

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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PUBLIC OPENING OF NATURE PRESERVE IN THE SUPERIOR GREENWAY Secret Nature Preserve Public Hiking Trail is OPEN

Superior Township, MI – The City of Ann Arbor, Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy, and Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission announced today that the Secret Nature Preserve is now open to the public. The 80-acre preserve, owned by Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy (SMLC), is a late 2019 addition to the Superior Greenway, a 2,700+-acre wildlife and public recreation corridor, located in Superior Township. The acquisition was made possible with significant support from the County, who holds the conservation easement on the property, and the City's Greenbelt program.

SMLC had intended to complete a new public hiking trail last year. Due to the pandemic and subsequent state shutdown, however, the organization moved some of their public-readiness activities forward. SMLC finalized the trail-readiness work this past summer and is currently establishing onsite public parking with a goal of having it completed in 2022.

“This property was important to protect from a public access standpoint because of its location on the corner of Ford and Berry roads near Prospect Road and M-14,” said Jill Lewis, SMLC’s Executive Director. “This makes it easily accessible for the local area as well as the Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti communities. SMLC is excited to open this preserve to the public especially given the importance of access to natural areas as demonstrated last year.”

SMLC held a private Dedication Event on September 12th. Attendees included:

- members of the Secrest family, who have been instrumental in supporting land protection efforts in Superior Township and across the region for many years,

- the Superior Greenway partners – the City of Ann Arbor, Superior Charter Township, and Washtenaw County’s Natural Areas Preservation Program (NAPP), and
- members of SMLC’s Board of Directors and local Superior Township Chapter.

At the event, SMLC gave out it’s first-ever Community Partner Awards to the three Superior Greenway partners for their many years of contributions that helped make the Greenway what it is today. It awarded Jim Weiner, a longstanding member of its Board of Directors and Land Protection Committee it’s Jack R. Smiley Conservation Award. It’s named after SMLC’s founder, Jack Smiley, who is locally known for his many years of land protection efforts. The award is given to an individual who has been instrumental in SMLC’s land conservation success.

Attendees previewed the new trail and connection to the existing trails at Washtenaw County’s Weatherbee Woods Preserve and Superior Township’s Schroeter Park to the north. This 2-mile trail system is part of the consolidation of 278 acres of protected land north of Ford Road in the Greenway. Ginny Leikam, Superintendent of Planning and NAPP, Washtenaw County Parks & Recreation Commission, said,

“One of the successes of the County’s NAPP program has been working with local partners to protect more land and provide additional recreation trails for the public. The purchase of the property is a great example of both of these: extending existing trails from Weatherbee Woods, owned by Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation, and partnering with SMLC and the City of Ann Arbor’s Greenbelt program to see this land protected and open to the public.”

Visitors to the Secrest Preserve will find scenic vistas of neighboring farmland and a beautiful old-growth oak woods along the new loop trail where it adjoins Weatherbee Woods. The Preserve is also an attraction for birds and other wildlife. In 2019, Washtenaw Audubon documented over 40 noteworthy bird species. In the future, SMLC intends to restore wildlife habitat including grasslands, a declining habitat for migrating birds. [Click here for directions to the Secrest Nature Preserve](#) and [here for a trail map](#).

Partner Information

The City of Ann Arbor Greenbelt Program is an innovative land preservation program that has protected over 6,400 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 33 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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