

ANNUAL MEMBERS MEETING

2026

November 4

AGENDA

Mud Creek Conservancy Annual Members Meeting

Wednesday, November 4, 2026 6:00-8:30 p.m.
Movable FEAST 5143 E 65th Street Indianapolis

6:00-6:30 Welcome and member check-in / Giving Guide activity

Food and drink, Bird Safe Indy table, and Giving Guide project posters

6:30-7:15 Business meeting

Welcome, call to order, board introductions and President's remarks - Maria Smietana

2025 annual-meeting minutes and motion to approve - Kathryn Rietmann and Maria Smietana

Treasurer's report - Jeff Yu

2026 year in review, project updates and 2027 priorities - Ben Miller

Director renewal vote, recognition of Michelle Mannweiler and recruitment update - Maria Smietana

Committee participation and MCC Giving Guide activity - Maria Smietana and Ben Miller

7:15-7:30 Questions and open discussion

7:30 Adjournment, followed by social time until 8:30

Visit Bird Safe Indy, share your project priorities and connect with neighbors.

Board Leadership and Governance Slate

Name	Current role	Term status	2026 action
Ben Miller	Executive Director	Staff	Continues as staff, Year 2.
Maria Smietana	President	2027	Continue current term.
Jeff Yu	Treasurer	2027	Continue current term.
Kathryn Rietmann	Secretary	2026	Director renewal for 2026-2028. Member vote pending.
Dr. Kristin Adams	Director	2027	Continue current term.
Frank Smietana	Founder Emeritus and Director	2027	Continue current term.
Earl Simon	Director	2027	Continue current term.
Rick Marrs	Director	2027	Continue current term.
Eric Mannweiler	Vice President	VP 2027	Continues VP term through 2027, elected in 2025.
Jim Tulledge	Director	2027	Continue current term.
Michelle Mannweiler	Director departing	2026	Not renewing. Thank you, Michelle, for your unwavering support of MCC.

No new directors are nominated at this meeting.

Kathryn has agreed to renew her director term for 2026-2028, pending the member vote. Eric continues as Vice President through 2027.

2026 Estimated Funding Needs

$400,000

Funding need	Estimated amount
Executive Director Year 2	$70,000
Land Protection Fund	$100,000
Blue Heron Nature Preserve	$25,000
General Operating Expenses	$20,000
Habitat Restoration / Ecological Research	$50,000
Sargent Road Nature House Rent & Improvements	$100,000
Community & Member Events (Sponsor Heavy)	$35,000
Total estimated needs	**$400,000**

Valley Guardian goal: $250,000

Dependable annual support for our ongoing mission and operating capacity.

Additional funding opportunities

Potential support for remaining needs includes sponsorships for community events and education, grants, and applicable state and federal funding for future land protection.

2026 Achievements and Progress

Progress since the November 6, 2025 Annual Meeting

Thank you to our members, donors, volunteers and partners.
See the 2026 Progress Check-In Packet for details.

Land Protection in Madison County

We completed the 106-acre Anderson Land Ventures donation on December 4, 2025, exceeding our strategic plan's 54-acre land-protection growth target.

Blue Heron Nature Preserve

We secured $100,000+ through a $50,000 IHCDA grant and $50,000+ in private matching gifts. Parking is complete and trail installation is underway, with a public opening planned for spring 2027.

Habitat Restoration and Stewardship

We seeded more than two acres at Blue Heron and received 100 native saplings for Earth Day distribution and preserve planting. Volunteers and contractors continued invasive removal, trail care and property stewardship.

Biodiversity and New Support

The first recorded North American occurrence of the lichen *Thelenella vezdae*, found by Perry Scott at Sargent Road Nature Park, was published this year. MCC also earned a $2,000 Bioinventory grant for botanical surveys at three preserves in 2027.

Cox Conserves Heroes and Public Awareness

Ben finished second nationally in Cox Conserves Heroes, earning $15,000 for MCC. WTTS interviews and campaigns, IndyStar coverage and other outreach introduced more people to our work.

Programs and Community Events

We launched the Sargent Road Nature Series and welcomed 200+ attendees across 15+ programs and events. Our first Nature Prom brought in more than $20,000 in gifts and pledges. Thank you to our hosts, sponsors, volunteers, attendees and Evan Mannweiler. And it was really fun, too!

Staff Capacity and the Nature House

We completed our first year with a paid part-time Executive Director and strengthened payroll, board reporting and operating systems. MCC contributed $31,000 toward the Nature House mortgage payoff while continuing shared community and education programs.

2027 Priorities and Member Participation

Proposed Priorities for Discussion

Open Blue Heron to the public in spring 2027

Complete trails, benches, access and visitor information. Strategic Plan 1.3 and 3.2.

Complete the planned botanical inventory

Use findings to guide stewardship at Jensen Nature Preserve, Sargent Road Nature Park and Blue Heron Nature Preserve. Strategic Plan 1.1 and 3.2.

Sustain preserve maintenance and invasive management

Continue caring for MCC properties and welcoming visitors. Strategic Plan 3.2.

Finalize the Nature House agreement

Complete the agreement with Sargent Road Association. Strategic Plan 5.2.

Strengthen committee participation

Bring more members into work that supports MCC’s priorities. Strategic Plan 5.1.

Build dependable annual support

Grow Valley Guardian support for ongoing operations and stewardship. Strategic Plan 5.1.

Sargent Road Nature Series



Date	Program	Speakers
Jan. 18	Intro to Wildlife Track Identification	Matt Shull
Feb. 15	Intro to Invasive Plant ID and Management	Dawn Slack and Maria Smietana
Mar. 15	Intro to Landscaping with Native Plants	Nate Sils, Meadowlark Nativescapes; Karin Maloney Anderson, Native Plants Unlimited
Apr. 19	Intro to Citizen Science: eBird, iNaturalist and City Nature Challenge	Aidan Rominger and Ben Miller
May 31	Exploring Indiana's Wetlands Through Time	Tom Swinford, Sycamore Land Trust
July 19	The Herpetofauna of the Mud Creek Valley	Rick Marrs and Jim Horton
Aug. 16	Intro to Nature Connection Practices	Michelle Morton
Sept. 27	Intro to Tree Care and Species Selection	Jerome Delbridge

2026 Programs and Community Events

Date	Event	Program / presenters
Jan. 17	MCC Hosts Board Game Night!	Nature-themed fundraising game night, co-hosted by Lou Harry
Mar. 28	Sing for Spring	Children’s event featuring musician Mr. Daniel, sponsored by MCC
Apr. 25	MCC Earth Day Festival	Sargent Road Nature Park / Nature House
Apr. 26	Feathers and Fermentation	Guided birding hike with Wes Homoya / Indiana Audubon
June 21	Father’s Day Open House	Sargent Road Nature House
Aug. 30	Land Trust Days: Intro to Forest Bathing	Michelle Morton, certified Nature & Forest Therapy Guide
Oct. 2	Nature Prom	Inaugural gala at Hillcrest Country Club, with Mark Booth and West Winds Big Band
Oct. 10	Indiana Audubon / ILPA October Big Day hike	Fall migration birding at Sargent Road Nature Park with Aidan Rominger and Ben Miller

Giving Guide Activity

Help shape the projects in MCC's new Giving Guide!

Your feedback will help MCC develop project scopes and giving opportunities. Proposed projects and budgets still require review.

1. Visit the project posters and place stickers on the projects you most want to see move forward.

2. Write additional ideas on the New Project Ideas poster.

3. Ask about a committee where your interests and skills can help. The committee framework follows.

MCC Board Committee Charter Summary

Every MCC board member is expected to chair or serve on a committee.

Only MCC board members are eligible to chair committees.

Conservancy members who are not on the board are welcome and encouraged to serve on committees.

Prospective board members are encouraged to serve on a committee for at least one year before nomination to the MCC board.

Committees work collaboratively with the Executive Director and align their work with MCC’s Strategic Plan.

Committee chairs report to the full board at each MCC board meeting.

Each committee may determine its meeting frequency and location as needed.

Interested in helping? Talk with Ben or Maria about joining a committee.

Major projects stretched our capacity in 2026, and we did not get the committee framework fully underway. Thank you for your patience. We hope to involve more members in 2027.

MCC Board Committee Framework

Land Protection Committee
Purpose: Guide MCC's efforts to expand protected lands.
- Review land and easement opportunities
- Conduct due diligence
- Recommend acquisitions
- Ensure alignment with LTA standards

Land Stewardship Committee
Purpose: Ensure the long-term ecological health of MCC's properties.
- Implement management plans
- Monitor properties
- Manage and engage volunteers
- Assist restoration projects
- Control invasive species

Membership Committee
Purpose: Grow, engage and manage MCC's membership base.
- Recruit members and manage renewals
- Canine Conservancy Club
- Collect and track membership data
- Coordinate with fundraising and marketing
- Plan MCC events

Community Engagement and Education Committee
Purpose: Connect people with nature through outreach and education.
- Table at events
- Develop public and member programming
- Plan MCC events
- Build school partnerships
- Collaborate with community groups

Communications and Marketing Committee
Purpose: Communicate MCC's mission, impact and updates.
- Plan MCC events
- Contribute social media content
- Assist with e-newsletters
- Review and improve the website
- Develop mailings, ads and marketing

Fundraising and Development Committee
Purpose: Ensure MCC has resources to achieve its mission.
- Cultivate donors
- Lead giving campaigns
- Pursue grants and planned giving
- Recognize donors
- Plan MCC events

Finance and Risk Management Committee
Purpose: Oversee MCC's financial health and risk management.
- Oversee budgets and financial reporting
- Review insurance and risk
- Support compliance
- Oversee reserves

Governance and Board Development Committee
Purpose: Strengthen MCC's governance and leadership.
- Recruit and orient board members
- Provide board education and evaluation
- Manage bylaws and policy compliance
- Plan for succession

Executive Committee
Purpose: Support the Executive Director and coordinate major initiatives between board meetings.
Composition: President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary and Founder Emeritus or Strategic Advisor.
- Provide guidance to the ED and serve as liaison between board and staff.
- Coordinate priorities and time-sensitive matters within authority delegated by the bylaws or full board, with reporting back to the board.
- Coordinate ED performance review and payroll or benefits matters within board-approved authority.