

# NAPP Application ● Staff Report ● N-25-2008

Washtenaw County Planning Advisory Board

**Date Received:** November 10, 2008

N-25-2008

**TOWNSHIP:** Scio

**LOCATION:** The site is located east of Peters Road in Section 10 in Scio Township. James Jarskey, the property owner, is applying to the Natural Areas Preservation Program (NAPP), requesting that the County purchase this property under NAPP.

**REASON FOR PAB REVIEW:** Natural Areas Preservation Program Committee Ordinance No. 128 requires that the Washtenaw County Planning Advisory Board provide an advisory opinion on the applications submitted to the program.

**BACKGROUND:** The Jarskey Property site proposed for the NAPP program is 10-20 acres. The Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission is considering the opportunity of buying this parcel.

## **STAFF COMMENTS**

### **1. The application's impact on long-range planning**

According to the Scio Township Master Land Use Plan (Township Plan), the long-range planning for this parcel is Open Space/Agriculture/Residential land use. *A Comprehensive Plan for Washtenaw County* (County Plan) designates this parcel as Open Space and Rural. Staff believes that the use of this site for passive recreation and/or open space does not conflict with the long range planning for the area.

### **2. Existing land use of the property and adjacent properties**

According to SEMCOG 2005, the land use on this parcel is currently classified as "underdevelopment". The surrounding land use around this parcel includes woodland/wetland and grassland/shrub land to the east, and active agriculture to the west. According to the application, there are no easements on the property. Adjacent parcels to the east are enrolled in the PA116 program. Staff believes that an open space use on this parcel does not conflict with surrounding land uses.

### **3. Current zoning of the property and surrounding properties**

The zoning designation for this site is General Agricultural District, as is the surrounding land.

According to the Scio Charter Township Zoning Ordinance (Township Ordinance), the intent of the General Agricultural District is: "...to protect and preserve agricultural uses, maintain rural

character, minimize population density.... And promote open space preservation." Permitted uses include single family units, agriculture and nature and wildlife preserves.

The use of this property either for passive recreation, open space, or a conservation area does not appear to conflict with the Township Ordinance.

#### **4. Compliance with Master Plans**

The Washtenaw County Land Use Plan maps the area as Rural and Open Space. Rural uses are defined as being recognized for agricultural operations, parklands and vast open spaces. Open Space areas, according to the County Plan, "can refer to grasslands, stands of trees, swampy lowland, or a park." Further, the County Plan states that "preserving large tracts of natural ecosystems and linkages between these ecosystems are an important part of developing an open space plan. Preserving these areas has positive impacts on air quality, ecological systems, habitats, natural corridors, scenic vistas and water quality. Corridors and natural connections between ecosystems provide a natural flow that stands in stark contrast to small isolated pockets of open space leftover from developments that disrupt natural water systems or trap wildlife."

According to the Township Plan, the site is designated as Open Space/Agricultural/Residential Lands. The intent of the category is described as: "to protect existing agricultural land uses, maintain rural character, minimize population density, and preserve open spaces." Roads within this area are not planned for paving or widening. In addition, this site is also within the Agricultural Preservation Overlay. The Township Plan encourages landowners in this area to participate in conservation programs. Recreational land use is also permitted in this area if done in a manner which does not jeopardize the environmental functions of the land. Public Preserve/Parks are directly to the south.

Staff concludes that overall, the passive recreational and open space use on these parcels do not conflict with either the County land use policies or the Township Plan.

#### **5. Impact on fragile lands/natural resources**

According to Washtenaw County data, the site has wetlands and a significant amount of steep slopes. According to the application, surveys by recognized experts or an environmental assessment by a qualified consultant have not been performed.

#### **6. Impact on infrastructure and community as a whole**

The Township and County Plans indicate that this area does not have, nor is planned for water or sewer services. The closest area served by public sanitary sewer and water is north of Huron River Drive, a mile north of the applicant parcel.

The Township is presently patrolled by the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Department. Scio Township is served by the Scio Township Fire Department, whose fire station is located on Ford Rd. three miles to the northwest.

This parcel appears to be significant for its natural feature value and does not appear to impact on public and community services.

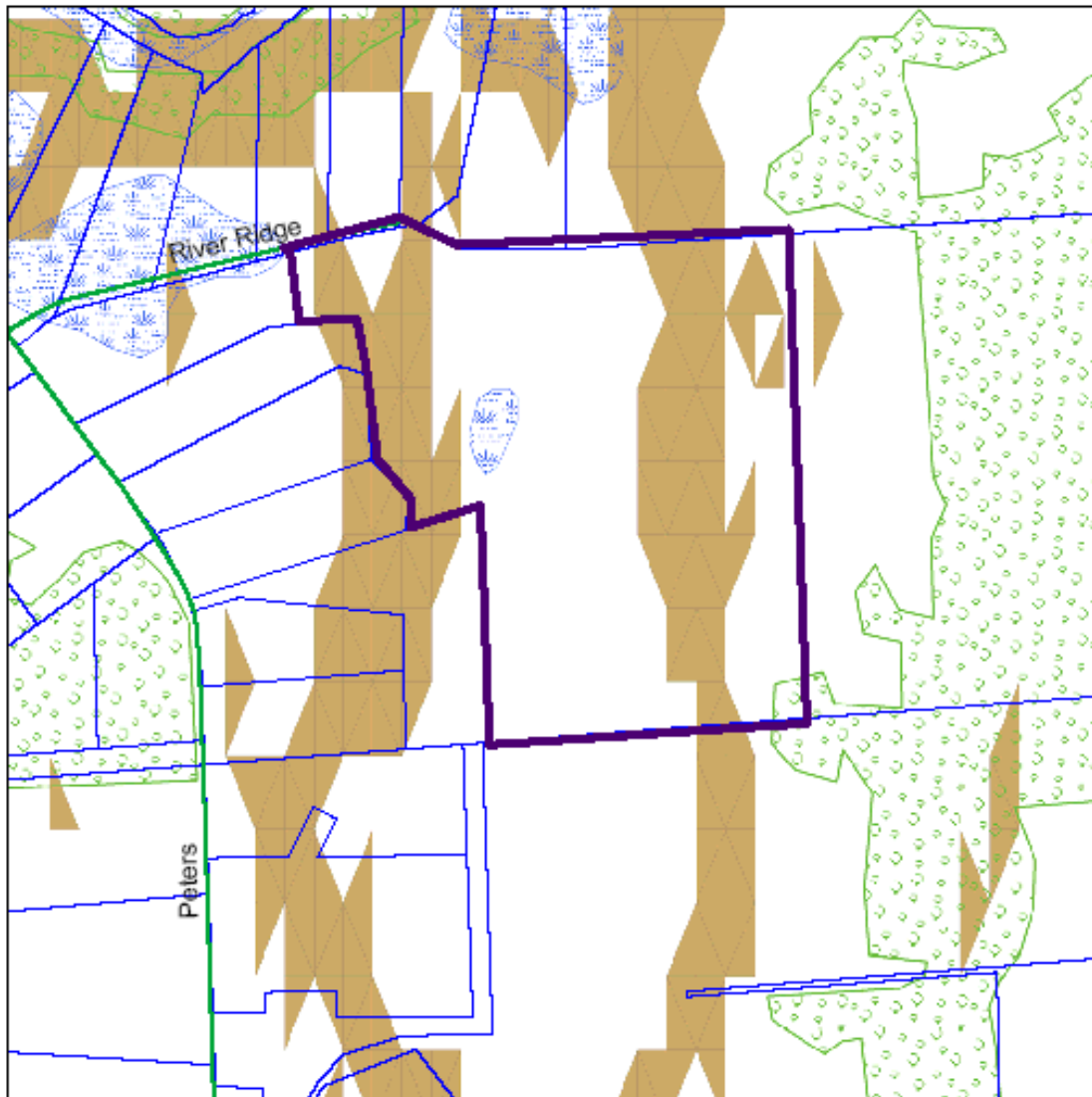
Access to the site would be provided from River Ridge Rd. Many of the Township's roads are local gravel, including Peters Rd. Traffic counts data have indicated substantial increases in average daily traffic counts on Township roads. As growth and development continues in and around Scio Township, daily traffic will increase on area roads. If any additional access drives are developed, staff recommends that Access Management Standards, as developed by MDOT or the County Road Commission be consulted.

### **Conclusion**

This area is important for water quality and stormwater management, since there are wetlands as well as steep slopes with potential for erosion if developed. The site is also important for the preservation of the woodlands and general open space.

In conclusion, based on the observations above, it is the opinion of the Washtenaw County Planning and Environment Department Staff that this parcel for the Natural Areas Preservation Program does not conflict with any land use plans nor the zoning ordinance.

# Jarskey Property



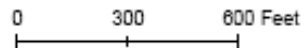
**NAPP REVIEW**

• **STAFF REPORT** •

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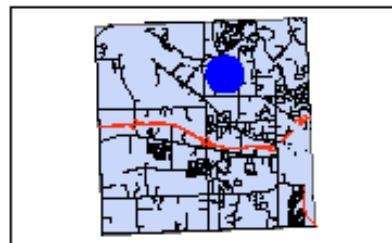
Washtenaw County Department of Planning and Environment

SCIO TOWNSHIP -- NATURAL FEATURES



## Legend

-  Roads
-  WGIS.SewerServiceArea
-  Wetlands
-  Woodlands
-  Steep Slope



Scio Township

