

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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SUPERIOR GREENWAY ADDS WOODS, WETLANDS, AND OPEN SPACE

Partnership protects an additional 80 acres in Washtenaw County

Superior Township, MI – The City of Ann Arbor, Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy, and Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission announced today that the Superior Greenway, a 2,800+-acre wildlife and public recreation corridor, has expanded through the purchase of an additional 80 acres at the end of 2019.

Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy (SMLC) acquired the property from the Marissa A. Stepien Living Trust and Washtenaw County acquired a conservation easement on the property. The City was a major funder of both acquisitions. After the closing, Marissa Perez said:

“This piece of land (which we always referred to as “the farm”) has always been a part of my family, so it has always conjured up good memories for me. When I was made aware of the truly inspirational work that the Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy and Washtenaw County were doing in the region and their plan to preserve and protect the property, I was very pleased to know that our small plot would be incorporated into a larger protected area to be enjoyed by future generations. I look forward to seeing their collaborative plans come to fruition.”

SMLC intends to name the new preserve, *the Secrest Nature Preserve*, in honor of a local family who have been instrumental in supporting land protection efforts in Superior Township and across the region for many years.

Conservation Values

- This purchase consolidated 278 acres of protected land at this location. This adds significant acreage to the northern Superior Greenway and protects the entire east side of Berry Road from Ford Road to Warren Road.
- The new Preserve is adjacent to Washtenaw County's Weatherbee Woods Preserve which adjoins Superior Township's Schroeter Park. On the east side, the property borders an 82-acre parcel of protected farmland.
- The property features a beautiful old-growth oak woods in the northern portion where it adjoins the Weatherbee Woods Preserve.
- The property is uniquely located in two watersheds, the Rouge and the Huron.
- The new Preserve is an attraction for birds. In 2019 birders from Washtenaw Audubon documented over 40 noteworthy bird species, including the Blue-winged Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Ovenbird, Eastern Towhee, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Baltimore Oriole, Wood Thrush, Great-crested Flycatcher, Cedar Waxwing, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and more!

Partnership Arrangement

Washtenaw County acquired a conservation easement on the property at the time of fee purchase by SMLC. This arrangement provides two layers of land protection and ensures that the property will always remain a natural area open to the public.

"For years, the County's Natural Area Preservation Program, Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy and the City of Ann Arbor Greenbelt Program have worked diligently to build and expand the Superior Greenway," said Coy Vaughn, Director of Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission. "The latest purchase further increases passive recreation opportunities for the County and expands a block of preserved land adjacent to NAPP's Weatherbee Woods Nature Preserve."

Future Goals

SMLC's plans include establishing a public hiking trail and parking area on the Secret Nature Preserve. The trail plans include linking up to the current public trail on the County's adjacent Weatherbee Woods Preserve. In the future, SMLC intends to restore wildlife habitat there including grasslands, a declining habitat for migrating birds. SMLC Board President, Mary Ericson, stated:

"SMLC is pleased that we could protect this property because it allows us to expand the northern Superior Greenway with the help of our project partners, preserve more of the rural character of the Township given the proximity of Ann Arbor and Detroit, and honor a special family who have been generous and longstanding benefactors of local land conservation."

Partner Information

The City of Ann Arbor Greenbelt Program is an innovative land preservation program that has protected over 5,840 acres of farmland and open space surrounding the City of Ann Arbor, and has leveraged over \$27.5 million through grants, landowner donations, and other locally funded programs. www.a2gov.org/greenbelt

Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy is a 501(c)3 nonprofit and qualified conservation organization that frequently partners with Federal, State, and local governments to achieve shared conservation goals. During the past 31 years, SMLC has protected 3,500 acres across southeast Michigan through the conservation of natural lands and open space to provide wildlife habitat and to enrich the lives of people. www.smlcland.org

The Washtenaw County Natural Areas Preservation Program purchases unique natural areas to ensure their preservation for the benefit of all County residents: plants, animals and people! The Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission also partners with other land preservation organizations to find creative ways to protect and preserve natural areas. washtenaw.org/parks

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