

Wetland Restoration in the Great Black Swamp

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Wetland restoration is a key strategy for reducing nutrient loading and improving water quality in the Western Lake Erie Basin. Historically, most wetland restoration in northwest Ohio was focused on Lake Erie coastal areas. In recent years, the Black Swamp Conservancy has been at the forefront of demonstrating the importance and benefits of wetland restoration in the upper watersheds of the Western Lake Erie Basin. Our process involves strategic land acquisition and focused wetland restoration of marginal agricultural fields in key locations in the watershed. This talk will highlight our experience and lessons learned from implementing wetland restoration projects as part of the H2Ohio Initiative. We will discuss how we use the historical and hydrological context of the historic Great Black Swamp to guide our project selection to ensure habitat benefits as well as water quality benefits. We will also describe how our design process aims to maximize the nutrient capture and retention functions of wetlands and highlight how we are collaborating with scientists to monitor and evaluate the outcomes of our restoration efforts. With examples of both successful and challenging projects, we hope our talk will inspire and inform other practitioners interested in wetland restoration in a large-scale watershed context.

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