

# NAPP Application ● Staff Report ● N-(18-21)-2008

Washtenaw County Planning Advisory Board

Date Received: May 8, 2008

	Property Owner	Acreage	Parcel Number(s)
N-18-2008	Isabel Herrera	15.0	H -08-35-300-005
N-19-2008	Randal & Donna Reith	8.0	H -08-35-300-007
N-20-2008	Carol Dudley	8.0	H -08-35-300-017
		11.0	H -08-35-300-018
		32.0	H -08-35-300-025
N-21-2008	Open Roads Developers, LLC	<u>20.0</u>	H -08-35-400-001
		94 Total Acres	

**TOWNSHIP:** Scio

**LOCATION:** The adjoining six parcels above, comprising a total of 94 acres, are located along the north side of Scio Church Road, west of Kestrel, in Section 35 in Scio Township. The property owners, Herrera, Reith, Dudley and Open Roads Developers, LLC are 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 site totals 94 acres and is comprised of six adjoining properties. The Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission is considering the opportunity of buying these parcels.

## **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. *A Comprehensive Plan for Washtenaw County* (County Plan) designates this parcel as Open Space. Staff has determined 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 Land Use Map for 2005, the land use on this parcel is currently woodland and wetland. The surrounding land use around this parcel includes single-family residential and active agriculture. According to the submitted applications, the Reith property has a 66' wide private easement for access. Staff finds 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. The surrounding zoning designations are Single Family Residential to the northeast and Planned Unit Development to the east. The remaining of the surrounding area is zoned General Agricultural.

According to the Scio Charter Township Zoning Ordinance (Township Ordinance), the intent of the Agricultural District is: "...to protect and preserve agricultural land uses, maintain rural character, minimize population density, minimize the burden of public facilities and services. It is also the intent of this district to allow only low density residential use which promotes open space preservation and is compatible with and maintains existing agricultural operations. Permitted uses include single family dwelling, farming and agricultural activities, and nature and wildlife preserves.

While the use of this property either for passive recreation, open space, or a conservation area does not appear to conflict with the Township Ordinance, a zoning district of Recreation-Conservation District may better align with the intent to preserve this site as a natural area. For consistency purposes, staff recommends the rezoning this parcel as such.

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

The Washtenaw County Land Use Plan maps the area as Open Space. 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 / Agriculture. The category is described as having the intention to: "allow low density residential only when it promotes open space preservation and is compatible with and encourages the maintenance of existing agricultural operations." In addition, this site is also within the Agricultural Preservation Area Plan Overlay. The Township Plan encourages landowners in this area to participate in conservation programs in order to "protect and preserve agricultural land uses and maintain rural character."

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 is almost entirely wooded, and has wetlands along the eastern edge. The prevalence of natural features on this site supports its protection as part of natural resource protection and management. 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 it projected to have, water or sewer services. The closest area served by public sanitary sewer and water is to the east of Wagner Rd, approximately half a mile away.

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 N. Zeeb Rd, north of Jackson Rd.

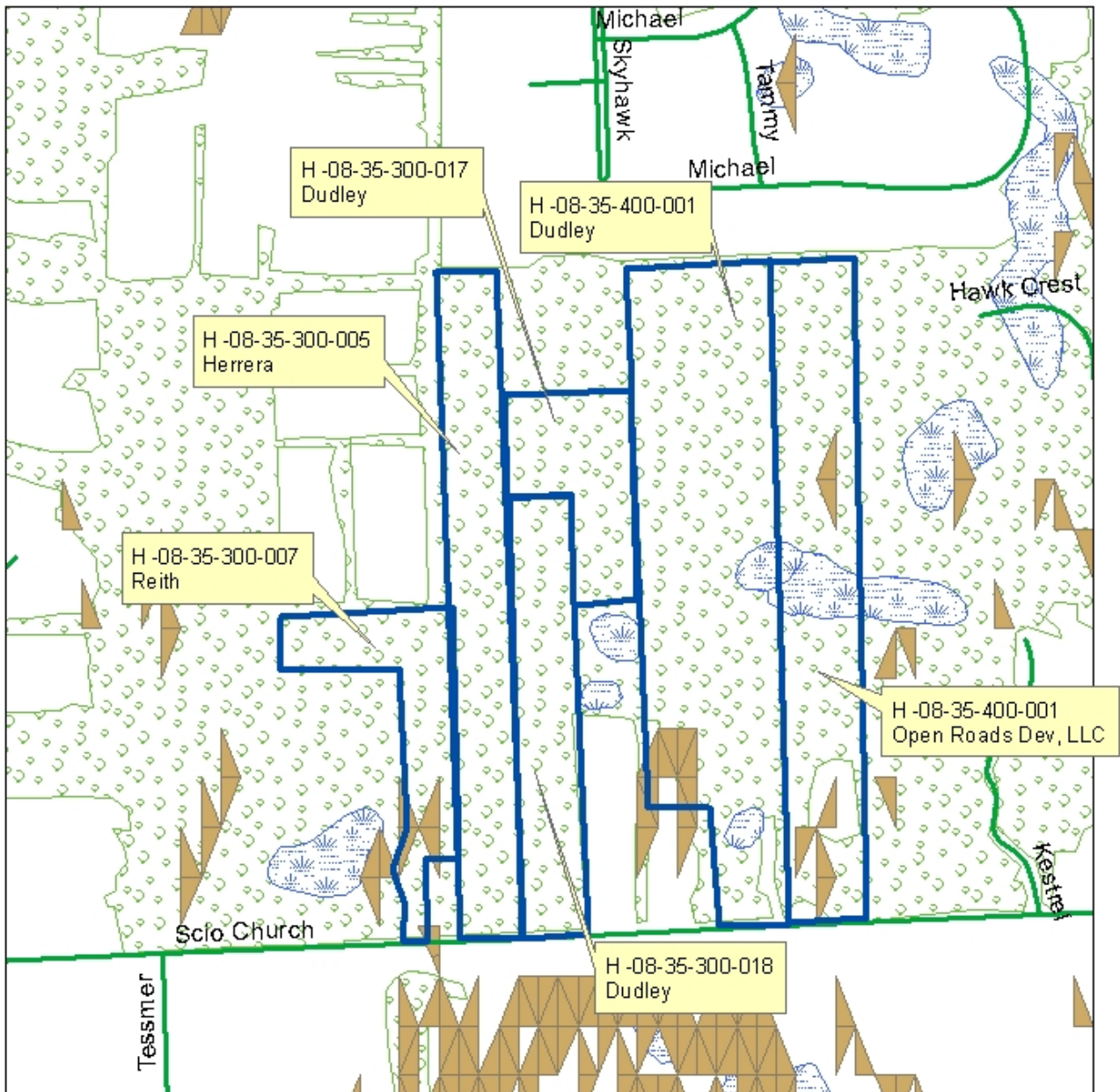
This parcel appears to be significant for its natural feature value and does not appear to impact on public and community services.

Access to the site would be provided from Scio Church Rd. While Scio Church Road is paved, many of the Township's roads are local gravel. 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**

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.

# Herrera / Reith / Dudley / Open Roads Development, LLC



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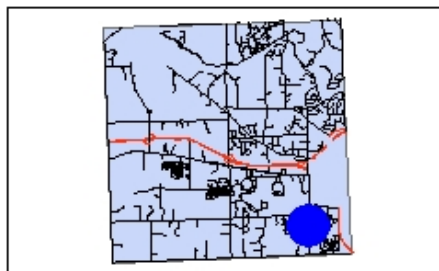
Washtenaw County Department of Planning and Environment

SCIO TOWNSHIP -- NATURAL FEATURES

0 500 1,000 Feet

### Legend

-  Roads
-  Steep Slope
-  Wetlands
-  Woodlands



Scio Township

