
Black Swamp Conservancy

Otsego School District Living Laboratory

Tontogany, Ohio



A former agricultural site is transformed into a living laboratory where students can experience and learn about a variety of local ecosystems and landscapes.

SERVICES

Design-build
Ecological Restoration

With funding from Ohio's H2Ohio Program, the Black Swamp Conservancy and the Otsego Local School District sought to transform 16 acres of former agricultural land into a living laboratory for elementary, middle, and high school students. The site, which was transferred to the Conservancy by its former owners, is bound on the northeast by the main branch of Tontogany Creek, which flows to the nearby Maumee River and ultimately Lake Erie.

In a design-build capacity, Biohabitats creating the living laboratory by restoring ecological function to the site. After surveying the site and performing an ecological assessment, Biohabitats and the project partners began the design process by hosting a design charrette where 7th grade students could learn about ecological restoration and contribute their ideas. The living laboratory will include restored wetlands and riparian habitats, a food forest, trails, new ways to access the creek, an amphitheater, and an area where Future Farmers of America will demonstrate sustainable agriculture practices.

In addition to providing students with hands-on educational opportunities, such as sampling fish and macroinvertebrates, exploring wetland, riparian, and meadow habitats, learning about the relationship between agriculture and ecology, and creating nature-inspired art, the lab will reduce runoff and sedimentation, increase nutrient uptake, and enhance wildlife habitat.