

ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF EXTENSION EDUCATION

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 49 chapters and has trained more than 16,700 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.

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ECONOMIC IMPACTS

- Master Naturalist volunteers provided a total of 553,100 hours of service in 2023, or 266 full-time equivalents (FTEs).
- Using an hourly rate of \$23.00 to value the time contributed by volunteers, the monetary value of these volunteers is estimated at \$12.7 million for 2023.
- Program volunteers conducted projects that made an impact on 872 acres in 2023, and 256,700 total acres of habitat since the program's inception.

