

MICHIGAN KARST CONSERVANCY, INC

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TO: MKC Board of Trustees, 14 March 2009
FROM: Rane L. Curl
SUBJECT: Report on Stewardship Network Conference 2009

The 2009 Stewardship Network Conference was held 23-24 January 2009 at the Kellogg Conference Center, MSU, East Lansing, MI. The MKC was a Partner Sponsor for the conference. I attended as a representative of MKC.

The Stewardship Network (<http://www.stewardshipnetwork.org/>) is a statewide organization coordinating the activities of diverse environmental organizations to build “the capacity of organizations, individuals, and businesses to preserve, restore, and manage Michigan's natural lands and waters”. It does this by forming “clusters” of local organizations and agencies, which cooperate in stewardship activities for nature areas in those localities. There are currently seven clusters in the mid-to-southern Lower Peninsula (none yet cover karst areas of interest to MKC). Participating organizations in the clusters include state, county and local governmental agencies, state and local nonprofits, nature centers, universities – essentially any organization with an interest of some kind in the study and stewardship of nature areas.

The Conference ran for two days. About 250 people attended. On Friday there were three Sessions with thirteen presentations with themes of Fire Ecology, Wildlife Ecology, and Water Ecology, with a Poster Reception in the afternoon. On Saturday, after a *keynote* presentation, participants scattered into three rounds of up to ten simultaneous workshops. I attended *Volunteer Liability and Your Property*, *How a Stewardship Network Cluster can Enhance Natural Areas Stewardship*, and *Importance of Restoration and Management Planning to Realizing Natural Resources Outcomes*. More details about these are available in the Conference Program, copies of which will be available at this meeting.

It would be very advantageous to MKC if clusters were formed in our areas of interest. The most likely would be for the Alpena and Presque Isle counties area. A number of environmental organizations exist there and their cooperation could further all interests by coordinating volunteers for stewardship activities. Organizations that come to mind include Headwaters Land Conservancy, Nature Conservancy of Michigan, Michigan Nature Association, Thunder Bay Audubon, Thunder Bay River Watershed Council, Alpena and Presque Isle Parks Commissions, Jessee Besser Museum, US National Forest Service, NE Michigan Community Foundation, MI Departments of Natural Resources and Environmental Quality, and of course MKC.

I recommend that MKC attempt to foster the formation of a Stewardship Network Cluster in the Alpena and Presque Isle counties area.