

AOA Purchases Cooks Creek Golf Club Property

Creates a New 337-Acre Preserve along the Scioto River Flyway Corridor

AOA recently completed the purchase of the 325-acre former Cooks Creek Golf Club, situated at the confluence of the Scioto River and Walnut Creek. Located in the Village of South Bloomfield, the property is a little over 12 miles south of the I-270 bypass along Highway 23, a rapidly developing corridor.

The Cooks Creek Golf Club property is a spectacular site with nearly a mile (4,910 l.f.) of frontage along the Scioto River and 3,485 linear feet of riparian frontage

along Walnut Creek. Water quality in this stretch of the Scioto River is exceptional as documented by testing performed by the Midwest Biological Institute (MBI). Water assessment results all surpass the biological criteria for the Exceptional Warmwater Habitat aquatic life use designation. It is classified as Superior High Quality Waters by the State of Ohio.



Conversion of the former golf club to a nature preserve will greatly improve and protect water quality. Golf courses require a high degree of vegetative management and chemical inputs. In addition to frequent mowing and non-native grass monocultures, frequent use of herbicides, pesticides, fungicides and fertilizers are required to

maintain the landscaping. Riparian corridor conservation and restoration will provide an important buffer zone along critical water courses, protecting and enhancing local water quality and aquatic species.

AOA is partnering with the Pickaway County Park District which will purchase 25 acres of the 325-acre former Golf Club site from AOA, including the clubhouse building, associated maintenance buildings, paved parking lots and the entry road. The Park District will utilize the site for a passive nature park for the Pickaway County community with a planned nature center and park offices. Many of the existing golf cart paths will be retained for public walking and nature observation. The 300 acres retained by AOA adjoins a 37-acre parcel across Highway 23 previously conserved by AOA, creating a 337-acre nature preserve.

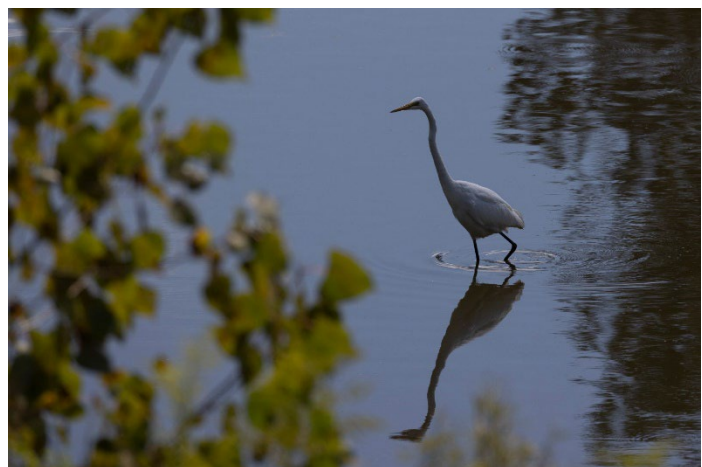


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In addition to the protection of the Scioto River and Walnut Creek and their riparian corridors, the former Cooks Creek Golf Club property has

substantial aquatic and upland natural resources worthy of conservation. The property contains over 100 acres of existing wetland and pond habitat, critical to migrating species. It also includes a significant portion of a large glacial esker (Circleville Esker) and geologic natural feature, integral to groundwater protection and supply. Large floodplains along the Scioto River and Walnut Creek offer opportunities for restoration of wetlands on the former fairways that were elevated during golf course construction.

The Cooks Creek property acquisition was undertaken with Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program monies administered by the Ohio Department of Environmental Protection and designated for protection and restoration of high-quality streams and wetlands in Ohio. City of Circleville and Montgomery County WPCLF loan projects sponsored this project. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources has provided funding through the H2Ohio Program to restore wetlands in the floodplains to help enhance water quality in the Scioto River.



The new preserve provides exceptional habitat for many species of breeding and migratory birds.

Travel paths such as the Scioto River Flyway Corridor are especially important for migrating neotropical birds and waterfowl. The site also provides excellent habitat for other migrating species such as bats and butterflies.

The former Cooks Creek property is a keystone parcel that will be a flagship AOA preserve along the Scioto River Flyway Corridor - a large landscape-scale conservation initiative undertaken by AOA in collaboration with numerous partners that focuses on riparian, wetland and watershed conservation along the Scioto River and its tributaries. Our efforts have so far led to the



protection of 37 properties within the Scioto River Flyway Corridor, including extensive stretches of the main stem as well as key tributaries such as the Big Darby.

While we are working on the entire river corridor, our efforts are necessarily focused on areas in Pickaway County that are still largely undeveloped, but most

threatened with rapid growth and escalating land prices. AOA continues working towards our goal of creating a continuous conservation corridor to protect water quality and create connected native wildlife habitats along the Scioto.