

AOA Purchases Cooks Creek Golf Club Property

Creates a New 337-Acre Genevieve Jones Preserve along the Scioto River Flyway Corridor

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.



The Cooks Creek Golf Club property is a spectacular site with nearly a mile (4,910 linear feet) of frontage along the Scioto River and two thirds of a mile (3,485 linear feet) of riparian frontage along Walnut Creek. Water quality in this stretch of the Scioto River is exceptional as documented by testing performed by the Midwest Biological Institute (MBI). Water assessment results all surpass the biological criteria for the Exceptional Warmwater Habitat aquatic life use designation. It is classified as Superior High Quality Waters by the State of Ohio.



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 highly manicured 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.

AOA is partnering with the Pickaway County Park District which purchased 25 of the 325-acre former Golf Club site from AOA, including the clubhouse building, associated maintenance buildings, paved parking lots and the entry road. 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 public walking and nature observation. 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 and their 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 habitat, critical to migrating species. It also includes a significant portion of a large glacial esker (Circleville Esker), a prominent Pickaway County geologic natural feature, integral to groundwater protection and supply. Large floodplains along the Scioto River and Walnut Creek offer opportunities for restoration of wetlands on the former fairways that were elevated during golf course construction.

The Cooks Creek property acquisition was undertaken with Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program monies administered by the Ohio Department of Environmental Protection and designated for protection and restoration of high-quality streams and wetlands in Ohio. City of Circleville and Montgomery County WPCLF loan projects sponsored this project. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources has provided funding through the H2Ohio Program to restore wetlands in the floodplains to help enhance water quality in the Scioto River.



The new preserve provides exceptional 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.

The former Cooks Creek property is a component of AOA's Scioto River Flyway Corridor - a large landscape-scale conservation initiative undertaken by AOA in collaboration with numerous partners including Ducks Unlimited. This initiative focuses on riparian, wetland and watershed conservation along the Scioto River and its tributaries. Our efforts have so far led to the



protection of 37 properties within the Scioto River Flyway Corridor, including extensive stretches of the main stem as well as key tributaries such as Big Darby Creek.

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.

While we are working on the entire river corridor, our efforts are necessarily focused on areas in Pickaway County that are still largely undeveloped, but most threatened with rapid growth and escalating land prices. AOA continues working towards our goal of creating a continuous conservation corridor to protect water quality and create connected native wildlife habitats along the Scioto.