



Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission

MEMORANDUM

TO: Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission
FROM: Robert L. Tetens, Director
DATE: November 12, 2013
SUBJECT: **Recommendation: Koenn Property – Sylvan Township**

Background:

In November 2011, the Koenn Property (comprised of six separate parcels totaling 264 acres) located in Sylvan Township was nominated for consideration by the Washtenaw County Natural Areas Preservation Program. Since the property is primarily farmland, the nomination was reviewed by the Agricultural Land Preservation Advisory Committee (ALPAC) as part of Round 12. Due to the high quality of the natural areas interspersed with the farmland, ALPAC approached the Natural Areas Technical Advisory Committee (NATAC) for financial collaboration.

Discussion:

The property has a significant history of productive farming, and 234 acres are prime, unique or locally important agricultural soils (as identified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources Conservation Service). All existing structures are to be excluded from the easement at the request of the Koenn Family.

NATAC members, staff to ALPAC, and Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation staff visited the property on multiple occasions. While farmland is the primary feature, about one quarter of the property is woodland or wetland. These areas have seen only mild to moderate human disturbance and are host to an impressive variety of plant species. Public access to the natural areas would be unique among experiences offered by County-owned preserves at this time.

In addition to the valuable natural features and farmland, the Koenn Property is adjacent to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources' Goose Lake State Game Area and other conservation lands. A conservation easement on the Koenn Property would mean creating a block of 575 acres of protected farmland and natural areas. Squiers Preserve and other properties protected by perpetual conservation easements are located within one mile.

ALPAC identified the Koenn Property as a high priority for acquisition of a conservation easement. NATAC would like to contribute the value of the easement over the natural areas, contingent on regular public access to those areas. An appraisal report, prepared by Bosserd Appraisal Services, L.L.C., identified a value of a conservation easement as \$1,100.44 per acre, or \$291,100 for the 264.4 acre Koenn Property.

Recommendation:

Based upon review by ALPAC, NATAC and staff it is my recommendation that the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission authorize preparation of a purchase offer for a conservation easement on the Koenn property (Sylvan Township) at a price of 291,000 (not to exceed \$1,100.44 per acre), contingent upon the completion of all necessary due diligence and the Commission's final approval.

Attachments