



## Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission

### MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission  
**FROM:** Robert L. Tetens, Director  
**DATE:** April 9, 2013  
**RE:** **Recommendation: Harwood, Harwood, Holley and Kim Property –  
 Pittsfield Township**

#### Background

In June 2010, property located in Pittsfield Township was nominated for consideration to the Washtenaw County Natural Areas Preservation Program as part of Round 10. The property is comprised of four parcels, in multiple ownership, totaling approximately 18 acres.

#### Discussion

The Natural Areas Technical Advisory Committee, along with Parks and Recreation Commission staff, visited the Harwood, Harwood, Holley and Kim properties on a number of occasions. The site visits identified a rich, high quality landscape. With the exception of a small portion of one the Harwood parcels, the entire property is native woodland. The properties include roughly 1700' of frontage on Michigan Avenue (US-12), one of the few intact, wooded viewsapes in this portion of the county. It is also largely devoid of invasive species. In its review, NATAC noted preservation of the Harwood, et al properties was important to the protection and viability of the adjacent woods. Clearing of the Harwood, et al properties would certainly have a serious, detrimental impact on the adjacent Pittsfield Preserve. Based upon its review, NATAC identified the Harwood, Harwood, Holley and Kim properties as a high priority for protection / acquisition.

Certainly one of the more interesting aspects of the properties is their location adjacent to the Pittsfield Preserve – owned and operated by Pittsfield Township. The woodlot on these properties is, in fact, part of the larger woods that comprises much of the Pittsfield Preserve south of Textile Road. Because of this proximity, it should be possible to extend the existing trail network into these properties and perhaps utilize the existing access point, removing the necessity of constructing an additional parking lot.

In addition to the review performed by NATAC, staff obtained a copy of review comments prepared by a local citizen. Based upon a long term familiarity with the history and character of the property, the author reveals the Harwood, et al properties were previously identified by Pittsfield Township as a potential park site. The comments provide insight into the natural and historic elements that make up these properties. A copy is attached for your information.

As noted previously, the properties were originally nominated in 2010. An appraisal was prepared at that time identifying a value of approximately \$34,465 / acre. The property owners were unwilling to accept that value, believing it to be too low. At that point, consideration of the property was discontinued. Staff subsequently received contact from the Harwood family in 2012 indicating an interest in having the property reconsidered. After meeting with the family, an appraisal of all four properties was authorized and completed in December 2012 by Bosserd Appraisal Services. The appraisal of the two Harwood properties identified a value of \$390,000 (\$30,093 / acre) for approximately 13 acres. The appraisal of the Holley and Kim properties

identified a value of \$150,000 (\$30,000 / acre) for approximately 5 acres. After review, the Harwood family indicated their acceptance of the new values.

**Recommendation**

As the information provided above reveals, preservation of the Harwood, Harwood, Holley and Kim properties offers the opportunity to protect a unique resource within Washtenaw County. Based upon the review by the Natural Areas Technical Advisory Committee, along with other background information, it is my recommendation the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission authorize preparation of purchase offers for the two Harwood properties at a price of \$390,000, and for the Holley and Kim properties at a price of \$150,000 – contingent upon completion of all necessary due diligence investigations and the Commission’s final approval.

Attachments

**Parcels along Michigan Ave and/or Textile Road near Platt Road:** This is west of Platt, north of Michigan Ave., south of Textile Road, and immediately east of property that now is part of Pittsfield Preserve. It is across Michigan Ave from the current township hall. It should be noted that this property is designated "wetlands" on the township Land Use maps, and the property currently is for sale.

Note: I walked this area approximately 30 years ago while on the Board of Trustees. Our then Supervisor, wanted badly to find a location for a park in the central portion of the township, at the time only having Montebeller park in the northeast portion of the township. We considered this as a potential park, but focused eventually on the "Hillsdale property", which today is Marsh Meadowview Park. At the time, we eventually had to abandon this intention due to financial limitations. However, I still have some recollections of walking this specific property at that time and will make some related comments below. However, much may have changed there in 30 years.

Criterion one:

- This is a water recharge area of considerable importance. The Three Fires Aquifer, from which Ann Arbor takes 15% of its water, underlies much of Pittsfield Township. This exact location may be slightly south of the actual aquifer, but the ground water from this area certainly makes its ultimate way into that aquifer. These marshes are impacted by the chemicals and fertilizer used on the large fields immediately west and north of the area.
- From here, I believe the water flows southeasterly (Janice Bobrin can clarify this). . Whatever the course of this water, this is the headwaters of a tributary creek.
- It should be noted that this area is immediately south and north of historic roads. Michigan Ave evolved out of the Old Sauk trail, while Textile evolved from a bypass trail that skirted Maston Marsh which was immediately to the south and a short distance west of this property. In wet conditions, the Mastodon Marsh was impassable, and this northern bypass was one of the two options for skirting the marshes. Nevertheless, the northern bypass – now Textile – was still so wet that when European settlers first entered this area, they had to construct a cord road along portions of Textile, near here, in order to keep their horses and wagons from mireing in the mud. This continues to be a very wet area of the township.

Criterion two:

- My impression is that the property was gently undulating, with slightly lower areas that were very wet. At one point, a short distance from a wet area, I saw a turtle which I believe was a Blanding's turtle – due to the yellow coloration under its neck. Because of my affiliation with the University of Michigan, I've always been partial to Blanding's since they seem to be fellow UM fans. In more recent years, the Walter administration conducted a fauna study of Pittsfield Preserve, which notes the presence of Blanding's, but this specific portion of land was

beyond the study area. I do not know the current fauna/flora characteristics of this area, but the just referenced study should provide some vital clues.

- This property is immediately adjacent to Pittsfield Preserve, which has key conservation and recreation roles in the Township. This property provides a meaningful extension of wildlife habitat, and would extend the Pittsfield Preserve related objectives to the southeast.

Criterion three:

- When the Chicago Road (formerly the Old Sauk trail and now Michigan Avenue) originally was surveyed by Orange Risdon for the Federal government, an assistant surveyor recorded in his notebook for this location – at the triangle formed by what today is Michigan Ave and Textile Road – that teepee poles of an abandoned Indian village were still standing. We know that countless arrow heads, spear heads, etc., have been found near here and thus know that this was a heavily used hunting grounds and area of probable habitation. We know the salt flats along the Saline River were a major attraction to the area, both prehistorically and historically. Thus all this area would have been greatly impacted by Native American peoples. This specific, pivotal area has never been explored archaeologically and could become a site for adjacent university students to practice their skills.
- A number of key interconnecting trails will traverse portions of Pittsfield Preserve and Pittsfield Township in this area. This specific property would provide an opportunity to rethink some of those trail routes, and provide an opportunity to extend them to the approximate intersection of Michigan Ave., Platt and Textile. This would provide residents in the southeast portion of the township with a much more desirable and diagonal access to Pittsfield Preserve resources.

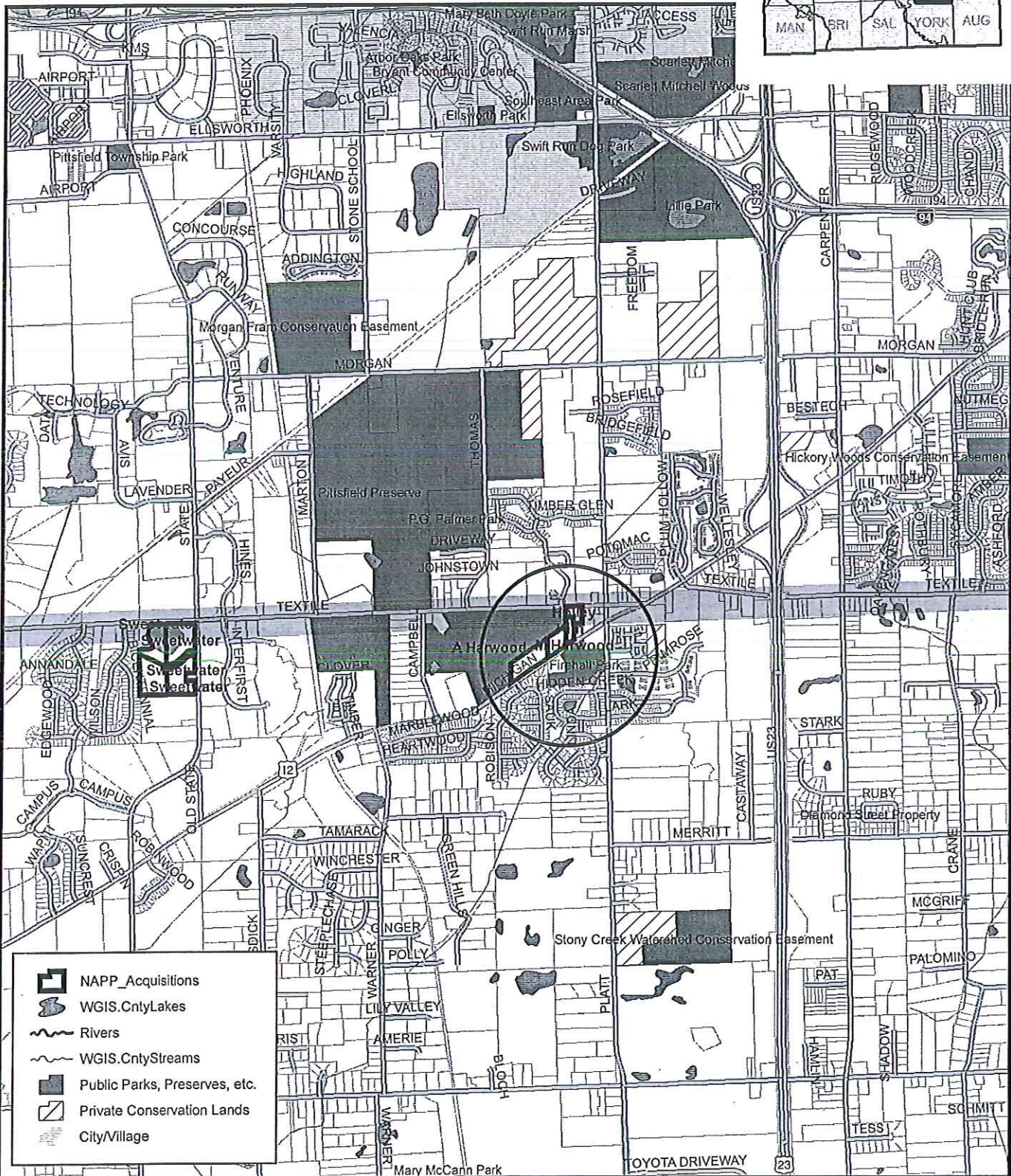
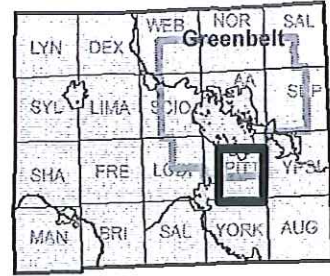
Criterion four:

- This area immediately abuts portions of Pittsfield Preserve, which are dedicated to conservation, recreation, and public use.

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**NAPP Round 10: Local Area**  
 Harwood, Harwood, Holley, and Kim  
 Pittsfield Township  
 18 +/- acres

Washtenaw County  
 Locator Map



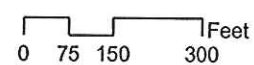
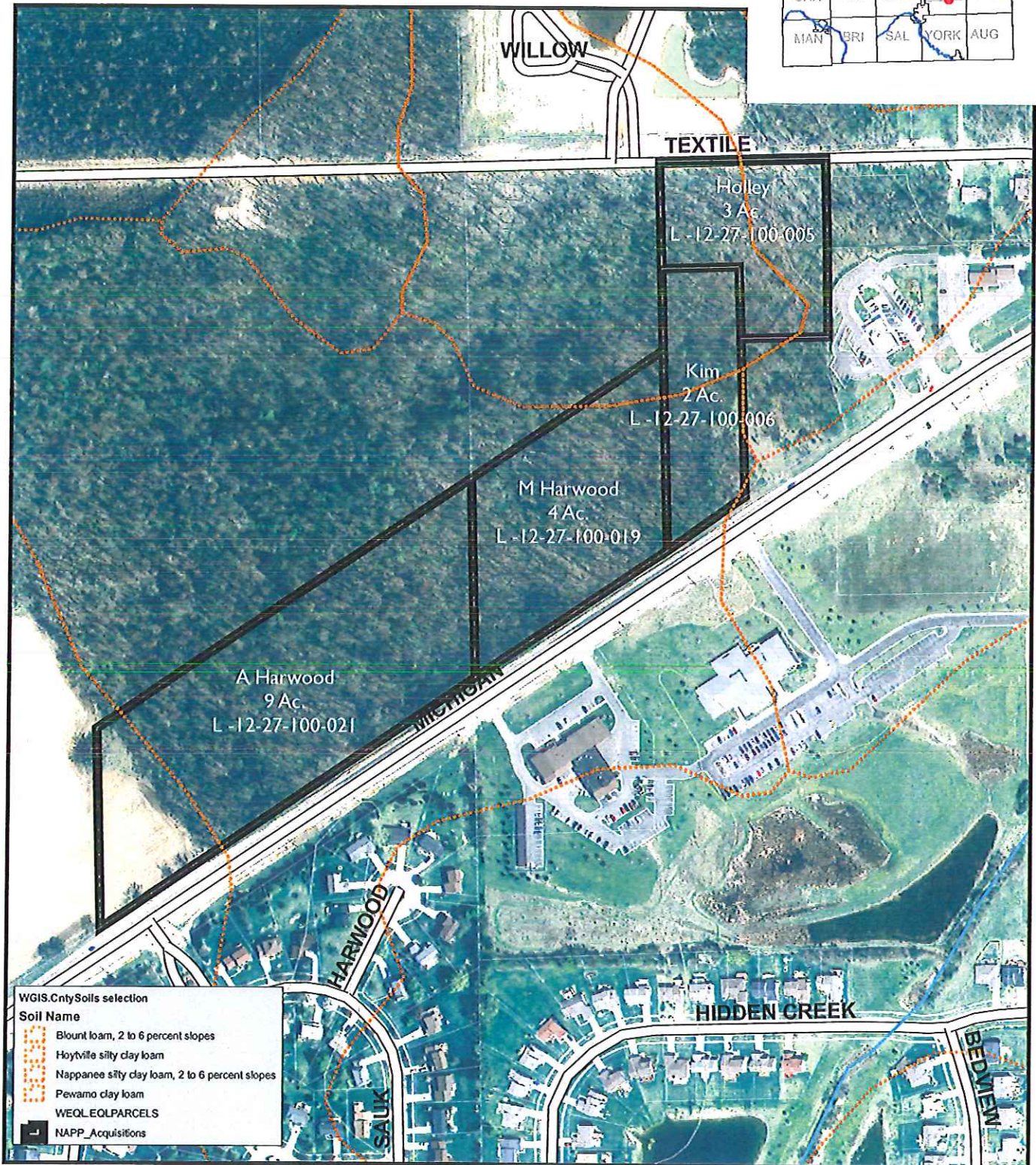
- NAPP\_Acquisitions
- WGIS.CntyLakes
- Rivers
- WGIS.CntyStreams
- Public Parks, Preserves, etc.
- Private Conservation Lands
- City/Village



# NAPP Round 10: Aerial & Soils

Harwood, Harwood, Holley, and Kim  
Pittsfield Township  
18 +/- acres

Washtenaw County  
Locator Map



# NAPP Round 10: Topography

Harwood, Harwood, Holley, and Kim  
Pittsfield Township  
18 +/- acres

Washtenaw County  
Locator Map

