Appalachia Ohio Alliance (AOA) collaborated with the ODNR Division of Natural Areas and Preserves (DNAP) to acquire a 95-acre portion of the List Family farm in Pickaway County. Monitored for over 60 years, preservation of this “field of dreams” has been a long-time goal of Ohio botanists.

The property includes several ephemeral pothole wetlands that have no natural outlet. They are seasonally inundated and are important migratory bird and waterfowl habitat, as well as a remnant home for a number of rare and endangered plant species. DNAP botanists have observed four State-listed species growing from the dormant seedbank remaining in the wetland areas.

The once common Pickaway Plains ecology, typified by upland prairies and oak savannahs interspersed with “pothole” wetlands that were originally on the site, has been virtually eliminated in its former range and become an exceptionally rare community type in Ohio. AOA proposes to completely transform the property, discontinuing the agricultural use and restoring it back to the iconic and very rare Pickaway Plains.

—Continued on Next Page

Photo by Jim McCormac
AOA Completes Merger with Earthtouch

Earthtouch has been integrated into the AOA organizational structure, completing the merger begun last fall. Ownership of the 380-acre Earthtouch Preserve in Vinton County has been transferred to AOA for permanent stewardship. Incorporated in 1991, Earthtouch operated for 21 years as a conservation-based nonprofit focused on promoting healthy interaction between people and the natural world. We welcome the Earthtouch community to AOA.

Lands / Stewardship

AOA works to conserve and enhance our precious land and water resources as sustainable assets for our community.

- Accepted the donation of new conservation easements on two properties protecting 135 acres. Easement donors include Barbara Andreas and Denny Cooke, and Carl and Gail Boesel.
- Purchased the 20-acre Grupenhof property in a bargain sale as an addition to AOA’s Bison Hollow Preserve in Vinton County.
- Increased the lands AOA stewards to 56 properties and over 7,100 acres. We are currently working on a number of additional conservation transactions that are in-process.
- Utilized the board, staff and volunteers to monitor all 56 of our conservation properties during the past 12 months.
- Added to and refined AOA conservation initiatives including the Hocking Hills, Hocking River Conservation Corridor, Scioto Flyway and Pickaway Plains.
- In association with community partners including Rural Action and the Buckeye Trail Association, and AOA volunteers, we carried out stewardship activities on AOA’s properties through cleanups and removal of invasive plants.
- Strengthened our commitment to the conservation of farms and farmland. Participated in the Local Agriculture Easement Protection Program, partnering with Franklin, Hocking, Pickaway and Ross Counties. Secured funds for an agricultural easement on the Barr Family farm in Pickaway County.
- Continued our efforts to protect resources that represent the character and heritage of the community through preservation of the List Mound.

List Farm Restoration – continued

ecosystem that historical accounts indicate existed when the Adena culture was building burial mounds throughout the area.

This property is the first and only site currently protecting the pothole wetland ecosystem in the region. DNAP holds a conservation easement on the property and is a partner in protection and restoration of the site which will be designated a State Nature Preserve. DNAP is collaborating with AOA in site planning, restoration and natural resource management of the property. AOA has procured grant funding to help complete restoration of the site.

The property also contains an intact, unexcavated Adena Period Burial Mound which is the third largest remaining in Pickaway County. The combination of the restored pothole wetlands, the rare and endangered species, the restored native Pickaway Plains oak-savannah/prairie ecosystem, and an Adena Burial Mound make this site a spectacular asset and a very special and important place to Pickaway County and Ohio.

The List property has been designated as the Pickaway Plains Preserve. AOA has made the Pickaway Plains area a high priority initiative with the hope that other remnants of this rare ecosystem can also be conserved.
AOA Establishes New Conservation Demonstration Site Along US Highway 33

AOA has established a new Conservation Demonstration Site along US Highway 33 just outside Rockbridge at the gateway to the Hocking Hills. The nucleus of the demonstration area consists of a 42-acre parcel along the Hocking River recently donated to AOA by the Gosnell family. AOA is supplementing the core site with adjacent properties protected by AOA conservation agreements.

AOA is creating a flagship property to provide conservation demonstration, outreach and educational opportunities to the local community, land owners and visitors to the region. The Demonstration Site incorporates and builds upon the conservation vision and leadership of Clyde Gosnell whose land and water stewardship and habitat restoration practices are existing features of the property.

The Demonstration Site will serve as a “one-stop shop” where visitors can experience a variety of natural habitats typical of the greater Hocking Hills region including bottomland forest, upland forest, prairie, vernal pool, pond, wetland and river and steam riparian habitats. Site design provides visitors the opportunity to observe and learn firsthand from interpretive signage and materials as well as from a range of conservation, stewardship and management activities and demonstrations carried out and supported by AOA, our partners and sponsors.

Layout and design are nearly complete and work has begun on site improvements including trail and parking enhancements. Ongoing partner and community participation in the form of work days and on-site events are being employed to carry out the project. The site will open to the public by the end of the year.
Generous gifts from friends and supporters enabled the Appalachia Ohio Alliance to accomplish much in 2013. We are grateful for this support, and for continued validation of our mission.

Organizational Advancement

As AOA grows and evolves we are striving to enhance our organizational capacity to better achieve our mission goals.

- Staff participated in the national Land Trust Alliance Rally, gaining valuable learning, training and skills. Board and staff participated in the Coalition of Ohio Land Trusts conference to enhance our conservation knowledge and build stronger relationships within the Ohio conservation community.

- Initiated a new membership program this year asking our friends to join with us to help provide the resources and support needed to continue and enhance our valuable and worthy conservation work.

- Enhanced and expanded our website and online presence. Improved our email correspondence and management.

- Undertook an organizational assessment and prepared a Development Plan and Case Statement with a capacity-building grant from the Land Trust Alliance.

Grant Funding

AOA was fortunate to receive 14 grants this year to help support our conservation, stewardship, educational and outreach activities. We obtained over $3.25 million in grants from numerous public and private sector organizations and agencies. In addition, AOA’s Demonstration Site partners have committed over $30,000 in cash and in-kind contributions for site enhancement and improvement.

Community Foundation Funds

AOA established two new endowed funds—the Clyde Gosnell Conservation Fund at The Columbus Foundation and the Louise and Jack Warner Farmland Preservation Fund at the Pickaway County Community Foundation. These funds were created with generous donations to honor the conservation career, contributions and achievements of two leading AOA board members and founders.
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 local lands and ecosystems, conveying an enhanced understanding of their significance and relevance to our community. Our numerous programs and events help build partnerships, provide outreach, engage the community, provide hands-on learning and stewardship experiences, and allow friends to visit our conservation lands—some of the most beautiful places in our region.

- Our outdoor activity program consisted of a wide range of events including several naturalist-guided field trips: a Bird and Butterfly Walk at Mathias Grove, a Vernal Pool Hike at Trimble Community Forest, and a Spring Wildflower Hike at AOA’s Kleinmaier State Nature Preserve.

- Other events included a Forest Botanicals Workshop held in conjunction with Rural Action and ODNR Division of Forestry and a Farm and Prairie Tour at the Warner-Pierce Farm. AOA also helped cosponsor the 2nd Annual Burr Oak Winter Hike with the Buckeye Trail Association.

- Stewardship-based events included the Trimble Community Forest Cleanup in partnership with Rural Action, a tree planting at our new Earthtouch Preserve, and several invasive removal events at AOA properties.

- A Trail Building Workshop and Workday led by the Buckeye Trail Association at the Demonstration Site helped construct the first phase of the nature interpretive trail.

- In cooperation with the founding host Gosnell and Davidson families, we sponsored the 31st annual Trillium Festival at Mathias Grove during the Spring wildflower season.
And More...

- AOA's Holiday Card program provided opportunities to "give a gift of conservation" while supporting AOA's mission and promoting local conservation.
- In Memoriam—AOA planted a memorial grove at our new Earthtouch Preserve in memory of AOA board member John Husted, who passed away this past spring.
- AOA's Annual Dinner "A Field of Dreams" was held at Hocking Hills State Park Lodge and celebrated our many land and water conservation and stewardship successes.

Synergies

AOA continued to seek compatible, complementary and collaborative partners to help achieve our conservation mission and goals. We were able to nurture and expand existing partnerships while building new relationships with numerous conservation, stewardship and educational organizations to help procure and implement a wide range of projects this year.

The Appalachia Ohio Alliance (AOA) is a regional nonprofit land conservancy that serves central, southcentral 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.