

# Mid-Michigan Land Conservancy Annual Report–2013

## **Mission**

The mission of Mid-Michigan Land Conservancy (MMLC) is to protect natural land and farmland in mid-Michigan and to promote the protection of these lands. MMLC does this (i) by assisting landowners to place conservation easements on their natural land and farmland, (ii) by acquiring some parcels outright, that is, MMLC owns the parcels fee simple, and (iii) by making people aware of the importance of protecting natural land and farmland. 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 Internal Revenue 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 and state income taxes to the extent allowed by law.

## **Protection of Land**

One of our main goals in 2013 was to complete the acquisition of a 130-acre property in Ingham County and begin to prepare it as a natural area that will be open to the public. This goal was accomplished. We acquired fee simple ownership of the property on June 13, 2013. This is an outstanding property and an excellent acquisition for the Conservancy. Before the property can be opened to the public a partially completed house needs to be removed from the property and a parking lot and an interpretive walking trail need to be constructed. A brochure for the trail will be prepared. These projects are in progress.

We now have 1,808 acres under protection through 16 conservation easements and 2 properties owned fee simple. A description of these properties can be found on our website, [www.midmilandcons.org](http://www.midmilandcons.org).

The properties we protect with conservation easements were all monitored or were in the final stages of monitoring by MMLC board members in 2013. All landowners were following the provisions of their conservation easements. Typically, properties are monitored approximately once a year.

## **Additional Activities**

The work on the Bunker Natural Area took the bulk of our time this year. We also worked with another landowner in Ingham County who plans to donate their 75-acre property in the County to MMLC. That work is continuing. In addition, we worked with four (4) other landowners who wanted to protect their land with conservation easements or through donation. This work is also continuing. A fifth request for protecting land, a lot in a city, was deemed inappropriate for MMLC to protect. The MMLC Board completed our Strategic Conservation Plan (SCP) (formerly called the *Natural Land Protection Plan*) for the seven counties we cover. This is a science-based plan for identifying natural lands in our area of coverage that are high in biological significance. A newsletter was prepared and mailed to all members in early Fall of 2013. Our website was improved and our *Annual Plan–2014* was prepared. Our membership at the end of 2013 was 53 and has steadily increased each year.

## **Annual Plan–2014**

The board developed our *Annual Plan–2014*. The plan will guide our activities in 2014. In 2014 we plan to: (i) continue preparation of the Bunker Natural Area (near Mason, MI) for public use, (ii) respond to all land inquires and prepare conservation easements and baseline documents for landowners that want to protect their land (iii) use our Strategic Conservation Plan to identify landowners in the previously identified Focal Areas (high biological significance) in Clinton and Hillsdale counties and then contact and give presentations to these landowners – and any other landowners that would like to attend – on the value of protecting their land with conservation easements, (iv) start the process for identifying a second property with significant biological and physical features that MMLC would own and open to the general public as a natural area, (v) inform more public and private organizations in our area that work on land conservation about MMLC and its mission, (vi) publish our next newsletter, (vii) continue to expand our membership, and (viii) prepare *Annual Plan – 2015*.

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

The enhanced federal tax incentive for the donation of a conservation easement to a land conservancy expired on December 31, 2013 and has not been renewed for 2014 as of January 28, 2014. Efforts to get this incentive restated are being led in Washington, D. C. by the Land Trust Alliance and are currently continuing. Further information on tax benefits for landowners who are considering protecting their land with a conservation easement can be obtained at [www.lta.org](http://www.lta.org), the website of the Land Trust Alliance, or by contacting MMLC.

An 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 for land conservancies, and Heart of the Lakes, a Michigan land protection advocacy organization for Michigan land conservancies.

### **Meetings and Website**

The Board of Directors of MMLC meets approximately 9 times a year. The meetings are open to the public. More information about MMLC is on our website, which is [www.midmilandcons.org](http://www.midmilandcons.org).

### **Board of Directors**

The members of the MMLC Board in 2013 were: Stephen Buzby, Eckhart Dersch, Carl Harmon, Paul Kindel, Seth Martin, Michael Rhodes, Ken Rosenman, Edward Schools, Jody Simoes, and Robert Zbiciak. Michael Rhodes is a new member of the board and was elected July 30, 2013. Stephen Buzby, Carl Harmon, Seth Martin, and Ken Rosenman were re-elected to the Board in 2013. Officers re-elected in 2013 were: Paul Kindel (President), Edward Schools (Vice-president), Jody Simoes (Secretary), and Stephen Buzby (Treasurer). Board members and officers serve 3- and 1-year terms, respectively.

### **Protection of Land**

We are glad to speak with any landowners who would like to protect their land. Feel free to have them contact MMLC. We can provide information and assistance.

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

Contact me by e-mail ([kindel@msu.edu](mailto:kindel@msu.edu)), postal mail (2915 Margate Lane, East Lansing, MI 48823), or telephone (517-332-3091) to arrange these or to obtain other information on protecting your land.

Paul K. Kindel, President,  
Mid-Michigan Land Conservancy  
On behalf of the Board of Directors  
East Lansing, Michigan  
January 28, 2014