



2022 Year in Review



Great White Egrets
Take Flight at AOA's New
Genevieve Jones Preserve
Scioto River Flyway Corridor Initiative

AOA Celebrates Conservation Milestones 20 Years of Conservation Achievement 15,000 Acres Conserved

What a difference 20 years makes. AOA has grown from a fledgling loose-knit group of civic-minded conservationists into a land trust birthed with vision and seed monies from Carole Kings White Cloud Council. AOA subsequently evolved from an all-volunteer organization into a robust, professionally directed, land trust capable of undertaking landscape-scale initiatives and sustaining conservation achievements.

Continued on next page...

20 Years of Conservation Achievement in Central and Southeastern Ohio

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| More than 15,000 Acres Conserved | 164 Properties Conserved | Conserved Properties in 19 Ohio Counties | 95 Fee Owned 66 Conservation Easements 3 Transferred/Facilitated |
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AOA Celebrates 20 Years

Continued from Cover

As AOA has grown, we have sharpened our geographic focus. After initially embracing a service area covering the entirety of Appalachian Ohio, we have since reduced our emphasis largely to a central, southcentral, southeastern Ohio geography. Although these are not exclusive, core landscape initiatives have been adopted within our geographic service area to better define our priorities for needed conservation.

We have also refined AOA's mission, emphasizing clean water resources, primarily riparian corridors and wetlands - while also continuing to protect high value natural areas and habitats, threatened species, heritage sites and geological features. As a nonprofit we take our public benefit mission seriously, conserving sites that provide long-term value to the community and engaging the public on our preserves.

Over the years AOA has developed many valuable partnerships with comparable and compatible groups, allowing us to undertake larger-scale conservation collaborations. Our hardworking consulting team members provide vital assistance in developing and carrying out our conservation projects. We have been fortunate to grow the number of our financial supporters who make our conservation work possible. Needless to say, we cannot do it alone. AOA drew immense inspiration from the many cherished friends, supporters and partners who attended our 20th anniversary annual dinner.

Would any of our founders have imagined we would conserve 15,000 acres within 20 years? Hopefully a few. 15,000 acres is a lot of land – over 23 square miles of it. This is a conservation achievement we can all be proud to have assisted.

As we celebrate the many spectacular natural, heritage and cultural resources that have been permanently preserved for public benefit, we also recognize that much more needs to be done. Many of our native species continue to decline in number while their natural home habitats necessary for their survival are lost. Looking ahead AOA, is dedicated to continue striving to make a difference in conservation in Ohio, and particularly central - southcentral Ohio. We hope you will join us.

Core Landscape Initiatives

Scioto River Flyway Corridor
Greater Hocking Hills Conservation Initiative
Hocking River Conservation Corridor
Hocking Canal Heritage Trail
Farmland Preservation
Cedar Run Watershed Conservation
Pickaway Plains
Salt Creek Narrows
Darby Creek Conservation Corridor
Endangered Species Habitats

Key Preserves

Bison Hollow Preserve
Mercer Woods Old Growth Forest
Kleinmaier State Nature Preserve
Cackley Swamp Preserve
Trimble Community Forest
AOA Conservation Demonstration Site
Bartley Preserve
EarthTouch
Marsha Gunder Schneider Preserve
Trella Romine Prairie
Mische Moneto
Genevieve Jones Preserve





Land Conservation

AOA works to conserve land and water resources as sustainable assets for our community. In 2022 AOA increased the conservation lands we currently steward to 164 properties and over 14,000 acres. We have secured funding for numerous additional conservation transactions that are in process.



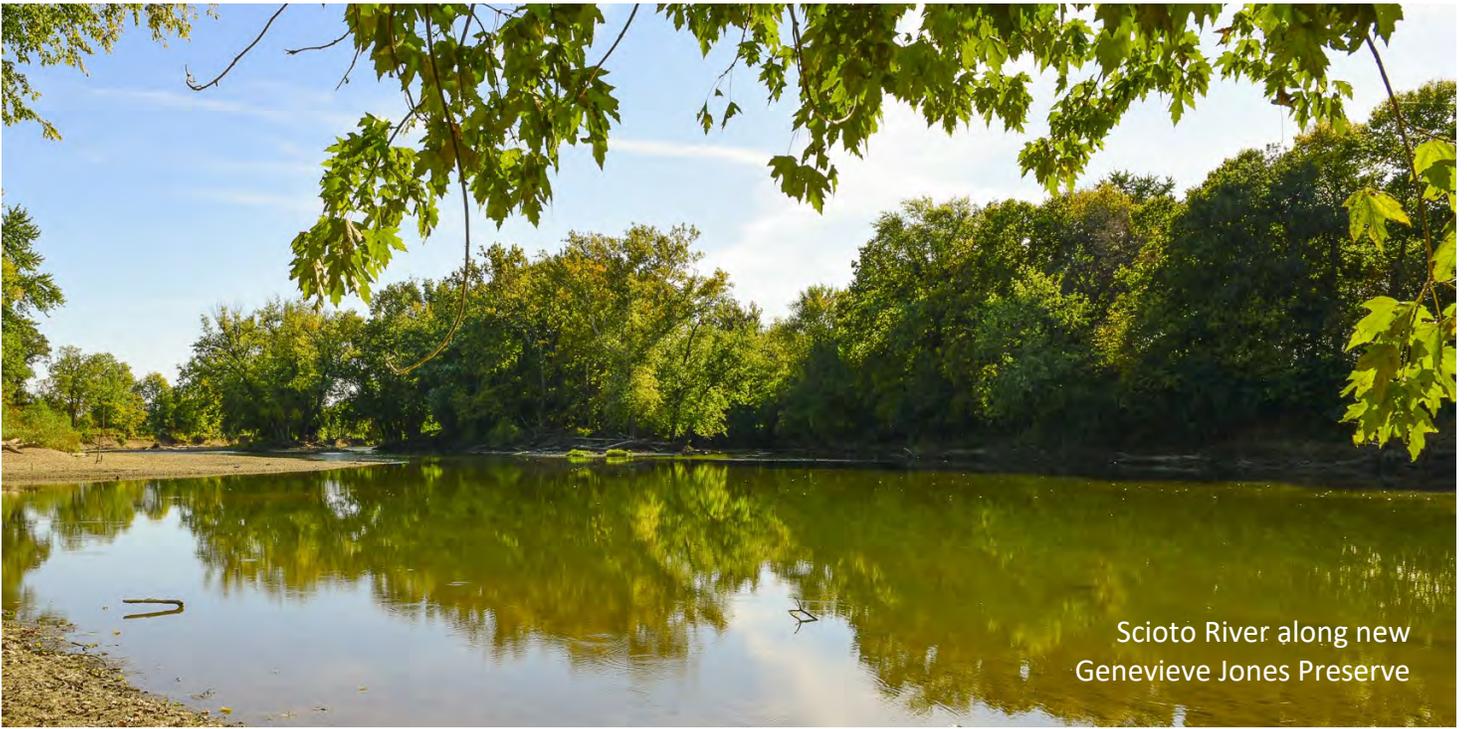
AOA Launches Cedar Run Watershed Conservation Efforts

AOA recently launched an initiative to conserve Cedar Run, a relatively small watershed in the Mad River valley which is home to one of the most valued and unique natural areas in Ohio – the 450-acre Cedar Bog State Nature Preserve. There are numerous rare, threatened and/or endangered species in the Cedar Run watershed - virtually all of which are concentrated in Cedar Bog, which contains a rare and unique remnant wetland ecosystem, that has been eradicated from surrounding areas.

Named for the relict population of northern white cedar, Cedar Run receives most of its water from cold water springs fed by a continuous flow of groundwater arising from underground glacially influenced formations. This condition creates a microenvironment which supports a diverse and relatively unique ecosystem that is vulnerable to external forces. The resiliency and sustainability of the habitats in Cedar Bog are highly dependent on the maintenance of the current groundwater level. The unique habitats and plant associations found here were once widespread but are now confined to a small wetland “island” with no connectivity to other natural systems. As the many wetland habitats that once graced the region have disappeared, flora and fauna that were once relatively common have become rare, while those that were rare have become endangered or extirpated.

AOA is pursuing strategic actions to conserve and protect the rare and unique habitats in the Cedar Run watershed, and the conditions that allow them to exist. As part of a long term, landscape scale conservation approach AOA seeks to: protect and restore riparian areas of Cedar Run and adjacent properties that are suitable to be returned to wetland and other comparable and compatible habitats, expanding the areas that can support the unique habitats and rare species living in the watershed; help protect and enhance surface and groundwater resources; and provide suitable natural buffers for the unique plant communities.

AOA recently acquired the 31-acre Koerner farm adjacent to the northern upstream boundary of Cedar Bog, which conserves 1,530 linear feet of the west branch of Cedar Run, a very high quality Class III Type B spring-fed Coldwater habitat headwater stream which is the primary groundwater source for Cedar Bog. We also accepted the donation of a 1-acre residential lot and previously acquired a 48-acre parcel on the south side of Cedar Bog from Jeff Clark, protecting 1,450 linear feet of Cedar Run riparian corridor and high quality riparian wetlands.



Scioto River along new Genevieve Jones Preserve

Scioto River Flyway Corridor Initiative

AOA continues our ongoing endeavor to protect riparian corridors along the Scioto River and its tributaries as part of our Scioto River Flyway Corridor Initiative. This large landscape-scale project is being carried out by AOA in collaboration with Ducks Unlimited and numerous conservation, sportsmen, outdoor recreation and governmental organizations. The need for conservation is supported by Ducks Unlimited (DU) identifying the north-south Scioto-Central Rivers corridor in Ohio as a critically important path and valuable habitat for migrating and nesting birds.



DU's model of investing in habitat protection for the last 85 years has proven successful in stabilizing and increasing waterfowl populations as well as benefiting many other native species. Conservation efforts along this crucial corridor is a priority objective for native species that is worthy for AOA to pursue in partnership with compatible organizations. AOA initially scouted the landscape conservation potentials with DU and ODNR nine years ago prior to initiating our efforts along the Scioto.

AOA Partners with Pickaway County Park District on Conservation Easement

AOA is partnering with the Pickaway County Park District which purchased 25 acres of the 325-acre former Cooks Creek Golf Club site from AOA, including the clubhouse building, associated maintenance structures, parking lots and the entry drive, as well as several natural areas. A conservation easement on the property provides long-term protection and buffering of the

The Scioto River Flyway project envisions a transformation of the Scioto River corridor, creating permanently protected riparian / floodplain zones and wetland areas along the waterways and adjacent upland buffers where achievable, that provide vital native habitat for wildlife survival and sustainability.

AOA is working to procure properties along the waterways that can be maintained in or restored to native habitat. Protected blocks of habitat will be connected to form continuous habitat corridors that support a diversity of migrating and resident species that rely on wild, natural spaces. Our efforts have so far led to the protection of 34 conservation properties and over 3,700 acres within the Scioto River Flyway Corridor. This includes significant stretches along the main stem, as well as prominent tributaries such as the Big Darby.

While we are working on the entire river corridor, our efforts are necessarily focused on areas in central Ohio that are still largely undeveloped, but most threatened with rapid growth and escalating land prices. The new Genevieve Jones preserve is an important example of the type and scale of habitat protection required along the Scioto River corridor to achieve the desired aquatic and wildlife benefits for Ohio.

adjacent AOA Preserve. The Park District will utilize the site for a passive nature park for the Pickaway County community with a planned nature center and park offices. Many of the existing golf cart paths will be retained for publicly accessible walking and nature observation.





Former Fairway in Fall Attire

AOA Creates New 337-Acre Genevieve Jones Preserve Along Scioto River

AOA recently completed the purchase of the 325-acre former Cooks Creek Golf Club, situated at the confluence of the Scioto River and Walnut Creek. Located in the Village of South Bloomfield, the property lies 12 miles south of the I-270 bypass along Highway 23, a rapidly developing corridor. This spectacular property includes nearly a mile of riparian frontage along the Scioto River and two-thirds of a mile of frontage along Walnut Creek.

AOA was fortunate to procure funding assistance through the OEPA Division of Environmental and Financial Assistance Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program (WRRSP) to acquire this property. These funds are dedicated to the conservation of high quality aquatic habitats. AOA is also utilizing funding through the ODNR H2Ohio program to reestablish wetlands to portions of the site, helping to improve water quality in the Scioto River watershed.

Conversion of the former golf club to a nature preserve will greatly improve and protect water quality. Golf courses require a high degree of vegetative management and chemical inputs. In addition to frequent mowing and non-native grass monocultures, frequent use of herbicides, pesticides, fungicides and fertilizers are required to maintain the landscaping. Riparian corridor conservation and restoration will provide an important natural buffer zone along critical water courses, protecting and enhancing water quality for aquatic species.

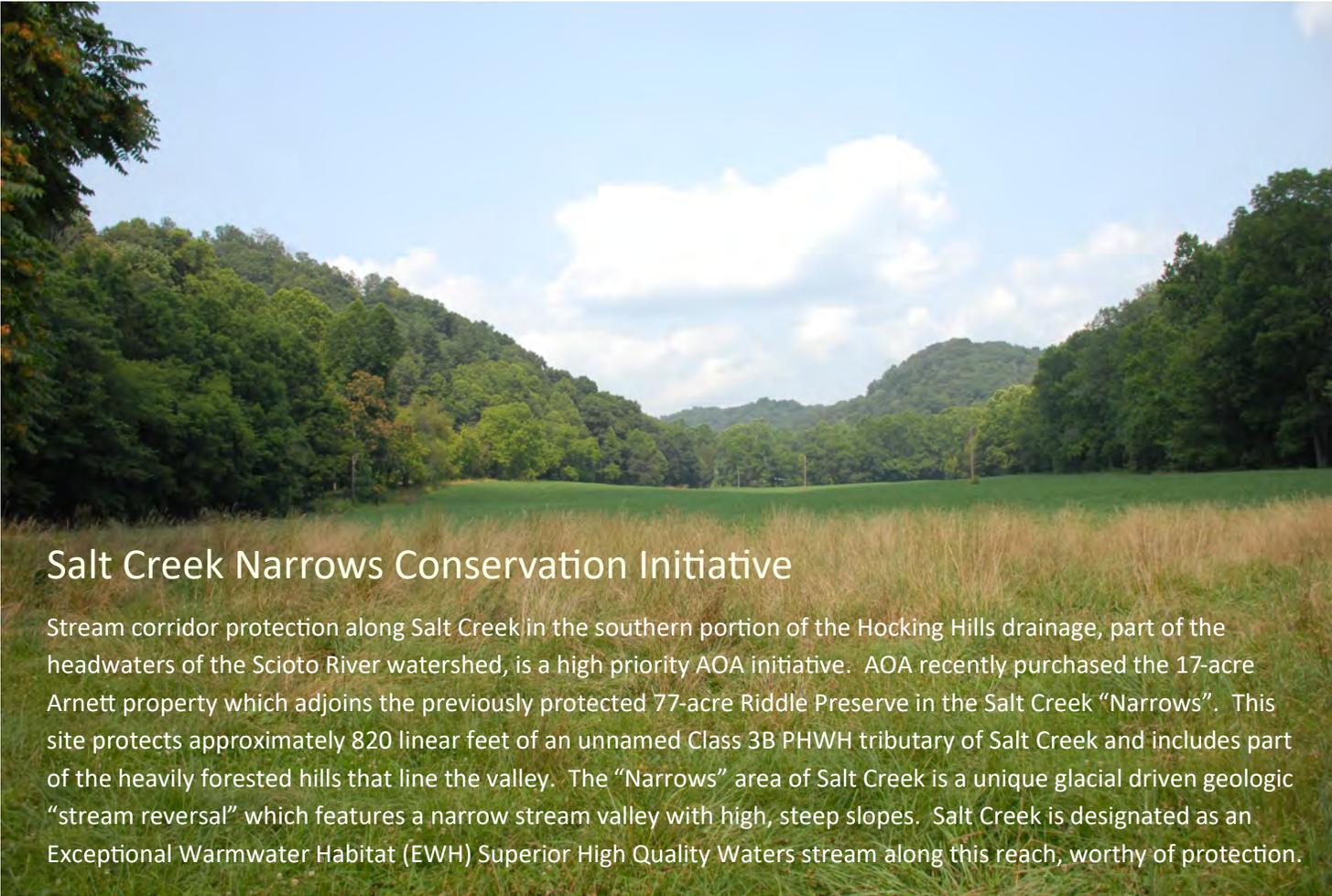
The 300-acre portion of the property retained by AOA adjoins a 37-acre parcel across Highway 23 previously conserved by AOA,

creating a 337-acre nature preserve. In addition to the protection of the Scioto River and Walnut Creek riparian corridors, the former Cooks Creek Golf Club property has substantial aquatic and upland natural resources worthy of conservation. The property contains over 100 acres of existing Category 2 wetland and pond habitats, critical to migrating species. It also includes a significant portion of a large glacial esker and geologic natural feature (Circleville Esker), integral to groundwater protection and supply.

The new preserve provides excellent habitat for many species of breeding and migratory birds. Travel paths such as the Scioto River Flyway Corridor are especially important for migrating neotropical birds and waterfowl. The site also provides excellent habitat for other migrating species such as bats and butterflies.

In recognition of the site's exceptional avian attributes and important position as a valuable part of the Scioto River Flyway Corridor, this preserve has been named in honor of Genevieve Jones - a 19th century Circleville ornithologist and initial author of what became the Jones Family's monumental publication, *Illustrations of the Nests and Eggs of Birds of Ohio*, intended as a companion to *Audubon's Birds of America*. The Genevieve Jones Preserve is a keystone parcel that will be a flagship AOA preserve along the Scioto River Flyway Corridor.





Salt Creek Narrows Conservation Initiative

Stream corridor protection along Salt Creek in the southern portion of the Hocking Hills drainage, part of the headwaters of the Scioto River watershed, is a high priority AOA initiative. AOA recently purchased the 17-acre Arnett property which adjoins the previously protected 77-acre Riddle Preserve in the Salt Creek “Narrows”. This site protects approximately 820 linear feet of an unnamed Class 3B PHWH tributary of Salt Creek and includes part of the heavily forested hills that line the valley. The “Narrows” area of Salt Creek is a unique glacial driven geologic “stream reversal” which features a narrow stream valley with high, steep slopes. Salt Creek is designated as an Exceptional Warmwater Habitat (EWH) Superior High Quality Waters stream along this reach, worthy of protection.



Land Conservation

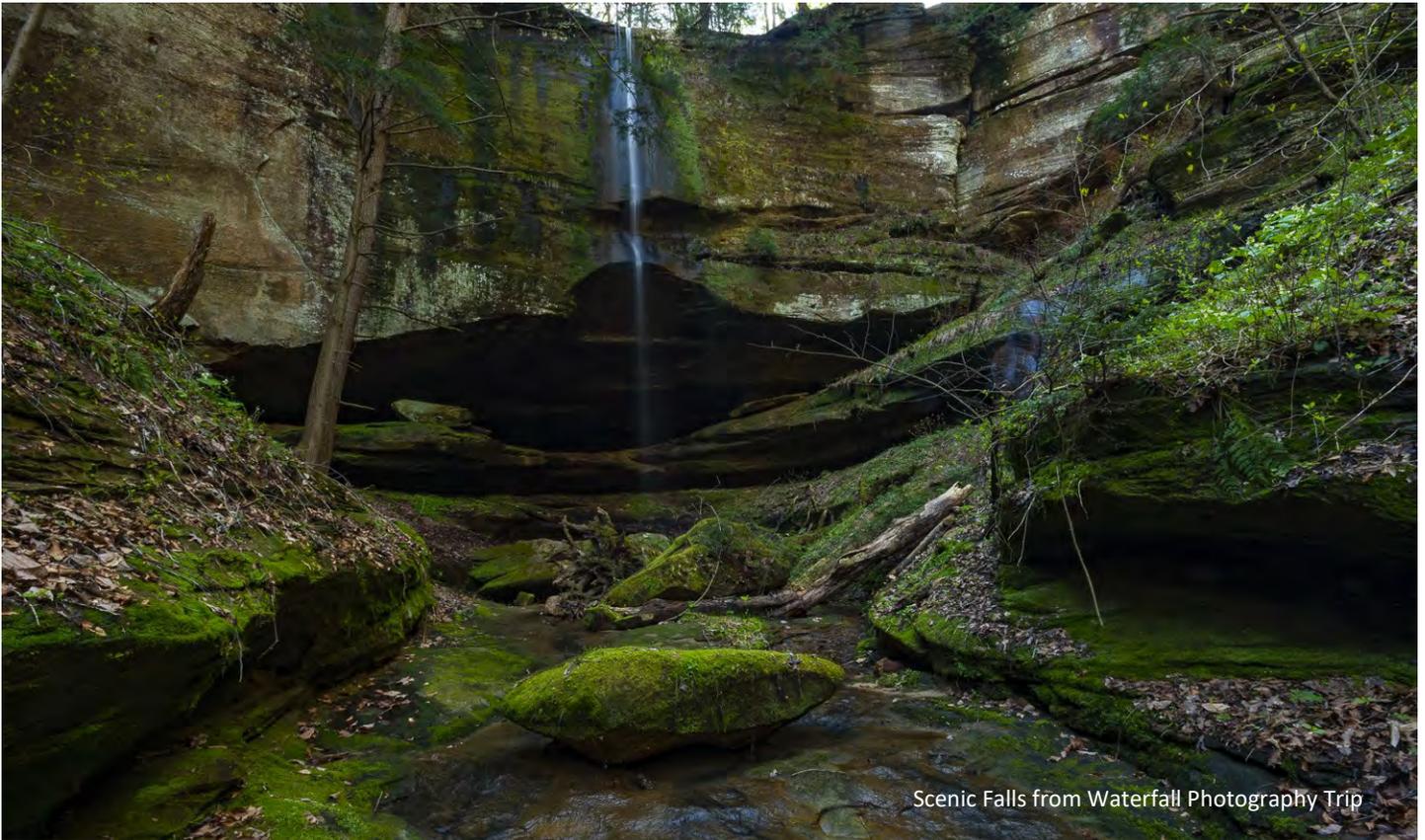
AOA Continues to Grow Our Bison Hollow Preserve

AOA purchased two new adjoining Vinton County properties on the south side of Bison Hollow in the upper portion of the South Branch East Fork of Queer Creek watershed. The 172-acre Merrybell Preserve was purchased from the Gratz family. An adjacent 37-acre parcel was purchased from the Kinschner family. Both sites are largely forested with a combination of relatively mature older growth as well as areas of reforested agricultural fields and timber cuts. Conservation of these properties protects 9,000 linear feet of high-quality Class 3B primary headwater coldwater streams.

These new sites expand the existing Preserve, bringing the largely contiguous area protected to 865 acres with another

238 acres in process. Bison Hollow features a spectacular Black Hand Sandstone gorge with a Coldwater Habitat system designated Outstanding State Waters. It is an important component of our Greater Hocking Hills Conservation Initiative.





Scenic Falls from Waterfall Photography Trip

Organizational Enhancement

Generous gifts from friends and supporters enabled the Appalachia Ohio Alliance to accomplish much in 2022. We are grateful for this support, and for continued validation of our conservation mission.

AOA continues to pursue the resources and support needed to carry out our valuable and worthy conservation work. For every \$1 donated to AOA, we are able to protect over \$20 worth of land and water resources.

Grants. AOA was fortunate to receive numerous grants in 2022 to support our conservation, stewardship, education and outreach activities. We procured over \$9 million in grants from public sector organizations, helping to maximize the return on our donor's investments in our conservation work.

Donations. AOA was fortunate to receive many generous gifts this past year including several significant donations for land conservation and long-term property stewardship and conservation defense.

Capacity. As AOA continues to grow and evolve we are striving to strengthen our organizational capacity to better achieve our conservation mission goals. In 2022 we:

- Added a full-time stewardship staff member.
- Participated in a variety of Ohio and national land trust seminars and conferences as part of our efforts to build stronger leadership and organizational sustainability.

Community Foundations. AOA continued to receive support through endowed funds at Community Foundations in our service area. AOA now has eight donor advised funds at local Community Foundations that support the sustainability of our conservation, stewardship and defense missions.



Hintz Hollow Barn

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AOA seeks to enhance the natural qualities of existing habitats and to restore and/or reestablish healthy ecosystems focusing on native plants. As once common species become rare, and rare species endangered, it is critically important that we conserve and restore natural habitats that provide homes for these species.



Stewardship



AOA works to enhance our land and water resources as sustainable assets for our community. We undertake a wide range of stewardship activities on our properties to preserve and enhance the natural habitats and site features.

In association with community partners, friends and volunteers, during the past year we have undertaken extensive site management and restoration activities on AOA preserves.



Conducted Woolly Adelgid surveys on Hemlock trees in our Hocking Hills preserves.



Reintroduced declining native species such as Showy Lady's Slipper orchids and augmented populations of forest medicinals such as Goldenseal to suitable habitats on our preserves.



Maintained heritage structures that are part of our shared cultural heritage - such as the Hocking Canal Lock No. 8 in Sugar Grove.



AOA has utilized staff, volunteers and contractors in a massive effort to remove and control non-native species throughout many of our preserves, targeting destructive invasives—particularly Japanese Honeysuckle, Multi-flora Rose, Tree of Heaven, Autumn Olive and Garlic Mustard. We removed large honeysuckle bushes from over 500 acres of forestlands.



Removed woody trees and shrubs from over 100 acres of existing prairies. Burned AOA's Conservation Demonstration Site prairie to enhance the habitat.

Preserve Stewardship

AOA sponsored over 40 workdays for volunteers and partner groups such as AmeriCorps to assist with stewardship activities at our preserves.



Harvested seeds from rare species in our prairies to help increase their distribution.



Removed utilities, man-made infrastructure, golf balls and trash from the former Cooks Creek Golf Course.



Installed new gates to control vehicular access to our properties to prevent habitat damage from noncompatible site use.



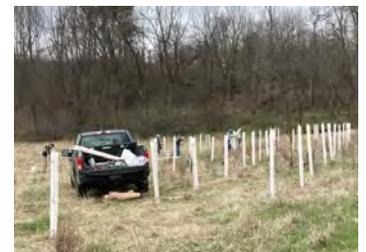
Performed numerous botanical / species surveys and identified new rare, threatened and/or endangered plant species on AOA preserves as part of site resource assessments.



Planted over 3,000 trees to help reestablish bottomland and upland forests on numerous preserves.



Demolished several dilapidated structures and removed legacy trash, debris and tires from AOA preserves.



Two New AOA Vacation Cabins at Bison Hollow. AOA recently added two new vacation cabins in the Hocking Hills. These supplement the chalet-style house on our Mercer Woods Old Growth Forest Preserve. The cabins are near to each other and are located adjacent to the northern boundary of our Bison Hollow Preserve near Ash Cave. They were



donated by the Russell family. The oldest is a nearly 100-year-old heritage cabin constructed of chestnut logs. The Russell's built the second cabin and all furnishings. Both cabins have been extensively renovated.

Guests are able to enjoy hiking and the natural beauty of AOA's spectacular Bison Hollow Preserve which borders the cabins. AOA cabins are available through our Logan-based real estate partner, Venture in Real Estate. Proceeds from AOA cabin rentals support our conservation mission.

As AOA pursues the conservation and aggregation of parcels into larger habitat preserves, we have gained a growing number of structures - most of which have been donated to us. This includes houses, cabins, barns, and accessory structures, indicative of legacy land uses. While many of these are in poor condition and need to be demolished, we try to preserve and reuse structures when feasible.



Nature-Based Outreach and Engagement





AOA provides opportunities for members and the public to participate in and learn more about our conservation mission.

We emphasize nature-based education that features conserved lands and local ecosystems, conveying an enhanced understanding of their significance and relevance to our community. Our numerous programs and events help provide outdoor recreational activities, build partnerships, engage local communities, provide hands-on learning and stewardship experiences, and allow friends to visit the lands they have helped to conserve – some of the most beautiful places in our region.



Our 2022 education and outreach program consisted of 30 events, providing a wide range of outdoor activities including naturalist-guided field trips to AOA conserved properties, workshops and programs. In addition we undertook a variety of stewardship-based events focusing on restoration and enhancement of AOA preserves. In all, our programs and events during the past year attracted over 800 participants, inspired by AOA's conservation work and the beauty of our special landscapes.



Hocking Canal Lock 8 Cleanup with Feet on Fire



2022 AOA Conservation Awards

AOA's **Conservation Achievement Award** recognizes exemplary dedication, commitment and achievement in the field of conservation. **Steve Gray** was honored for his many years of dedication and



service to Ohio conservation, as both a public employee and volunteer for AOA and many others.

AOA bestowed our **Conservation Partnership Award** on a couple of collaborating

organizations that helped facilitate the protection of the former Cooks Creek Golf Club: **OEPA Division of Environmental & Financial Assistance**, for funding the acquisition of the property with their WRRSP program dedicated to conserving high quality aquatic habitats; and the **Pickaway County Park District**, which has purchased the former golf course clubhouse for conversion into a nature center for the community.



AOA is fortunate to have many volunteers who assist our mission efforts. We presented our **Conservation Volunteer Award** to the many members of the active **Feet on Fire** hiking group for their immersion in and support for AOA's stewardship activities on many AOA Preserves over the last couple of years.

And More...

AOA's Holiday Card program provides opportunities to "give a gift of conservation" to promote AOA's mission and local conservation to friends and associates. Our 2022 card features a "Black Hand Sandstone Bluff Dusted in Winter White" in the Queer Creek Gorge at AOA's Bison Hollow Preserve.



AOA's **Annual Dinner** was held at the former Cooks Creek Golf Clubhouse in South Bloomfield. Bringing together 140 friends and supporters, AOA's recent purchase of the former Cooks Creek Golf Course and numerous land and water conservation and stewardship successes were recognized. Our featured speakers were **Steve Gray, Assistant Director ODNR**, who spoke about ODNR's conservation programs and **Mike Angle, retired Chair, ODNR Division of Geological Survey**, who spoke about the glacial geology of Pickaway County, and particularly the Circleville esker, which bisects the former golf course property.



The Appalachia Ohio Alliance is a regional non-profit land conservancy that serves central, south-central and southeastern Ohio. The Alliance is dedicated to the conservation and stewardship of our land and water as sustainable natural resources that are an asset and a legacy for our community.

