



## ***Why be a partner?***

The West Michigan Conservation Network (WMCN) is a partnership of environmental groups, educational institutions, governmental organizations, and private citizens working to conserve and enhance our natural communities. WMCN will achieve this goal by:

1. Maintaining and/or improving the health and resilience of natural communities by implementing and facilitating ecosystem restoration, utilizing invasive species management and other complementary approaches.
2. Increasing public environmental understanding to encourage shared value for vibrant, functional ecosystems as well as increasing partner capacity and expertise to benefit all regional conservation work.
3. Supporting sustainable organizational structure and function through partner engagement, internal and external Collaborative communication, and project management.

For more detail on WMCN's desired outcomes and the strategies we are employing to achieve them, please review our Strategic Plan (available [here](http://wmconservation.net) at [wmconservation.net](http://wmconservation.net)).

If that set of goals (or supporting outcomes and/or strategies) aligns with your organization or personal mission, then joining the WMCN will likely be mutually-beneficial! You may also be a "fit" for WMCN because you or your organization more broadly protects, restores, or manages natural lands and waters in our seven-county service area (Kent, Ottawa, Allegan, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, and Montcalm). Or perhaps you are simply interested in what is being done to address conservation challenges in west Michigan through a broad partner collaborative. Whatever the reason, we encourage you to consider contacting us to learn more and ultimately to get involved. We believe that there are two major reasons to become a partner:

- 1) **Knowledge sharing** – It is vitally important to simply know what is happening in the regional environmental/conservation space. WMCN encourages and facilitates this through:
  - WMCN all-partner meetings (quarterly) including partner updates and presentations
  - WMCN all-partner email lists (don't worry, these all-partner updates are infrequent and opting-out is always an option!)
  - The WMCN website calendar which allows you to spread the word about your work, attract volunteers and other engagement, and get involved with partner work you were unfamiliar with
  - WMCN Learning and Engagement events which offer partner training on the latest and greatest conservation topics as well as public trainings aimed at increasing general awareness of issues
- 2) **Direct Involvement** – WMCN is organized into three subcommittees that offer a more hands-on form of partnership and engagement. They are Habitat Restoration and Management, Public and Partner Learning and Engagement, and Organizational Structure and Function

Participation in one or multiple subcommittees provides:

- Connection with other partners working on similar projects
- Opportunities to collaborate on funding applications to both public and private funders
- A set of partners who can offer insight and past experience on projects you are involved with; this includes a group to help answer questions and resolve thorny problems
- Design and development of presentations, workshops, and trainings as well as a platform for outreach related to your work, either as one-offs or as part of our yearly Learning and Engagement "theme" (2017 – *Water*, 2018 – *Emerging Environmental Issues*.)

If you are still on the fence about joining, consider asking one of our existing partners what benefits they have received from their participation. There are absolutely no costs to join us, and participation is as simple as attending partner meetings. Beyond that, your level of involvement is completely up to you!

We seek to improve our body of work, both individually and collectively, as well as strive to understand all needs and perspectives. Now, more than ever, protecting our lands and waters requires cooperation and collaboration.