

Setting Roots for Continued Growth

More than 350 friends and supporters attended our 4th annual *Blue Grass & Green Acres* event in March, another sellout crowd. The event is an important fundraiser for Black Swamp Conservancy, helping to support the work we do year-round to protect northwest Ohio's valuable land and water resources.

What makes *BG&GA* such an exciting evening is the genuine enthusiasm everyone in the room shares for our mission and the natural legacy we are creating for future generations.

There really is a lot to be excited about. The Conservancy is quickly approaching the milestone of having protected 15,000 acres of land in northwest Ohio, forever. Just four short years ago we celebrated reaching the 10,000-acre mark. It is incredibly humbling to think of our founders' vision for the organization when it was formed in 1993 and protected the first (six acre) parcel in 1997.

As we continue our focus of preserving the region's best natural habitats and family farms, we are also increasingly working on natural area restoration in the places where those projects will result in the greatest impact on wildlife habitat and water quality. In addition to our ongoing initiatives at Forrest Woods, we have very recently been awarded a Clean Ohio grant to purchase 78 acres of bottomland along the Sandusky River. You can read about both projects inside this edition of *The Rookery*.

Black Swamp Conservancy is also placing a renewed focus on community engagement and public education. We recognize that if we are going to have a lasting and meaningful impact on our community, we need to inspire more people to care about conservation in northwest Ohio. A newly created volunteer calendar is included in this newsletter, and we have many events planned for 2015.

With great personal and organizational excitement, this issue formally announces the establishment of a permanent home for Black Swamp Conservancy. A significant investment in the organization's future.

Our new office backs into one of the top three finest remnants of the historic Great Black Swamp, an exceptional prairie restoration site and a small oak savanna demonstration area. I feel comfortable speaking for the entire staff in saying that it just feels "right" to pull into this driveway each morning, surrounded by land we work so hard to protect.

I hope you will join us on May 2nd for our open house. Come tour the house, walk the woods, and see for yourself what all the excitement is about!

Rob Krain
Executive Director

Homestead Open House

Date: Saturday, May 2nd

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Location: 4825 Sugar Ridge Road, Pemberville
(directly across the street from Eastwood High School)

Come join us as we officially welcome the community to our new space.

The morning will include viewing of the historic home and offices; mini tours of the woods and prairie; and a nature walk through the 80-acre woods to the heron rookery in the heart of the property. Nature walk will embark promptly at 11:00 a.m.

Guests are asked to park in the Eastwood Schools parking lot directly across the street.

We can't wait to share our new homestead with you!

BLACK SWAMP CONSERVANCY
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BlackSwamp.org

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**At Black Swamp
Conservancy...**

We take direct action to permanently preserve northwest Ohio's natural habitats and family farms for the benefit of future generations.

By protecting our valuable land and water resources we are supporting healthy communities with strong, sustainable economies.

Our work ensures the diverse habitats of our region will be protected for generations and that our children and their children will forever be able to enjoy this special place.



The Black Swamp Conservancy Homestead

In 2012, Black Swamp Conservancy signed a permanent conservation agreement protecting Bell Woods, an 80 acre property in Wood County - one of the few remaining sites that retains the characteristics of the historic Great Black Swamp. The property owners, Drs. Robert Huber and Moira Van Staaden also owned a farmhouse abutting the woods.

In late 2014, when the family decided to move closer to their son's high school, their first call was to the Conservancy, in hopes that we could help them find a conservation-minded buyer. Robert shared with us that he had nightmares a new owner might plant Russian Olives about the yard, which could invade the sensitive habitat he had taken such care to steward and preserve.

The farmhouse and grounds offered enormous potential, and after thoughtful consideration we decided this was an opportunity that just couldn't be passed up. The owners, who were as excited

as us at the prospect of establishing the Conservancy headquarters here, agreed to a very generous below-market-value sale of the home.

Located at 4825 Sugar Ridge Road, Pemberville – just a short and scenic country drive from the Conservancy's old location in Perrysburg - the homestead (as we have come to call it) is a historic farmhouse built in 1910.

Black Swamp Conservancy now has a more appropriate headquarters from which to accomplish its conservation mission and connect with constituents in deeper and more meaningful ways.

We can now, literally, walk out the back door to show our landowners, partners and supporters the splendor and importance of a Conservancy protected property.

Our business model is based on perpetuity – we promise to steward and protect our preserved lands forever. This establishes a permanent home for our permanent organization.

The former owners renovated the building in 2005, updating essentials such as electricity and plumbing - while tastefully preserving the original hardwood floors, built-ins and trim.

For the past nine years, the Conservancy had been leasing a basement office in downtown Perrysburg. While this had been a functional situation, and much was accomplished at this location, it was always less than ideal.

In many ways, this move sets deeper organizational roots that further ensure the Conservancy's permanence and allow for increased community impact.

Our business model is uniquely based on perpetuity – we promise to steward and protect our preserved lands forever. This move establishes a permanent home for our permanent organization.

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This was also a fiscally responsible decision. The Conservancy took on a five-year, \$85,000 loan (with very favorable terms) to facilitate the purchase. In consideration of rent and utilities in the old space, our monthly operating costs are unchanged. Once the loan is paid, we will realize significant savings in monthly costs – funds that can be applied directly to our conservation mission.

Plans are underway to develop the property into a community conservation center. This will include the installation of environmental improvements, demonstrative native gardens and renovation of an old barn into a meeting space for school groups, Scout troops and other community organizations. While the Conservancy has some initial ideas in the works, we are forming a series of small groups to discuss ideas on how the space might be best utilized as a community resource ... and would love to hear ideas from you as well.



Volunteers painting the new office.

Public programs will undoubtedly be central to our future plans. The homestead is surrounded by an exemplary forested wetland – home to spectacular wildflower blooms, a great blue heron rookery (boasting more than 40 nests) and 10 documented rare and endangered species. The “side yard” is a 30-acre prairie restoration site, on which the Conservancy holds right of-first-refusal.

We already have plans to showcase the property during an open house and nature walk, a nature photography workshop led by George Sydlowski and a starlight walk through the woods (*look for details on these events in our eNews, on our website and via Facebook*).

None of this would have been possible without the generous support we received from capital campaign donors (*see inset on this page*). The Conservancy kicked off a quiet capital campaign in late 2014 with a goal of raising \$300,000. A small group of committed and long-term supporters has contributed \$174,000 to get us to this point, and for their generosity we are grateful beyond measure.

We have \$126,000 left to raise in order to pay-off the mortgage, develop the grounds and establish a property maintenance fund. Please consider making a contribution to the capital campaign, above and beyond your important annual gift. This donation will help the Conservancy reduce its operating costs and begin to

create an on-site community resource. Please notate “Homestead Campaign” on the memo of your check or in the comment section of your online donation so we know where to direct your gift.

We are eager to share our new space with you – and have plans to do just that on Saturday, May 2nd during our Homestead Open House (*see front page for details*).

We hope you to see you here!

A heartfelt THANK YOU to our generous capital campaign donors:

- ◆ Anonymous through Toledo Community Foundation
- ◆ Jim and Pat Appold
- ◆ George Chapman
- ◆ Sara Jane DeHoff
- ◆ Entelco Foundation
- ◆ Lolita Guthrie
- ◆ Home Depot (Rossford)
- ◆ Robert Huber and Moira Van Staaden
- ◆ Eric and Jenny Kraus
- ◆ Paul and Carol Kraus
- ◆ Helen Maddock
- ◆ Sally Marti and Joseph Carron in memory of William A. Marti
- ◆ Peter R. Orser in memory of Caroline M. Orser
- ◆ Dorothy M. Price
- ◆ Andy Robinson
- ◆ The James Fuhrman Root Memorial
- ◆ Gary and Jan Samples
- ◆ Two Men and a Truck



Historic barn on property - to be refurbished into meeting space.

New Conservation Projects

Creating a Buffer for Wildlife

Black Swamp Conservancy recently signed a conservation agreement permanently protecting a 168-acre farm in Ottawa County.

The farm abuts the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge. This project ensures that the land will forever remain available for agricultural use and also protects the open space buffer it provides to the Refuge and the many species that call it home.



“Along with protecting 168 acres of northwest Ohio farmland, this easement provides a level of security to other natural areas from developmental pressures.”

- Chris Collier, Conservancy land protection specialist

Community Conservation

The newly-protected Reed Family Farm in Sandusky County adds to our ongoing efforts to work with neighboring families to preserve both their individual farms and their community’s rural heritage. With the addition of this 155-acre farm, the Conservancy has protected more than 1,720 acres in this neighborhood.

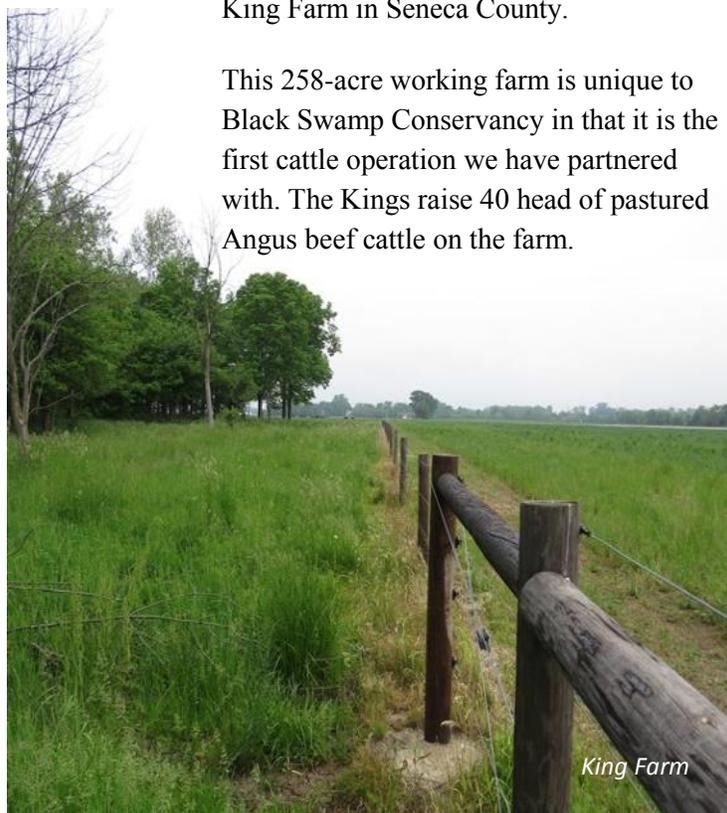


Reed Farm

A Conservancy First

The Conservancy recently entered into a conservation agreement protecting the King Farm in Seneca County.

This 258-acre working farm is unique to Black Swamp Conservancy in that it is the first cattle operation we have partnered with. The Kings raise 40 head of pastured Angus beef cattle on the farm.



King Farm

Forrest Woods Restoration

Black Swamp Conservancy is undertaking an exciting restoration project at Forrest Woods Nature Preserve this year. Our goal is to restore approximately 60 acres as close to its historic Great Black Swamp condition as possible.

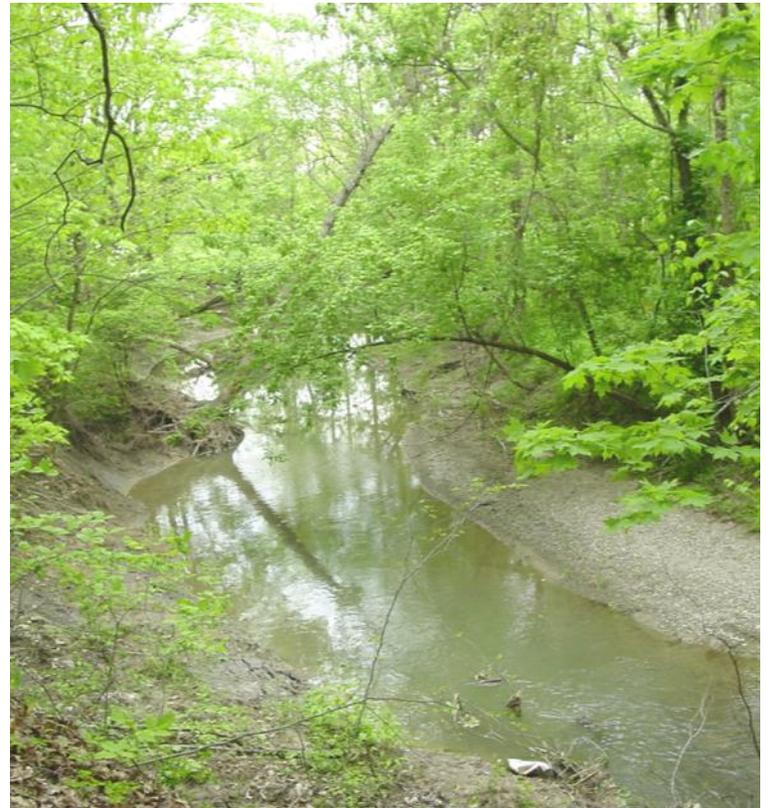
To accomplish this, the Conservancy plans to return two ditches back to natural stream conditions, and restore naturally functioning floodplains.

Agricultural land surrounding the ditches will be restored to forest cover, featuring scattered vernal pool wetlands. Tree species will include swamp white, yellow, red and white oaks, shagbark and shellbark hickories, walnut, and red maple.

This project will expand the habitat at Forrest Woods - a site that is known to harbor more than 30 rare and endangered species. It will also help to improve

water quality in the Maumee River and Lake Erie by restoring wetlands and floodplain, which act to filter pollutants.

Grant funding for this project has been awarded to the Conservancy by the U.S. EPA under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, Ohio EPA through its Surface Water Improvement Fund and the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation's Sustain our Great Lakes initiative.



VOLUNTEER!

At 292 acres, Forrest Woods Nature Preserve is Black Swamp Conservancy's largest owned nature preserve.

Stewarding a property this size is no easy task and we rely on our volunteers to help.

Please consider joining us for one of our upcoming volunteer days at Forrest Woods. Dates include: Saturday, June 6th and Wednesday, July 8th.

Call the Conservancy office at 419-833-1025 for more details.

Top photo shows a portion of the Forrest Woods restoration area. Bottom photo shows example of a natural stream channel on the property.

Conservancy Awarded Clean Ohio Grant

Black Swamp Conservancy was recently awarded a Clean Ohio grant to purchase 78-acres of land located on the Sandusky River just outside of Fremont. The property, which contains mostly bottomland, is currently farmed and will be restored to fully functioning floodplain wetlands. This project will restore ecosystem function along the river and help alleviate nutrient loading.

We are currently pursuing funding opportunities and working to bring together partner organizations to collaborate on the restoration phase of this project.



Recent Events

Winter Nature Walk

More than 20 people braved the cold for our winter nature walk on January 17th. Tim Schetter, Conservancy trustee and Director of Natural Resources for the Metroparks of the Toledo Area, served as our guide through the Conservancy's Forrest Woods Nature Preserve.



Blue Grass & Green Acres 2015

We had another sell-out crowd of 350 people at the Carranor Hunt & Polo Club this year for our *Blue Grass & Green Acres* celebration. Close to \$30,000 was raised, all in support of our land conservation mission.

A special thank you to our volunteers; Neil Brokamp, Debbie Farley, Sally Gladwell & Jason Thomas, Steve & Virginia Keller, Eric & Jenny Kraus, Bob & Karen Lucas, Nadia Oelher, Jacob Rodriguez, Katie Rousseau, Jessica Sherman, Tom & Laurie VonSeggern, Karen Wood & Dave Donley, and Tricia Zook.

THANK YOU to the following organizations for sponsoring our 2015 BG&GA celebration:

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Become a Black Swamp Volunteer

The Conservancy Launches New Program for 2015

Black Swamp Conservancy is excited to launch its new volunteer program and present our volunteer opportunities calendar for 2015!

Volunteers have always been instrumental to the Conservancy's success, and we look forward to growing our program by offering new experiences, with more dates and a variety of projects that appeal to all levels of interest and capabilities.

Whether you prefer to get your hands dirty installing bird boxes at Water's Edge; are up for the challenge of battling invasive teasel at Forrest Woods; want to sell tickets at our *Down-Home* event; or simply wish to stay indoors and help process our newsletters - we appreciate and need the help - and hope you will join us!

As we have many volunteer opportunities fast approaching, the quickest way to begin is to visit our website at BlackSwamp.org, click on the "Sign Up Now" button, and complete the volunteer registration form.

You may also contact Emily Nunn, Conservancy program associate. She will be happy to talk with you and start the process of finding an opportunity that matches your interests and schedule. You can contact Emily directly by calling 419-833-1025 or by email at enunn@blackswamp.org.

Listed below are all of the current volunteer opportunities we have scheduled so far for 2015.

We look forward to seeing you out in the field!

Conservancy volunteer Alec, cuts teasel heads at Black Swamp Conservancy's Forrest Woods Nature Preserve.

Upcoming Black Swamp Conservancy Volunteer Opportunities

Date	Time	Opportunity	Location
Sat., April 18	9am	Spring Clean Up	Water's Edge Preserve (Sandusky Co.)
Wed., April 29	1pm - 4pm	Homestead Spring Clean Up	Conservancy Office
Sat., May 2	9am - 1pm	Homestead Open House	Conservancy Office
Sat., May 16	9am	Invasive Plant Removal	Water's Edge Preserve
Sat., June 6	9am	Teasel/Autumn Olive Removal	Forrest Woods Nature Preserve (Paulding Co.)
Wed., June 17	9am	Invasive Plant Removal	Water's Edge Preserve
Wed., July 8	9am	Teasel/Autumn Olive Removal	Forrest Woods Nature Preserve
Sat., July 18	9am	Invasive Plant Removal	Water's Edge Preserve
Wed., August 19	9am	Invasive Plant Removal	Water's Edge Preserve
Tues., August 25	6pm	Volunteer Monitor Training	Conservancy Office
Wed., September 2	6pm	Volunteer Monitor Training	Sawyer Quarry Nature Preserve (Perrysburg)
Sat., September 19	9am	Invasive Plant Removal	Water's Edge Preserve
Mon., September 28	1pm - 4pm	Homestead Fall Clean Up	Conservancy Office
Sat., October 3	10am	<i>Down-Home</i> Event	Conservancy Office

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BLACK SWAMP CONSERVANCY PRESENTS



Life in the

WESTERN BASIN

an Earth Day Conversation

INFORMATION

Celebrate Earth Day with Black Swamp Conservancy as we spend the evening discussing our great local resource, Lake Erie and its watershed. Speakers include:

Steve Pollick - retired outdoors editor of the Toledo Blade

Cheryl Harner - environmental educator and advocate for conservation and land preservation

Christine Mayer - Professor of Ecology, University of Toledo

Speaker presentations will be followed by questions and open discussion. This program is free and open to the public - we hope you will join us! For more information, call Black Swamp Conservancy at 419-833-1025.

DETAILS

Date: Wednesday, April 22nd, 2015

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Location: W.W. Knight Nature Preserve
29530 White Rd., Perrysburg

Cost: FREE

Find us online at www.BlackSwamp.org

