



## AOA Moves Forward with Big Darby Creek Conservation - Over 280 Acres to be Added

AOA is working to add new properties to AOA's Big Darby Creek Conservation Corridor in Pickaway County. Big Darby Creek is a National and State designated Scenic River that is recognized as "one of the most biologically diverse aquatic systems in the Midwest". It is home to

38 known state and federally listed species, including numerous freshwater mussels and fish. According to Freshwater Mussel Surveys of the Big Darby Creek System in Central Ohio (1998), for a waterway of its size the Big Darby has the greatest diversity of freshwater mussels of any in the entirety of North America. Through our Big Darby Initiative, AOA seeks to preserve riparian properties and to create a continuous corridor of connected conservation lands to safeguard water quality, natural habitat and scenic qualities of Big Darby Creek.

AOA is purchasing two key properties. Both sites will help increase habitat suitable for supporting rare bat species in Ohio, such as the endangered Indiana Bat. They are located within the home range of Indiana Bats identified during recent bat studies and surveys. The 144-acre Carter family farm lies along the west side of the Big Darby, between Darbyville and Orient. It is a short distance north of AOA's existing Hunsinger Farm Preserve and south of our Igel and Wildasinn Preserves.



This site will protect 1,785 linear feet of riparian corridor along Big Darby Creek, 3,700 linear feet of Greenbrier Creek, and an additional approximately 4,320 linear feet of primary headwater habitat tributary to Greenbrier and Big Darby Creeks. The property is located along a stretch of the Big Darby which harbors up to 13 known state and/or federal listed species, including 5 nationally threatened or endangered mussels. The site includes a mix of maturing forest and agricultural fields which will be converted to native prairie and succession bottomland forest.



AOA is also acquiring the 144-acre Confluence property located at the northwest corner of the confluence of Big Darby Creek and the Scioto River. This site will protect 3,800 linear feet of riparian corridor along Big Darby Creek and

2,750 linear feet of corridor along the Scioto River. The habitat value of this site, located at the Big Darby gateway to the Scioto River, where aquatic species migrate between the two waterbodies, is very important from a habitat integrity and connectivity standpoint. The property includes 1,900 linear feet of old river oxbow that has transitioned into a linear wetland. About 100 acres of the property is relatively mature forest which provides habitat for local bat populations. Much of the 125 acres of flood plain area along the river is currently in dry season agricultural fields that will be returned to bottomland forest habitat.



These properties will be conserved with funding from the Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program, which seeks to protect and restore high-quality streams and wetlands in Ohio. This program is administered by the Ohio Department of Environmental Protection which recently completed a limited environmental assessment process for the Big Darby Creek Conservation Corridor Additions project. A complete copy of the environmental documents may be found [here](#). AOA's new Big Darby conservation properties are being sponsored by the City of Columbus' Lower Olentangy Tunnel WPCLF loan project.