



## **SARATOGA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS**

### **SARATOGA COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS FACILITY**

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**THOMAS A. SPEZIALE**  
Acting Commissioner

November 30, 2020

Dear Resident,

This letter is to provide you with the background and schedule for the ongoing habitat improvements on County owned property in the Towns of Northumberland and Wilton. The habitat improvements are a condition of FAA approval and funding of safety improvements at Saratoga County Airport. The goal, to establish 183 acres of habitat for the Karner Blue Butterfly (KBB) and Frosted Elfin Butterfly (FE) on three sites (as shown on the attached graphic). The habitat creation is required to offset impacts to existing KBB habitat at the Saratoga County Airport. All the planned projects are intended to improve safety at the airport by reducing wildlife incursions and improve the safety of taxiing aircraft. They include construction of a wildlife deterrent fence, construction of Taxiway D to separate powered aircraft from gliders, replacement for glider staging areas, and enhanced mowing of runway safety areas. These projects were developed as part of the airport's Master Plan Update in 2015 and analyzed in a subsequent Environmental Assessment (EA) completed in January of 2019. The FAA issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the EA on July 2, 2019 and the USFWS issued a Biological Opinion on December 14, 2018 for the proposed airport projects and habitat mitigation.

The KBB is an endangered species protected by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). The FE is a threatened species protected by the NYSDEC. The habitat mitigation sites are within the York State Saratoga Sandplains Recovery Unit (SSRU) for the KBB, which includes existing and recently created habitat areas managed by the NYSDEC

The USFWS and NYSDEC assisted the County in determining the best location to create KBB habitat remote from the airport. The chosen locations are proximate to other existing KBB habitat mitigation sites and will help meet the USFWS SSRU goal of creating a total of 320 acres of suitable habitat for a viable population of KBB.

KBB/FE habitat is comprised primarily of a plant called blue lupine, the leaves of which KBB/FE larvae feed exclusively on. Blue lupine, and other nectar source plants, grow best in sandy soils with moderate shade. Creation of KBB/FE habitat consists of tree canopy thinning, removal of remaining tree stumps and roots, topsoil removal to expose sandy soils, and seeding with a specialized seed mix, including blue lupine. A 100-foot buffer of forested land between the mitigation areas and adjacent private properties and roadways will be left in place to provide habitat protection and screening for neighboring residential properties. The final product will closely resemble the NYSDEC Fox Parcel located on Ruggles Road and butterfly habitat on nearby lands associated with the Wilton Wildlife Park and Preserve. The County will maintain ownership and management of the land under County Law Section 219, Reforested lands. All currently allowed uses on the land will remain after completion of the project (such as hiking and hunting).

Currently both the North and the South sites are under construction for habitat creation. The East site is anticipated to begin construction for habitat creation in the Spring of 2021. An anticipated schedule for all three sites is as follows:

Location	Beginning of Construction	Completion of Tree Clearing	Completion of Topsoil Stripping	Completion of Initial Plantings
North Site	10/2020	11/2020	12/2020	06/2021
South Site	11/2020	12/2020	04/2021	06/2021
East Site	04/2021	05/2021	12/2021	06/2022

We hope this letter addresses your questions and concerns. If you have any further questions, please email me at [tspeziale@saratogacountyny.gov](mailto:tspeziale@saratogacountyny.gov).

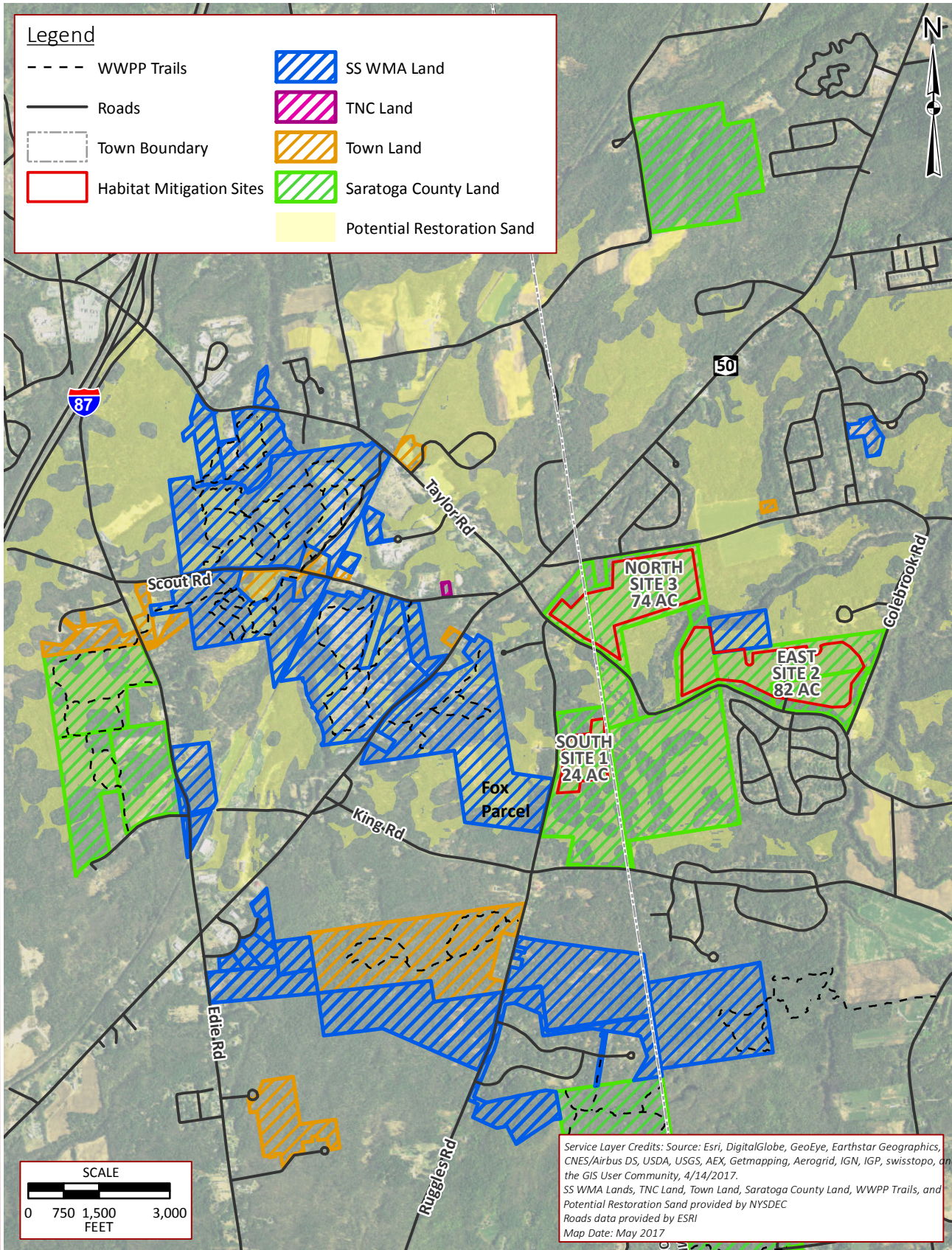
Sincerely,



Thomas A. Speziale  
Acting Commissioner of Public Works



Figure 5-2: Off-Airport Habitat Mitigation - Vicinity Map



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