



Minutes- All-Partner Meeting

Monday, December 8 | 2:00–4:00 PM | Virtual

Hosted by Structure and Function

Attendees:

Jessie Schulte – West Michigan Conservation

Kelsey Bockelman – Clean Boats, Clean Waters / Aquatic Invasives

Ben Jordan – Ottawa Conservation District (Acting Executive Director)

Lea Sevigny – Learning & Engagement Committee

Ginny Wanty – West Michigan Conservation (Emeritus / Administrative support)

Larry Burns – City of Grand Haven; Grand Valley State University Professor

Justin Heslinga – Land Conservancy of West Michigan

Jeff Westendorp – Private sector invasive species and oak wilt management

Sue Aagaard – Flat River Group / Montcalm County

Ryan Wilemski – Kent Conservation District, Invasive Species Strike Team

Matt Dykstra – Calvin University

Emma Waatti- Oceana Conservation District

Additional Notes: Additional partners were present and listening during the roundtable discussion. Sarah and Randy from the Newaygo Coalition were referenced during the meeting but were not in attendance. One participant (Larry Burns) joined shortly after the meeting began due to initial confusion between Teams and Zoom access.

1. Welcome & Opening Remarks

Lea Sevigny - 2026 WMCN Program Schedule Preview

– Partners encouraged to add events to WMCN calendars to prevent overlap.

Jessie Schulte - Quick Review on WMCN Partner Expectations (The WMCN is composed of 80 partners currently.)

– Reminder that WMCN partners are asked to:

- Publicize Learning & Engagement Subcommittee workshops and trainings each year
- Join at least one subcommittee (Learning & Engagement, Habitat & Restoration, Structure & Function)
- Collaborate on grant opportunities
- Support Network programs through volunteering
- Attend the three quarterly virtual partner meetings and the Annual Meeting, now November 5th 2026

2. Partner Roundtable

Partner roll call & guest introductions

Roundtable updates:

Partners shared current projects, new initiatives, or needs.

3. Committee Deliverables & Updates

Learning & Engagement Committee

Mission: Provide aligned and widespread public education and outreach; host partner-led trainings; build partner capacity.

- 2026 Program Schedule with registration links now posted on website under “Events”
- 2026 Individual programs as well as All-Partner and Executive Board Meeting dates are posted on calendar by date.

Structure & Function Committee

Mission: Maintain clear organizational structure, partner engagement, and adaptive management.

Key Work: Preparations for the November 5, 2026 Annual Meeting.

Current WMCN Steering Committee Members

- **Murielle Garbarino** - Habitat Restoration Committee
- **Ottawa Conservation District Executive Director** - Fiduciary
- **Lea Sevigny** - Learning & Engagement Committee
- **Jessie Schulte** - Structure & Function Committee
- **Sue Aagaard** - Montcalm Master Gardeners / Flat River Watershed Council
- **Kelsey Bockelman** - MSU Extension AIS Educator
- **Larry Burns** - Forestry representative / GVSU
- **Kenny McMahon** - Fishbeck, Wetland Specialist
- **Emma Waatti** - Oceana CD Stewardship Coordinator
- **Ginny Wanty** - Historian/Emeritus

Board Appointments (Action Item)

The Board reviewed and confirmed appointments to fill three open positions on the Board of Directors reflecting recent governance realignment and the transition of Steering Committee members into Board of Director members, (January 1 is official date for name change.)

The following individuals were nominated:

- **Katie McLaren** – Community Engagement and Volunteer Coordinator (seasonal), Muskegon Parks; providing increased Muskegon County representation and experience in outreach, volunteer coordination, and marketing.
- **Ginny Wanty** – Formerly serving in an Emeritus capacity as Historian, Website Coordinator, and Supervisor; she expressed willingness to transition to an active **voting Board Member** role.
- **Stephanie Dood** – Executive Director, Newaygo Conservation District; previously engaged through the and introduced to the WMCN Steering Committee /Board during the **October 6 Quarterly Steering Committee meeting**, when Steering Committee members transitioned to Board membership.

All nominees confirmed their willingness to serve and participate fully as voting board members.

Motion: To appoint **Katie McLaren, Ginny Wanty, and Stephanie Dood** to the Board of Directors.

Vote: Motion carried unanimously.

Outcome: All three individuals were formally appointed as **voting members of the Board of Directors**. (Stephanie and Ginny have accepted but waiting to hear acceptance from Katie.)

Follow-Up Actions

- Newly appointed board members will be notified and be provided with onboarding materials.
- The Board roster, WMCN Website and governance records will be updated.
- Meeting minutes will be posted publicly on the WMCN website.
- Continue to recruit additional Board of Director members to reach max of 15.

4. Governance Decisions from October Steering Committee Meeting

WMCN Structure & Function Update: At the October 6th the WMCN Steering Committee meeting, steering Committee members unanimously approved the following realignment actions:

Key Decisions

- **CISMA will form its own standalone Steering Committee**, representing all seven counties and focused on survey, treatment, outreach, and strike-team guidance.
- **Murielle Garbarino** will draft CISMA bylaws and its first strategic plan this winter.
- **WMCN Steering Committee will transition to a Board of Directors model** with up to 15 voting members and clearer attendance guidelines (increasing the board leadership).
- **Ottawa CD remains fiduciary** for both WMCN and CISMA unless changed by vote.
- **Shared representation required:**
 - One WMCN representative will serve on the CISMA Steering Committee
 - CISMA Coordinator will hold a seat on the WMCN Board

Why This Realignment Matters

- Reduces public confusion on WMCN vs WMCISMA
- Supports CISMA's program growth focused on invasives (~\$900K in grants, 3 strike teams)
- Allows both entities to adopt governance tailored to the WMCN expanded mission
- Clarifies revenue streams (CISMA grant-funded; WMCN donation/fee-based)
- Increases long-term consistency, representation, and expertise

Next Steps

- Structure & Function will update the WMCN strategic plan and governance diagram
- CISMA Steering Committee roster to be identified early 2026 (nominations open)
- Both entities will continue coordinated quarterly updates and shared votes
- Updates will be formally reiterated to all partners

Organizational Goals & Strategic Management Objectives

1. Ensure all Network members understand their roles, responsibilities, and opportunities for participation.
2. Facilitate seamless and inclusive communication across the Network.
3. Improve transparency regarding finances, data, and progress toward shared outcomes.

Habitat & Restoration Committee

Lead: Murielle Garbarino (unable to attend), Ben Jordan will represent instead

Mission: Invasive species management, public education, and green-industry outreach.

Updates:

- Current grant status
- Progress across the three strike teams
- Upcoming initiatives and winter planning for CISMA steering committee

5. Next Meeting & Committee Assignments

Next All-Partner Virtual Meeting:

March 12, 2026 at 2:00 PM

2026 Schedule for Board of Directors and All-Partner Meeting; if interested in attending

WMCN Board of Directors (previously known as Steering Committee) Meeting Schedule (*Ginny has posted these meetings on the WMCN calendar*)

Mon, January 26, 2026 – 2 to 4 pm– Winter / Q1 WMCN Board Meeting-virtual

Mon, May 18, 2026 – 2 to 4 pm- Spring / Q2 WMCN Board Meeting

(in person at Kent County Parks Administrative Building)

Mon, Sept 21, 2026 – 2 to 4 pm-Early Fall / Q3 WMCN Board Meeting-virtual

Thurs, Nov 5, 2026 – 10 am-5 pm WMCN Annual Meeting and 20th Anniversary Celebration

Mon, Dec 7th – 2-4 pm Q4 WMCN Board Meeting

Zoom Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84848509567>

Other Meetings:

OPTIONAL-Mon, Nov 2, 2026 – Pre-Annual Meeting Check-In meeting

All- Partner Meeting for 2026 (Board members need to attend if possible and please attend if you are a member of the subcommittee.)

Thursday, March 12, 2026 – All-Partners Meeting- Habitat and Restoration Subcommittee hosted by Murielle

Monday, June 8, 2026 – All-Partners Meeting- Structure and Function Subcommittee hosted by Jessie

Wednesday, August 12, 2026- All Partner Meeting-Learning and Engagement Subcommittee hosted by Lea

Adjournment & Thank-You