

West Michigan Conservation Network (WMCN)

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Date: May 18, 2026

Time: 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Location: Kent County Parks Office, Multi-Purpose Room

Attendance

Present: Ginny Wanty, Ben Jordan, Emma Waatti, Jessica Schulte, Katie McLaren, Lea Sevigny, Matt Bain, Murielle Garbarino

Absent: Kenny McMahon, Kelsey Bockelman, Stephanie Dood, and Sue Aagaard

1. Welcome & Introductions

Ginny Wanty called the meeting to order. Attendees introduced themselves and shared brief updates. The Board congratulated Ben Jordan on his appointment as Executive Director of Ottawa Conservation District.

2. WMCN Strategic Plan Approval

The Board reviewed final updates to the WMCN Strategic Plan.

Key revisions included:

- Separation of bylaws and organizational history from the strategic plan document.
- Clarification of the Habitat & Restoration Committee's role following the formation of the independent WMCISMA Steering Committee.
- Continued focus on regional collaboration, habitat restoration, learning opportunities, and partner engagement.

Motion: Approve the updated Strategic Plan with discussed revisions.

Result: Approved unanimously.

3. MDARD Hearing Preparation

The Board reviewed talking points for the May 20 MDARD hearing.

Discussion focused on:

- Representing the interests of the seven-county region and WMCN partners.
- Conservation funding priorities.
- Habitat restoration, invasive species management, and regional collaboration.

Board members discussed attendance and coordination of testimony.

4. Annual Meeting Update

Planning for the WMCN 20th Anniversary Celebration and Annual Meeting on Thursday, November 5 continues.

Updates included:

- Sponsor and presenter outreach.
 - Scholarship opportunities to support attendance.
 - Collection of historical photos and stories from partners.
 - Event planning remains on schedule.
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5. Committee & Partner Updates

Habitat & Restoration Committee

- Committee responsibilities were refined within the Strategic Plan.
- Continued emphasis on regional restoration coordination, grant opportunities, and partner communication.

Learning & Engagement Committee

- Positive feedback was received on the new electronic newsletter format.
 - Appreciation was expressed for volunteers supporting communications, outreach, and event promotion.
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6. Financial Report

The Board discussed communication platform expenses and future funding needs.

Highlights included:

- Current Mailchimp limitations and the need for a paid subscription.
- Estimated annual cost of approximately \$150.
- Discussion of voluntary partner contributions, sponsorships, and donation opportunities.
- Need for funding update from fiduciary at each Board of director meeting was discussed

Consensus was reached to move forward with a paid subscription if necessary to support partner communications.

7. Coordinator Position Discussion

The Board discussed the future WMCN Coordinator position and the need to define responsibilities.

Areas identified for future discussion include:

- Communications and outreach.
 - Partner engagement.
 - Event coordination.
 - Administrative support functions.
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8. Donor Recognition

The Board discussed establishing a consistent process for donor thank-you letters and acknowledgements.

Staff will develop a standard donor recognition process for future sponsorships and contributions.

9. Next Steps

- Final Strategic Plan edits will be incorporated and distributed.
 - MDARD hearing participation on May 20.
 - Continued planning for the Annual Meeting.
 - Future discussion regarding the Coordinator position and long-term funding strategies.
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10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:00 PM.