



BLACK SWAMP FOOD & FARM INITIATIVE

Growing Ohio's next generation of farmers

CALLING NORTHWEST OHIO'S ASPIRING FARMERS

Black Swamp Conservancy ("the Conservancy") was formed in 1993 to protect and preserve natural and agricultural lands in northwest Ohio for the benefit of future generations. To date, the Conservancy has protected over 17,000 acres of woods, wetlands, prairies, and family farms. The Black Swamp Food & Farm Initiative represents the evolution of our conservation vision to protect the agricultural and natural heritage of Ohio.

THE INITIATIVE

Through this new initiative, we hope to address a number of agricultural and ecological issues in northwest Ohio by helping the next generation of Ohio's farmers get their start. The average age of farm operators in Ohio continues to climb, but even with growing numbers of people interested in getting back on the land, we continue to see a lack of new farmers. Rising land prices have been identified as a common hurdle for aspiring farmers, and to overcome this barrier we are planning to use long-term lease agreements to provide affordable access to farmland. These lease agreements will minimize start-up costs and eliminate volatile year-to-year leases, helping to:

1. get the next generation of stewards on the land,
2. improve northwest Ohio's ecological health,
3. grow food for our communities,
4. protect Ohio's prime agricultural soils,
5. ensure affordability of agricultural land for generations to come, and
6. improve water quality and habitat connectivity through conservation and farm practices that also enhance agricultural productivity (if you are not familiar with conservation practices, the Conservancy will connect you to services and partners to become better informed about improving conservation on your farm).

The Conservancy and aspiring farmers (you) will partner to start farms that grow profitable and ecologically sustainable food. This will protect our prime agricultural lands, improve water quality and natural resource protection, and provide healthy food for our communities.

HOW DO I GET INVOLVED?

If you are interested in starting, or expanding a farm in northwest Ohio and would like to explore working with Black Swamp Conservancy, please mail the following items to PO Box 332 Perrysburg, OH 43552 or email them to bsc@blackswamp.org.

1. A letter of intent stating your desire to farm in northwest Ohio (including why you want to farm), an outline of the vision for your farm, your contact information (phone, email, and mailing address), and any other information you think is important for the Conservancy to know.
 - a. The vision for your farm might include the following: crop and/or livestock plans, products you hope to produce, market opportunities, farm acreage, desired location in northwest Ohio, planned conservation practices, certifications or IP designations such as organic certified, certified naturally grown, Animal Welfare Approved, grass-fed, non-GMO, etc., and any other information you believe is important.
2. A resume detailing your agricultural experience and any other skills you believe will help you run your farm (for example; business, marketing, food processing training, etc.)

Black Swamp Conservancy Staff will review all letters of intent and resumes and invite aspiring farmers in for an interview with our advisory committee to hear about your plans in more detail. We will then work together to explore how we are best able to help you accomplish your goals.

If you have any questions about this announcement or the Black Swamp Food & Farm Initiative please contact our Conservation Manager Chris Collier at (419) 833-1025 or at ccollier@blackswamp.org. We look forward to working with you!