

THE HISTORY OF THE GREAT BLACK SWAMP

AND ITS EVOLUTION OVER TIME

H2Ohio



**Department of
Natural Resources**

Aerial view of Lakeside Daisy State Nature Preserve

During the last ice age, about 20,000 years ago, glaciers covered much of North America, including what is now northwestern Ohio. Melting glaciers left behind water which later formed the **Great Black Swamp**, a vast wetland that covered the region for thousands of years.



Glacial Grooves Geological Preserve on Kelleys Island

The Great Black Swamp provided resources, including food, shelter, and medicine, to various Native American tribes. In the late 1700s and early 1800s, European settlers began moving into the area, but the waterlogged

landscape made it difficult for them to access the fertile soil and abundant timber.

By the mid-1800s, settlers had begun draining the swamp using a system of ditches and canals. This allowed them to access the rich soil for farming and the timber for construction. However, the drainage also destroyed much of the natural habitat



Clay drainage tile

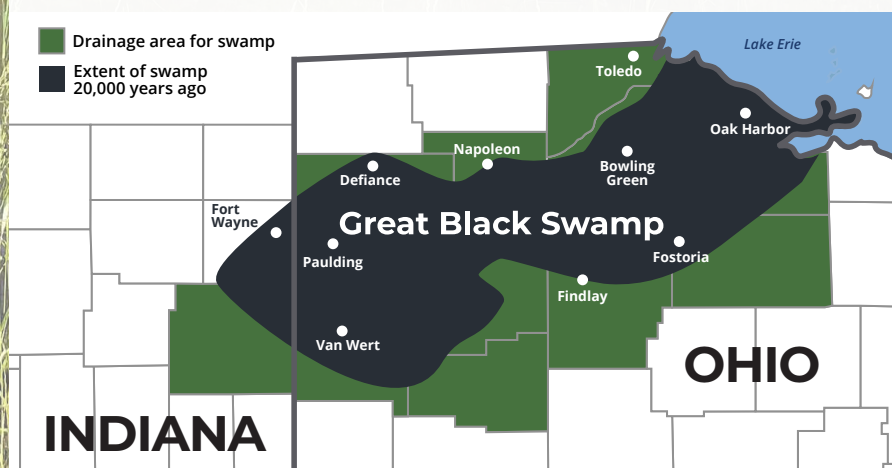
and ecosystem of the swamp, causing many plant and animal species to disappear from the area. It also had negative impacts on water quality and flooding downstream into Lake Erie.

While the Great Black Swamp can never be fully restored to its original state, efforts can still be made to restore and protect wetlands in Ohio and beyond. Wetlands play a critical role in filtering pollutants from water, reducing flood damage, providing habitat for wildlife, and storing carbon.

In recent years, there have been efforts to restore wetlands and improve water quality in Lake Erie. **H2Ohio** is **Governor Mike DeWine's** comprehensive, data-driven **water quality plan** to reduce harmful algal blooms, improve wastewater infrastructure, and prevent lead contamination.

H2Ohio has over 200 projects across the state to build and restore wetlands.

Learn more at h2.ohio.gov.



Discover Ohio's Natural Wonders

There are still a few places in Ohio where visitors can see similar features to the Great Black Swamp!

- **Magee Marsh Wildlife Area** is a 2,200-acre wetland area that provides habitat for a variety of bird species, including warblers and waterfowl. The area is located along the southern shore of Lake Erie and is an important stopover for migratory birds on their journey between their breeding and wintering grounds.
- **Goll Woods State Nature Preserve** is another area in Ohio where visitors can see what the region might have looked like before it was developed. The preserve includes a 321-acre forest of mature hardwood trees and is home to rare and endangered plant and animal species.
- **Forrest Woods / Forder Bridge Wetland Restoration** can be found within Forrest Woods Nature Preserve and is home to fine remnants of the historic Great Black Swamp. This site is 393 acres and home to 41 rare, threatened, and endangered species of flora and fauna.
- **East Harbor State Park** is situated on a peninsula stretching into the waters of Lake Erie. This park also lies on the edge of Ohio's prairie marsh zone, so these wetlands that you see are remnants of the Great Black Swamp. This area has an abundance of waterfowl and shorebirds.



For more information visit ohiodnr.gov.

How can I get involved?

The **H2Ohio Students Take Action program** allows middle and high school teachers and their students access to wetlands for real-world learning opportunities and career exploration. This program encourages students to "Take Action" and implement what they have learned to positively influence the watershed.

For more information and to sign up, please visit: h2.ohio.gov/studentstakeaction.

ACTIVITIES

Plant Natives

*ENV.GP.8, B.DI.3

Water Testing

*ENV.ER.3

Stream Quality Monitoring

*ENV.ER.3

Wildlife Survey

*ENV.ER.5

Stream, River and
Beach Clean-up

*ENV.ER.3

**correlates to Ohio Learning Standards*