E-mail may be used for Board decisions when those decisions can be made with simple email discussion and no significant controversy. Any board member may request that a decision be deferred to a board meeting if the discussion is controversial. The board will then decide if it is more prudent to wait until the next board meeting for further discussion.

E-mail communications are limited at best. All board members, volunteers and employees of Rusk Ranch Nature Center (RRNC) will maintain polite and cordial verbiage when communicating by e-mail. Blaming, name-calling, negative insinuations about anyone, venting and other forms of negative, destructive communications are not an appropriate use of e-mail.

Some guidelines from the web:
Electronic mail is a quick, easy, and convenient way to instantly link up with people around the globe. To ensure our messages do not confuse or alienate others, it is important to practice basic e-mail etiquette. Here are twelve simple e-mail rules to keep you connected and make sure every communiqué is clear, polished, and professional.

Rule #1 – Be concise. Follow the KISS rule (keep it short and simple). Get to the point in a clear manner. Keep paragraphs short – three or four sentences at most. If you find you need to send an e-mail that is longer than a few short paragraphs, revise the message or consider picking up the phone or paying a personal visit instead.

Rule #2 – Watch your words. Before sending any e-mail, check your message. Ask yourself, *"What is my purpose for sending this e-mail?"* Anger, enthusiasm, and anxiousness are all emotions that can trigger an itch only an immediate heated reply can scratch. Always consciously choose your words and be sure every communiqué accurately and clearly conveys your message. Be careful about what you say and how you say it because your words can come back to haunt you. Words, especially the written word, can live and be remembered forever. Do not say something in the heat of the moment that you cannot take back.

Rule #3 – Follow a format. Every correspondence you send is a reflection of you and your organization. Therefore, at a minimum, each e-mail needs to have these elements – a greeting, a skipped line before and after each paragraph, a closing or call for action, and a signature (which identifies you and provides alternate ways to contact you).

Rule #4 – Spell check. While spell check can accurately check for misspellings, it will not recognize all errors. Before you hit the send button, check every e-mail for spelling, punctuation, and grammar. An e-mail filled with multiple errors is not only difficult to read and understand; it tests the patience of the recipient, who may decide your message has no value and simply is not worth reading.

Rule #5 – Send messages to your outbox first. Disable the "auto send" feature in your e-mail software and, instead, have messages sent to the "outbox" first. This gives you a second chance to review your e-mail for content and intent. If your e-mail is a reply, you will now be able to reread the original message to be sure you did not misunderstand the message. When in doubt, seek clarification before responding.

As a rule, always wait at least 24 hours before responding to a heated e-mail. This is often enough time to cool off and think clearly. Reread the message and ask yourself if you misinterpreted the e-mail. If so, at least now you can hit "delete" instead of "send." Remember to always communicate with integrity and respect.

Rule #6 – Avoid writing in all caps. Text written in all caps is hard on the eyes and is difficult to read. More importantly, all caps in an e-mail SCREAMS at the reader. Better to write in upper and lower case. If you need to draw attention to a word, consider using bold or italics for the emphasis.

Rule #7 – Reply to all sparingly. When you respond to a mass e-mail (a message sent to multiple recipients), determine whether everyone listed needs to receive your reply. If a reply to the sender only is sufficient and appropriate, hit the "reply" vs. the "reply to all" button to cut down on multiple and unnecessary mail.

Rule #8 – Stay current. Just like voice mail, be sure to keep your auto-reply message up-to-date. An outdated auto-reply is as bad as dated voice mail – information that serves no purpose.

Rule #9 – Office e-mail is never personal. Unless you own the company, any e-mail sent via your office computer is the property of the employer and is subject to their purview. There is no such thing as personal e-mail at work. Be aware and watch what you say because every message represents you and the organization.

Rule #10 – Stay organized. Attempting to save every e-mail creates clutter. Get in the habit of saving only necessary e-mails and discarding the rest. Be sure to delete messages from your inbox, delete, and sent message boxes. This will cut down on the clutter and free up much needed computer space. Review periodically so you do not feel overwhelmed at the sight of months or years' worth of messages. If your box is full right now, commit to reviewing at least 15 messages from each box daily until you are all caught up. Also, be sure to regularly back up all mail boxes, just in case.

Rule #11 – Answer e-mail. I can't tell you how many times I've sent an e-mail requesting specific information only to receive a reply with half, if any, of my questions answered. This now requires sending a second message to get the necessary answers. When responding to an e-mail with multiple questions, type your response right next to the questions in a different color font than the original message. This clearly shows your reply, enables the reader to easily match the response to a question, and ensures you have answered all of the sender's questions.

Rule #12 – Be patient. With the proliferation of text messaging, PDAs, and Blackberrys, many people send an e-mail and expect an on the spot response within moments of a message being sent. It is unreasonable to expect others to drop everything to instantly cater to your every whim. When sending e-mail, be patient and allow a reasonable amount of time to pass before you expect a reply.

Electronic mail can open up doors to you from around the world. Apply these twelve simple e-mail rules and your messages will be clear, concise, and always connected.

PRINT:

Date _____

Name _____

SIGN:

Signature _____