and pursue and maintain partnerships with local organizations. Chapters may also engage in fundraising to support their activities.

Have states collaborated with each other to share curriculum, course topics, pitfalls, etc?

Absolutely. Right now about 26 states have established or developing Master Naturalist or Master Naturalist-type programs. Annual national conferences of ANROSP are an excellent venue for exchanging resources and ideas among coordinators of developing and established programs. The national board can provide information to individual programs, and ANROSP will collect survey data, forms, etc. from member programs annually to provide a base of information to be used by other programs.

Do Master Naturalist-type programs REALLY make a difference in conservation and education efforts?

Graduates of Master Naturalist and related programs make an amazing difference in education and stewardship! Due to strong interest from both participants and partner organizations, program growth is generally rapid. The Texas Master Naturalist program began with 4 chapters and 150 volunteers in 1998, and has now trained over 3400 volunteers in 35 local chapters; the Florida Master Naturalist program has trained over 3000 people since its first participants graduated in 2001. The scope and activity of Master Naturalist programs is staggering. Texas Master Naturalist Program volunteers have provided over 334,000 hours of service valued at >\$6.02 million while working with more than 260 local partner organizations. This service has resulted in 75,000 acres of enhanced wildlife and native plant habitat, reaching over 530,800 youth, adults and private landowners. Evaluations conducted by individual programs indicate that course training is effective in changing participants' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. A national needs survey delivered in 2005 found that natural resource professionals in 43 responding states reported overwhelmingly positive volunteer impacts in conservation education & outreach, and in wildlife & habitat conservation. Respondents also indicated a strong and growing need for more trained volunteers to act as environmental educators and stewards.

If these FAQs didn't provide the answers you needed—or raised additional questions!—please don't hesitate to contact us via e-mail.