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**For immediate release**

**Illustration Attached**

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*Ohio University to transfer Dysart Woods to Captina Conservancy*

BELMONT, Ohio (Dec. 21, 2022) - After 60 years of stewardship, Ohio University reached an agreement to transfer the Dysart Woods property in Belmont County to Captina Conservancy, a non-profit land trust based out of Belmont County, Ohio that promotes, preserves, and protects biodiversity, natural beauty, and environmental health of regional land and watersheds.

“The preservation of Dysart Woods has been at the forefront of our goals when looking at this property,” Ohio University President Hugh Sherman said. “We are grateful to partner with Captina Conservancy to ensure just that for this historic area of land.”

Dysart Woods is a 455-acre property known for being the largest known remnant of original forest vegetation in Southeastern Ohio, with 55 acres of old-growth forest and 400 acres of second-growth forest, old fields, and pasture. It has been designated a U.S. Department of the Interior National Natural Landmark.

“Dysart Woods is a national, natural historic landmark and has been recognized since the 1960s as a nationally significant natural resource,” Elizabeth Ewing, executive director of Captina Conservancy, said. “This area is one of the last remnants of this type of ecosystem in Appalachia, so protecting the old-growth forest is extremely important for us to be able to further learn from it.”

Captina Conservancy applied for and was awarded a \$400,000 Clean Ohio Green Space Grant, administered by the Ohio Public Works Commission, to purchase a portion of Dysart Woods from Ohio University for ongoing preservation and to maintain the old-growth forests.

Ohio University will donate 189 acres containing the old-growth forests to Captina Conservancy and then sell them 242 acres of the land, agreeing to donate 90% of the purchase price back to put into a fund designated for the care and maintenance of Dysart Woods by Captina Conservancy. The use of Clean Ohio funds requires that the 242 acres will now also have permanent deed restrictions, thereby ensuring its long-term protection.

Captina Conservancy's goal for Dysart Woods is to continue allowing for public access and use, improving the existing trail system and updating infrastructure such as bridges and trail signs in order to make the area more accessible. They are also looking at expanding the trail network, building a bird observation platform, and adding more signage. Part of their goal is to also improve the health of the woods by combatting invasive species and improving plant diversity within the area.

Although Ohio University no longer owns the property, the agreement with Captina Conservancy will allow Ohio University faculty and students to continue to do research on the land for scientific purposes and have access to the property for research. Over the years, the College of Arts and Sciences has done research on the property studying the environment and living organisms that call Dysart Woods home.

The agreement also requires that whoever owns the property complies with the deed restrictions that say the land can't be split up into smaller parcels, the land can't be built on and that trees and other living organisms within the area cannot be commercially harvested.

In the 1960s, The Nature Conservancy sold Dysart Woods to OHIO. Of the 455 acres sold, 189 of those acres that contain the old-growth woods, were restricted from any sort of development and are required to be maintained in a natural state or revert to The Nature Conservancy.

"Our goal is to maintain the long-term protection of Dysart Woods and we are proud to partner with Captina Conservancy to achieve that for this National Natural Landmark," said Terry Seidel, director of land protection for The Nature Conservancy.

The Nature Conservancy currently holds deed restrictions on the donated acres of land and will continue to hold those restrictions following the transfer to Captina Conservancy.

In addition to this transfer, Ohio University will separately sell an existing homestead of approximately 3-5 acres, as well as approximately 20 acres of tillable farmland, neither of which contain old-growth forests. The farm fields will be sold with restrictions against the use of development aside from agriculture or return to nature.