AOA Expands Salt Creek Narrows Big Woods Preserve with 576 Acre Acquisition

AOA recently acquired two parcels from BTG Pactual to help expand our Salt Creek Narrows - Big Woods Preserve. This addition, totaling 576 new acres, enlarges the Big Woods Preserve to 950 acres. This is the third property AOA has acquired from BTG, a multinational timberland investment company.

The Salt Creek Narrows is the site of a unique glacial driven geologic "stream reversal" in the southern extent of the Hocking Hills landscape. Characterized by high hills with very steep slopes and narrow stream valleys, it is an aesthetically beautiful and ecologically rich area that is a high protection priority for AOA. Tucked away in a relatively isolated part of Hocking and Vinton Counties, the Narrows could be considered one of Ohio's most overlooked natural features and is very worthy of conservation action.

Water quality remains high within the Narrows portion of Salt Creek, which is designated as an Exceptional Warmwater Habitat (EWH) Superior High Quality Waters stream. The BTG site acquired will preserve 1,800 linear feet of Salt Creek riparian corridor and ~24,250 linear feet of high-quality largely Class 3 Primary Headwater Habitat Streams that contribute to the excellent water quality in Salt Creek.

Although about half of the site has been timbered in the last 20 years, the riparian corridors were excluded by BTG from timber harvests. These are covered in a comparatively mature mixed hardwood forest, helping to protect water quality. The conserved properties support native habitat for a number of relatively rare species, including endangered Timber Rattlesnakes.

AOA continues to work with area property owners to conserve additional nearby sites. We have several parcels totaling another ~550 acres under contract that will be acquired within the coming year, as part of our effort to assemble a block of contiguous forested native habitat and preserved stream corridors. These areas will eventually provide a vital wildlife connectivity corridor linking the Hocking Hills to nearby Tar Hollow.