



Curtis Preserve Management Background

This document is intended to provide the public with general information about Saratoga PLAN's Curtis Preserve property. The preserve is currently closed to the public. PLAN is beginning to plan for environmentally appropriate public access and is seeking community feedback and input on the property's future use. After reviewing this document, please submit your comments through the survey found on www.saratogaplan.org/curtis during the month-long comment period from April 11, 2025, through May 11, 2025. This feedback will help inform the future management of the property.

Background

The Curtis Preserve property was donated to Saratoga PLAN by Patricia LeClair in 2022, with funding to cover transactional costs awarded through the Saratoga County Farmland and Open Space Grant Program and The Nature Conservancy. The intention of the donation was to protect the ecologically important and resilient property while providing public access. Since acquiring the preserve, PLAN has been studying its natural resources and communities to help determine the appropriate type and level of public access for the health and well-being of the forest.

The property is a 127.51 acre mixed forest. Historically, the property was subject to agriculture and timber harvest but today consists of 100% forest cover. Approximately 1.5 miles of historical skid trails and logging roads exist on the property.

Location

As depicted in Figure 1, the Curtis Preserve is located in the Town of Corinth between Wells Rd and NYS Route 9N. Within a 5-mile radius, Wilcox Lake Wild Forest, Corinth Reservoir Recreation Area, Lincoln Mountain State Forest, Moreau Lake State Park, and Spruce Mountain all offer public trails. A section of the Mulleyville Snowmobile Trail starts and runs along the western boundary of the preserve.

Forest Ecology

Forty-two species of birds have been observed on the property, including the wood thrush, a species considered to be in population decline by the North American Bird Conservation

Initiative. Ten additional species, such as the scarlet tanager, eastern towhee, and veery, are also considered to be approaching classification as a declining species. Several owls, turkeys, and a great blue heron were also observed.

Mammal species observed on the property include white-tailed deer, red fox, coyote, raccoon, eastern grey squirrel, and eastern chipmunk. A trail camera spotted a single northern flying squirrel on the property, suggesting that this elusive nocturnal rodent may call the preserve home. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Information for Planning and Consultation system has identified the property as potential habitat for the Indiana bat and northern long-eared bat, both of which are endangered species.

Twenty different tree species have been observed on the property, with the most common being red oak, white pine, eastern hemlock, and American beech. According to estimates, the forest has been growing since the 1930s or earlier, with some of the trees in the hemlock stand being nearly 200 years old.

Approximately 23.8 acres of freshwater/forested shrub wetlands are located within the property, mostly located along the northern boundary surrounding Dry Brook (see Figure 2). The entire property is ranked "high" for upland wetland habitat which are transitional areas found in higher elevation zones, characterized by soil that is seasonally or permanently saturated with water (see Figure 3). These wetlands can support a variety of plant and animal life, including unique species adapted to these specific conditions. As a terrestrial habitat, the preserve is ranked between average and above average for climate resilience. Climate resilience is the ability of ecosystems and natural systems to withstand, adapt to, and recover from climate change-related stresses, such as extreme weather events and changing temperatures.

The preserve's soils consist of Hinckley gravelly loamy sand and Windsor loamy sand (see Figure 4). According to U.S. Geological Survey data, these soils present moderate to severe erosion hazards for roads and trails. It will be important that any trails on the property are designed with careful consideration to ensure long-term sustainability of both the trail and soils. The design of trails in areas of moderate to severe erosion hazard may require specific drainage considerations such as water bars, following natural topographical contours, and slopes and grades of less than 10%

The preserve is considered a uniquely high-value and high-risk natural habitat due to its lack of known terrestrial invasive species.

Figure 1: Location Map

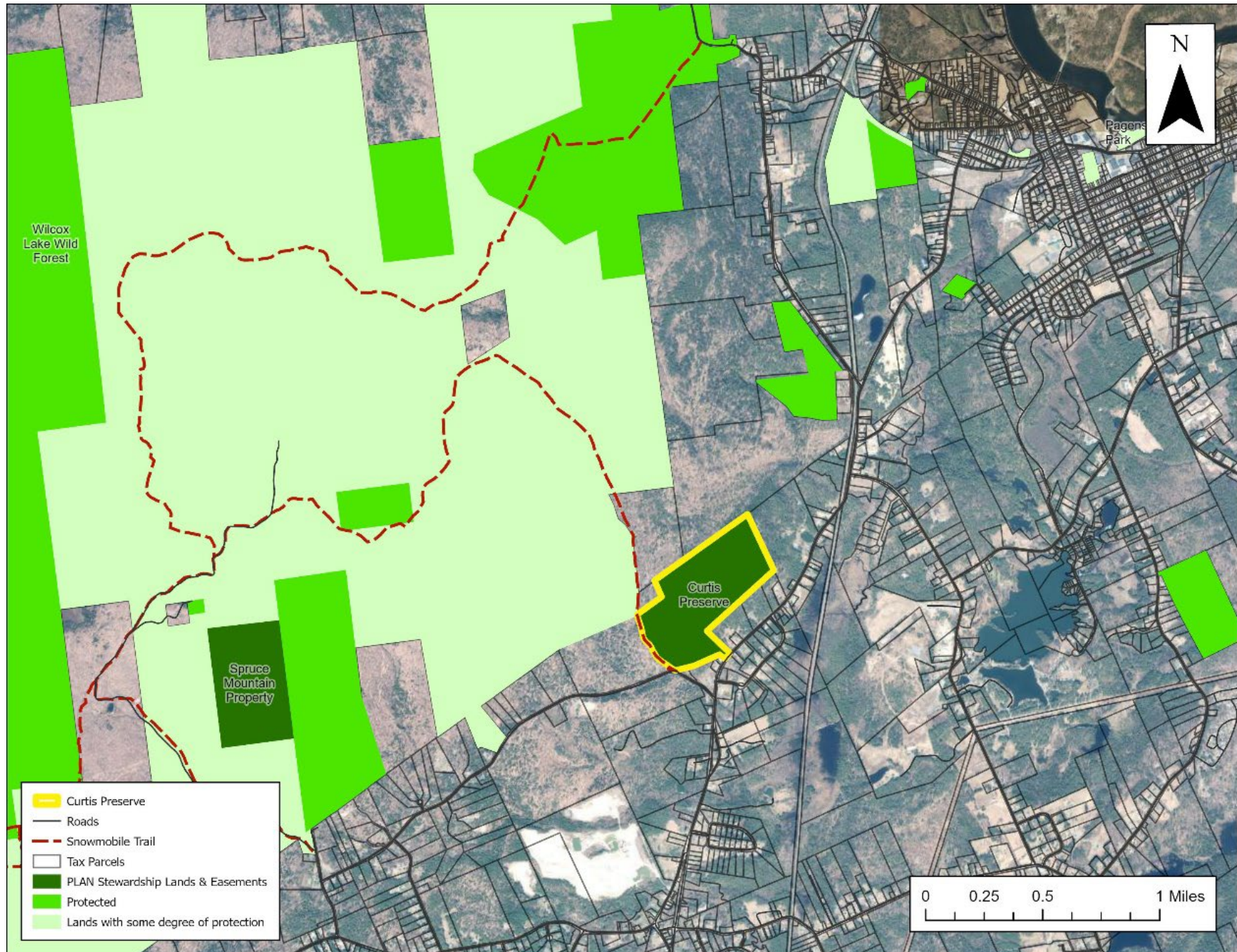


Figure 2: Wetlands and Topography Map

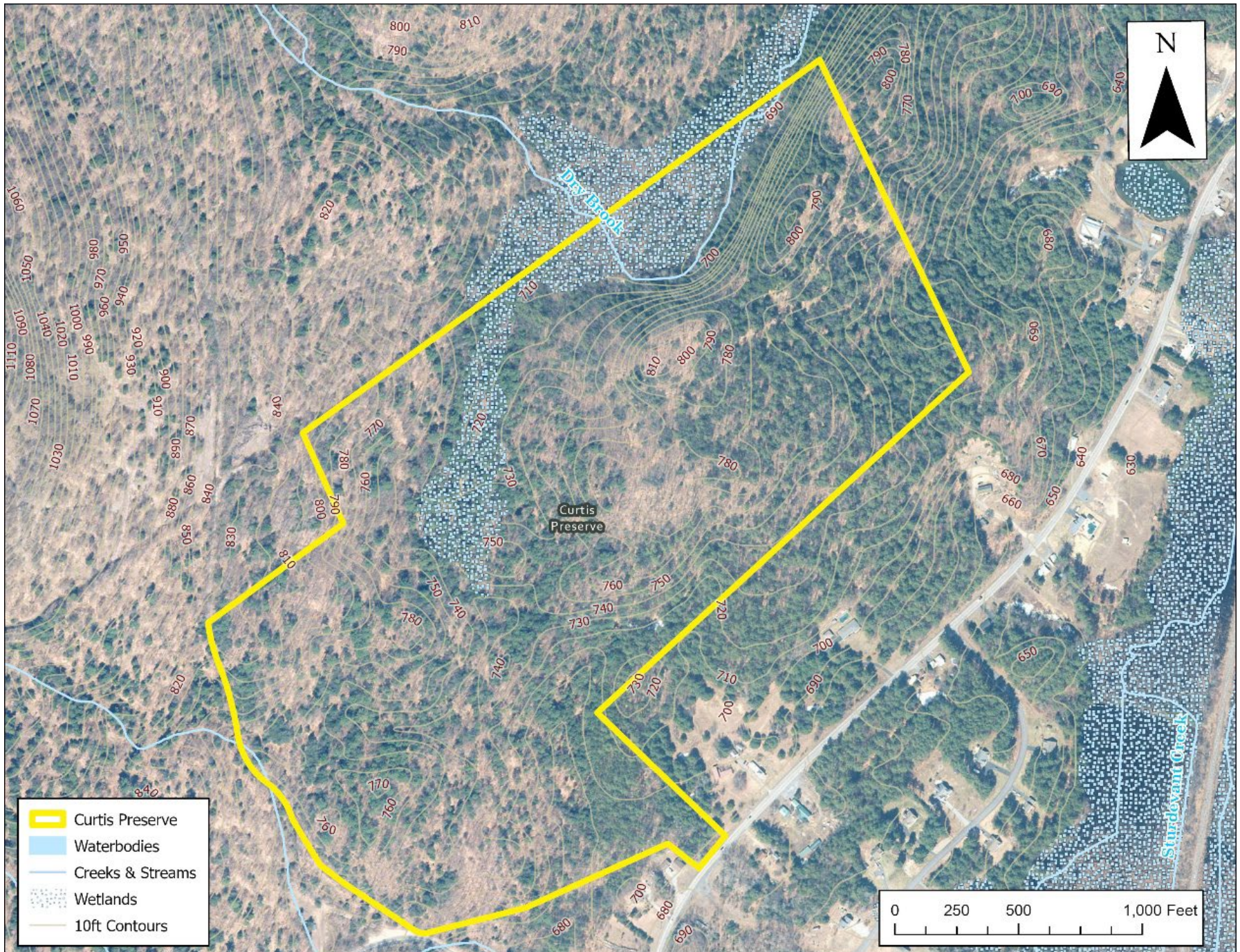


Figure 3: Upland and Wetland Habitat Map

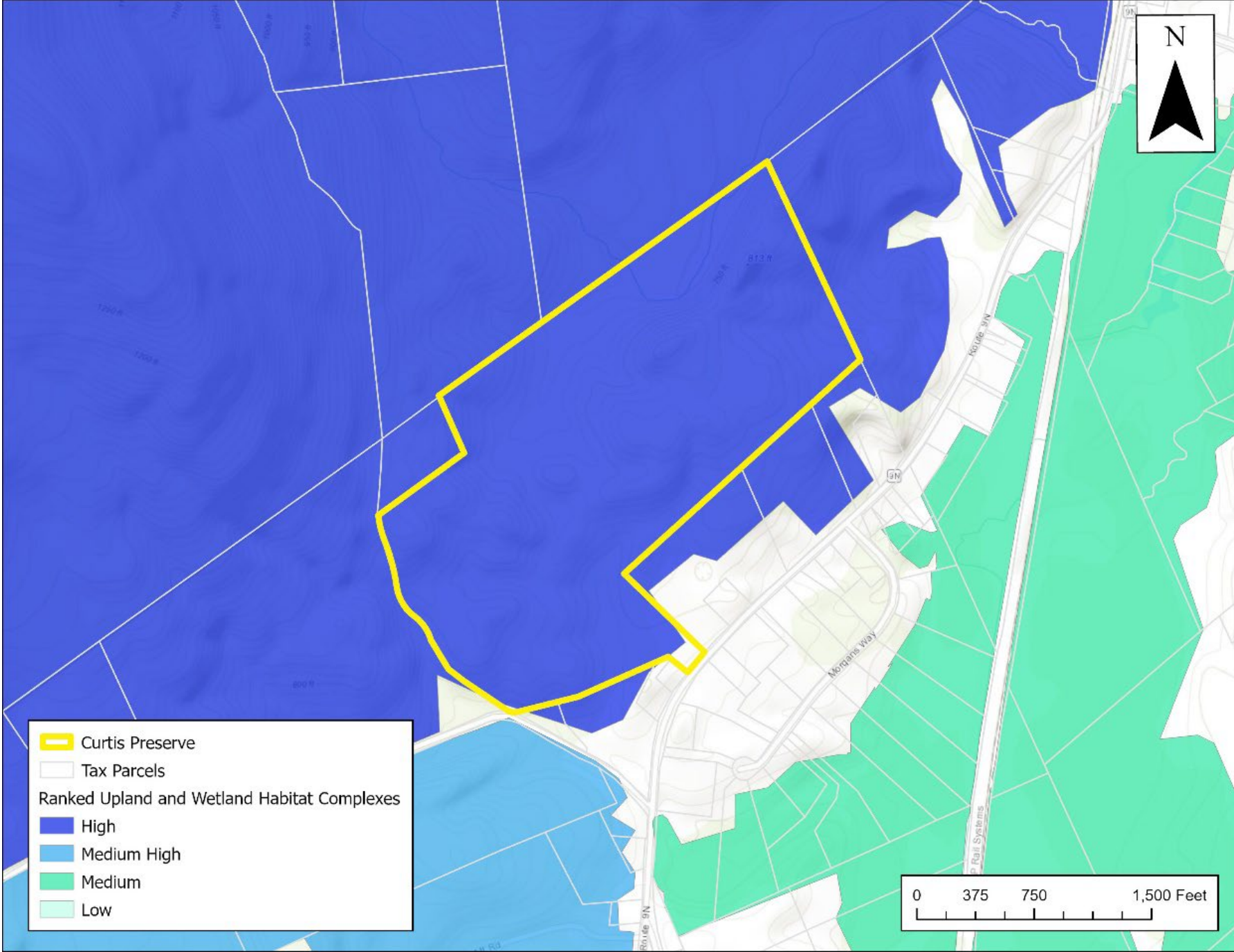


Figure 4: Soils Map

