

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### 2007 ANOTHER EXTRAORDINARY YEAR FOR LAND PRESERVATION IN WASHTENAW—1,720 ADDITIONAL ACRES PROTECTED

ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN –

In 2007, land trusts and local land preservation programs protected an additional 1,720 acres of natural areas, farms, and open space. Prior to 2007, land preservation programs were key to protecting 6,045 acres in the region.

#### Farmland Protection

Of the total 7,765 acres protected to date, nearly 5,000 are farmland, making the combined farmland protection efforts of Washtenaw County land protection organizations the most successful in the state.

In 2007, this included three Federal Farm and Ranchland Protection projects, completed with the support of the US Department of Agriculture.

- Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy protected the 158-acre **Shultz farm** in Superior Township, connecting a contiguous block of 950 acres which the Conservancy has protected over the years. Washtenaw County Natural Areas Preservation Program also partnered in this project.
- The Washtenaw Land Trust protected the 43-acre **Rogers farm** in York Township, south of Saline, expanding the block of protected land here to nearly 550 acres.
- The City of Ann Arbor protected the 70-acre John and Beverly **Alexander farm** in Northfield Township. The farm is located within one of the areas identified in the Greenbelt's Strategic Plan and is in proximity to other protected properties.

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## Partnerships

The key to this land protection success has been a willingness for land protection organizations to work collectively to complete important projects. Among recent partnership successes:

- The **Fox Science Preserve** was protected through a collaborative effort involving the former owners Betty and Mel Fox, the City of Ann Arbor Greenbelt Program, the Scio Township Land Preservation Program, and Washtenaw County Parks who now holds title to the land. Once a gravel pit, this site provides a conveniently accessible outdoor classroom to investigate natural phenomena such as fossils, natural succession, and evidence of glaciers. Approximately half of the 49 acres of the site was not mined and has a cover of native woods of significant habitat value.
- Another collaborative effort, this one between Pittsfield Township and Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy, resulted in three new **Pittsfield Township conservation agreements** on 141 acres of land. These agreements were acquired by the Conservancy prior to the Township acquiring the lands for public parks and nature preserves. The conservation agreements assure that the properties will remain as public preserves in perpetuity.
- Also in 2007, the **Parker Woods** was protected thanks to collaboration between landowners Stanley & Helen Parker, the Washtenaw Land Trust, and Scio Township. This 23-acre woods links up to a contiguous block of 256 acres of protected land that will now be available for farming forever, a permanent benefit to the community.

## Tax Benefits for Landowners who Protect Their Land

Many acres have been protected not only through purchasing a conservation agreement or outright purchase of the property, but also through donation of a conservation agreement by the landowner to a local land trust or local agency.

For example, Bill Wenk, a native of Freedom Township, has permanently preserved 41 acres of open space on Waters Road by donating a conservation agreement to the Washtenaw Land Trust. The **Wenk conservation agreement** allows the land to be sold, inherited, and managed responsibly, but it cannot be developed for residential or commercial use.

Says Wenk, “It was an easy decision to put the property into the Land Trust. For one thing, the protection makes property taxes manageable, and gives other significant tax advantages too. Most importantly, though, it allows me to keep a part of the family farm that has been in the family for almost 150 years.”

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Donating a conservation agreement or donating land is considered a charitable gift for federal income tax purposes. That means that landowners may be able to deduct the value of the donation on their taxes. Landowners may also see property tax and/or estate tax benefits. Landowners who would like to learn more should contact their local land trust.

### Preserve Washtenaw

Ten charter members have now signed onto “Preserve Washtenaw”, a coordinating body for local land protection efforts, including the **City of Ann Arbor** (with its Ann Arbor Open Space and Parkland Preservation (Greenbelt) program), **Washtenaw County** and its **Parks & Recreation** division (with its Natural Areas Preservation Program (NAPP)), **Scio Township, Ann Arbor Township, Webster Township, and Pittsfield Township**, as well as local land trusts including the **Raisin Valley Land Trust, Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy, and Washtenaw Land Trust.**

### Protected Farmland & Open Space Acres in Washtenaw County

	Prior to 2007	2007	Total
<b>TOTAL ACRES PROTECTED</b>	<b>6,045</b>	<b>1,720</b>	<b>7,765</b>

### Land Protection Details, by Organization

	Prior to 2007	2007	Total
<i>Ann Arbor Greenbelt</i>	636	119	755
<i>Ann Arbor Township</i>	148	153	301
<i>Pittsfield Township</i>	838	223	1,061
<i>Scio Township</i>	0	79	79
<i>Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy</i>	1,974	443	2,417
<i>Raisin Valley Land Trust</i>	150	na	150
<i>Washtenaw County Parks &amp; Recreation</i>	980	99	1,079
<i>Washtenaw Land Trust</i>	2,531	1,088	3,619

Notes:

- The totals in the “Land Protection Details, by Organization” section do not match the overall Washtenaw County totals because the details section lists the acreage for any partnership projects for each partner, and it lists acres protected in the organization’s entire service area, where applicable.

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