

January 4, 2013

Mr. James Zehringer
Director, Ohio Department of Natural Resources
2045 Morse Road, Building D
Columbus, Ohio 43229

Dear Director Zehringer:

We understand that the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is seeking to divest the property known as the Sawmill State Wildlife Education Area (Sawmill Wetlands) in Franklin County in a way that is consistent with its mission of ensuring a balance between wise use and protection of our natural resources for the benefit of all. Our two organizations wish to assist DNR in this pursuit and are willing to invest in this property to enhance the benefits that the wetlands already provide.

Sawmill Wetlands is one of a limited number of wetlands remaining in Central Ohio and includes mature forested wetlands that are even more rare. Ranked Category 2, the wetlands at the property are one of the largest left in the county. Their importance is recognized by the Clean Water Act, which requires no net loss. The pools located within the wetlands are potentially amphibian breeding habitat and are known to have recently sustained a population of small-mouthed salamanders. Given their context within a highly developed area, their ecological value would be degraded if additional development occurs at the site.

Moreover, the property is a unique resource for the local community as a place to learn about and experience wetlands firsthand. Local residents have expressed strong interest in seeing the property preserved. They have demonstrated their commitment to this wildlife education area by assisting DNR in the stewardship of the property by picking up litter and monitoring activities there.

In the spirit of collaboration, our two organizations propose the following to DNR: The Columbus Recreation and Parks Department is prepared to assume permanent ownership of the property and would manage the property for the benefit of the people of Columbus. Nature Conservancy staff would assist by providing recommendations to protect and enhance the health of the wetlands. To help pay for initial improvements, the Conservancy is prepared to donate up to \$50,000 as a match for additional contributions from individuals, foundations and corporations wishing to help preserve this site.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with DNR to discuss our proposal and ways that we can help preserve this site. Many thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Alan D. McKnight
Columbus Recreation & Parks



Josh Knights
The Nature Conservancy in Ohio