

MID-MICHIGAN LAND CONSERVANCY

Annual Report of Activities – 2011

Mission

The mission of Mid-Michigan Land Conservancy (MMLC) is to protect farmland and natural land in mid-Michigan and to encourage and promote the protection of these lands. Our area of coverage is Ingham, Eaton, Clinton, Ionia, Shiawassee, Hillsdale and Jackson counties. MMLC is a qualified land conservancy as recognized by the State of Michigan and the Internal Revenue Service and is covered by Section 501(c)(3) of the federal tax code. It is qualified to receive donations of conservation easements on land, gifts of land, monetary donations, and other donations. The donors can use these donations as deductions on their federal income taxes.

Protection of Land

Four conservation easements were in progress in 2011. One was completed in 2011 and a second was completed in January, 2012. The other two are nearing completion. The conservation easement completed in 2011 is on a property in Shiawassee County. The property protected is a 40 acre parcel of mostly wetland but it also contains some nice upland forest.

We now have 1,532 acres under protection with 13 conservation easements. A description of these properties can be found on our website, www.midmilandcons.org. All of our properties were monitored in 2011 by MMLC board members except one, and it will be done this spring. All landowners are following the provisions of their conservation easements.

Additional Activities

A brief summary of our other major activities follows: (i) Our first newsletter was prepared and sent to all MMLC members in late summer. It was also more widely distributed, including to people in governmental and non-governmental organizations in our area that are working on land conservation issues; (ii) Our website was further improved. This was done on a continuing basis throughout the year; (iii) A membership and fund raising drive by letter solicitation was held in spring; (iv) A five (5)-year membership and funding plan was developed and approved by the board; (v) A presentation on protecting land through conservation easements or by donation was developed and two presentations were given in our area at meetings dealing with land conservation. These presentations will continue to be given in 2012; (vi) A plan for identifying natural land in our area of coverage that is high in biological significance was further developed and will be completed in 2012. Our first priority for our presentations will be in those areas that have land of high biological significance; (vii) A “Handbook for MMLC Board Members” was largely completed in 2011 and will be completed in 2012. The Handbook puts our methods of operation in writing.

Development of “Annual Plan - 2012”

In fall the board developed our “Annual Plan - 2012”. This is a plan for what MMLC will do in 2012. In summary, we plan to: (i) complete the development of a “Natural Land Protection Plan” and use it to identify areas of high biological significance in our area of coverage, (ii) give presentations to landowners in these areas on the value of protecting their land with conservation easements, (iii) identify one or more properties with significant biological and physical features that MMLC could own and could open to the general public, (iv) make presentations to landowners describing different ways they can protect their land, (v) continue to accept conservation easements from landowners that want to protect their land, (vi) expand our membership, and (vii) publish our next newsletter.

Funds to MMLC from Trust

MMLC received approximately \$225,000 as a beneficiary of the trust of an individual who lived in Michigan. A policy for use of the funds is being developed by the MMLC Board.

Important Information on Tax Benefits for Landowners Who Are Considering Protecting Their Land with a Conservation Easement

Information on tax benefits for landowners who are considering protecting their land with a conservation easement can be obtained at www.lta.org, the website of the Land Trust Alliance, or at our website, given above.

Another important tax benefit for protecting land was enacted by the Michigan legislature in December of 2006. Michigan Act 446 of 2006 eliminates the “pop-up” of property tax on land covered by a conservation easement when ownership of the land is transferred, for example, sold. The taxable value that the land had before the transfer (sale) occurred is retained by the new owner after the transfer occurs. This makes land covered by a conservation easement attractive to new owners since the property tax for the new owner should not increase significantly. The exemption does not apply to buildings or other structures on the land.

Affiliations

MMLC is a member of Land Trust Alliance, a national land protection advocacy organization, and Heart of the Lakes, a state land protection advocacy organization.

Meetings and Website

The Board of Directors of MMLC meets approximately 9 times a year. The meetings are open to the public. Our website is www.midmilandcons.org.

Board of Directors

The members of the MMLC Board in 2011 were: Christie Bleck, Stephen Buzby, Eckhart Dersch, Carl Harmon, Paul Kindel, Seth Martin, Ken Rosenman, Edward Schools, Jody Simoes and Robert Zbiciak. Christie Bleck left the board September, 2011, when she moved from the area. Elections were held in the spring and Jody Simoes and Paul Kindel were re-elected to the Board. Officers elected were: Paul Kindel (President), Edward Schools (Vice-president), Jody Simoes (Secretary), and Stephen Buzby (Treasurer). The board members and officers serve 3- and 1-year terms, respectively.

Protection of Land

If you are a landowner and would like to protect your farmland and natural land, feel free to contact MMLC. If you know of landowners who would like to protect their farmland and natural land, encourage them to contact MMLC. We are glad to talk with any landowners and can provide information on and assistance with protecting their land.

If you, or if someone or some group that you know, would like us to give a workshop on land protection and its tax benefits for landowners in your area, we would be happy to do so.

Feel free to contact me by e-mail (kindel@msu.edu), postal mail (2915 Margate Lane, East Lansing, MI 48823), or telephone (517-332-3091). We welcome inquires about land protection by landowners and other matters related to land conservation.

Paul K. Kindel, President,
Mid-Michigan Land Conservancy
On behalf of the Board of Directors
East Lansing, Michigan
March 15, 2011