



Commissioner Paula Brooks • Commissioner Marilyn Brown • Commissioner John O'Grady
President

December 19, 2012

Director James Zehringer
Ohio DNR
2045 Morse Road, Building D
Columbus OH 43229-6693

Director Scott Nally
Ohio EPA
P.O. Box 1049
Columbus, OH 43216-1049

RE: Sawmill Wetlands Education Area

Dear Directors Zehringer and Nally:

We are writing to express our concern and opposition to the transfer of the Sawmill Wetlands Education Area.

It is our understanding that the State is planning to sell the 17 acre, publically-owned Sawmill Wetlands Area to a private developer in exchange for 43 acres of land next to the Olentangy River. Additionally, the soils on the Olentangy River property are not suitable for wetlands such as vernal pools.

High quality wetlands within Franklin County are rare due to development. Many times the wetlands in Franklin County that are impacted are replaced outside the county, and their benefits along with them. Wetlands provide many benefits free to our county. They provide habitat for hundreds of species of birds, mammals, amphibians, plants, and insects; store and slowly release thousands if not millions of gallons of stormwater that could otherwise overwhelm the sewer infrastructure; store carbon, improve property values; improve water quality; and provide great educational opportunities to our community.

The Sawmill Wetlands Education Area provides a unique feature in an area that has been heavily urbanized. Yet, these wetlands (technically vernal pools) provide habitat to the smallmouth salamander, several species of plants that are not common within Interstate 270, and as of yet, a type of midge that has not been documented elsewhere. This high quality wetland complex should be kept to benefit the public's use.

Franklin County has made significant investments in improving air quality, energy efficiency, land use, and water quality. The proposed transfer of the Sawmill Wetlands Area is counterproductive to public policy actions and negatively impacts our community, and ultimately the tax payers

While we support the restoration of the property along the Olentangy River, it should not occur at the expense of the high quality Sawmill Wetlands Education Area.

Sincerely,

Paula Brooks, President

Marilyn Brown

John O' Grady