



December 18, 2024

**Preliminary Finding of No Significant Impact
To All Interested Citizens, Organizations, and Government Agencies**

**Muskingum County
Pidcock and Norwich Valley Water Main Extensions
Loan Number: FS390060-0051**

The attached Environmental Assessment (EA) is for a drinking water distribution project in Muskingum County which the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency intends to finance through its Water Supply Revolving Loan Account (WSRLA) below-market interest rate revolving loan program. The EA describes the project, its costs, and expected environmental benefits. We would appreciate receiving any comments you may have on the project. Making available this EA and seeking your comments fulfills Ohio EPA's environmental review and public notice requirements for this loan program.

Ohio EPA analyzes environmental effects of proposed projects as part of its WSRLA program review and approval process. We have concluded that the proposed project should not result in significant adverse environmental impacts. More information can be obtained by contacting the person named at the end of the attached EA.

Any comments on our preliminary determination should be sent to the email address of the contact named at the end of the EA. We will not act on this project for 30 calendar days from the date of this notice. In the absence of substantive comments during this period, our preliminary decision will become final. After that, Muskingum County can then proceed with its application for the WSRLA loan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathleen Courtright".

Kathleen Courtright, Assistant Chief
Division of Environmental & Financial Assistance

Attachment

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Identification

Project: Pidcock and Norwich Valley Water Main Extensions

Applicant: Muskingum County
401 Main Street
Zanesville, Ohio 43701

Loan Number: FS390060-0051

Project Summary

Muskingum County applied for financing from the Ohio Water Supply Revolving Loan Account (WSRLA) to fund the Pidcock and Norwich Valley Water Main Extensions project. This project is necessary to supply public water to areas with limited and, in some cases, unsafe sources of water. The estimated loan amount for this project is \$575,263, with construction scheduled to begin in early 2025 and last approximately 18 months.

History & Existing Conditions

The Muskingum County Water Department (MCWD) owns and operates a water treatment plant (WTP) and distribution system that serves approximately 9,000 homes and businesses over large portions of Muskingum County through a network of more than 300 miles of water lines, 13 storage tanks, and nine pump stations that surround the city of Zanesville. The county's WTP draws source water from county wells along the Muskingum River, near Duncan Falls, and can provide up to 4 million gallons per day (MGD); the WTP currently operates at about half capacity on an average day.

The project area is one of the last remaining residential areas within Union Township, Muskingum County, that is not served by public water. Residents in the project area primarily draw water from private wells and cisterns. Problems with the private water supplies in this area include acid mine waste contamination, iron staining, coliform bacteria contamination, and low-producing wells. As a result, these residents sometimes rely on unsafe sources such as springs and ponds, or they must pay for hauled water. Many of these residents have petitioned MCWD to resolve these problems by providing them with public water.

Population and Flow Projections

The 4-MGD WTP currently experiences a peak demand of 2.6 MGD. The proposed project is expected to serve 31 residential customers and have an average water demand of 4,650 gallons per day (GPD). MCWD projects the growth in its service areas to increase by approximately 5% in the 20-year planning period. At this level of growth, the MCWD water supply, treatment, and distribution system can adequately meet the present and future needs of the county.

Alternatives

Alternative 1. No-Action

Due to the above-described existing conditions for drinking water services within the project area, the No-Action alternative of continuing with the current situation would leave citizens with unsafe, limited, or expensive water sources, which is not a viable, long-term option.

Alternative 2. Connection to the City of Zanesville Water System

The City of Zanesville has adequate volume to supply the project area. However, a connection point to the project area is more distant, and the unit cost is higher, than with MCWD's system.

Alternative 4. Regionalization with Muskingum County Water District

MCWD's 4 MGD water plant and distribution system has more than enough capacity to serve the project area, has nearby water transmission lines, will result in minimal environmental impact, and will be a cost-effective solution as compared to new private well installation and having water commercially hauled.

Selected Alternative

Alternative 3 was selected (see figures 1 and 2) and will extend approximately 7,400 linear feet (LF) of 4-inch diameter high-pressure water distribution lines, 11,800 LF of 4-inch diameter low-pressure water distribution lines, valves, flush outs, and air releases to the project area. Most of the water lines will be open trenched, with various sections being directionally bored. The vast majority of the project will take place in previously disturbed road rights-of-way. The new water lines will be owned and maintained by MCWD. Those connecting to the system will receive a metered water bill from MCWD.

Implementation

The total estimated cost for the proposed project is \$825,263. MCWD is planning to utilize approximately \$250,000 in local American Rescue Plan Act funds for this project, leaving a balance of \$575,263. MCWD proposes to borrow this amount from the WSRLA and qualifies for a 0% interest rate for water regionalization. Borrowing at 0% will save MCWD approximately \$435,000 over the life of the loan compared to the current market rate of 4.14%.

Public Participation

MCWD has been petitioned to provide public water by many of the residents of the project area that are currently served by private water systems. As a result, the Board of Muskingum County Commissioners gave notice of its intent to file an application for financial assistance in a public meeting, and the project has been discussed in multiple board meetings that were open to the public. A public notice announcing the availability of this Environmental Assessment will be posted on Muskingum County and Ohio EPA Division of Environmental and Financial Assistance websites. The public notice for the Environmental Assessment will be open for a 30-day public comment period.

Thus, there have been adequate opportunities for information dissemination and public participation.

Environmental Impacts

The project has the potential to affect the following features, but the effects will be reduced or mitigated to acceptable levels as explained below.

Surface Water and Ground Water: The proposed project will not have significant adverse long-term impacts on surface water resources, as there will be no in-water work, and the majority of work will be performed within road rights-of-way and limited easements on private properties, in which the predominant cover is pavement, gravel, and lawn grass.

Minor, short-term impacts from the open-cut construction could occur. Excavation of trenches and pits could be prone to erosion and deposition if construction mitigation is not followed. Dewatering of ground water or surface water to enable work below grade may be necessary, but engineering controls are part of the specifications to minimize the impacts of discharging pumped water to a river or stream. Stormwater construction best management practices are part of the specifications.

Based on the above, the proposed project will not result in significant adverse impacts to surface waters.

Terrestrial Habitat and Endangered Species: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) indicates that the project is within the range of the federally endangered Indiana bat and northern long-eared bat, and state endangered little brown bat and tricolored bat. Trees within the project area are primarily small- to large-sized trees and scrubby brush, and no bat hibernaculum is present within 0.25 miles of the project. Tree removal will only be permitted to occur October 1 to March 31 or in coordination with USFWS, and tree removal is limited to only those trees necessary for completion of the project (e.g., trees within the excavation location or within the path of heavy equipment, etc.). Other mature trees are located outside of the work area and would provide alternative habitat. These tree clearing restrictions will further ensure that any potential impacts to these bat species are avoided.

The project is within the range of the sheepnose, fanshell, and snuffbox, all federally endangered mussels; rabbitsfoot, a federally threatened mussel; Ohio pigtoe, wartyback, long-solid, and sharp-ridged pocketbook, all state endangered mussels; salamander mussel, a state threatened mussel; northern madtom, a state endangered fish; American eel, mountain madtom, blue sucker, paddlefish, and channel darter, all state threatened fish; and eastern hellbender, a state endangered and federal species of concern salamander. As no in-water work will take place, the project will have no significant short-term or long-term adverse effect on aquatic species.

The project is within the range of the eastern spadefoot toad and the northern harrier, both state endangered species. However, due to the location of the project and the lack of appropriate habitat present, these species are not likely to be impacted.

Based on this information, the project will have no significant short-term or long-term adverse effect on terrestrial habitat or endangered species.

Air Quality, Dust, Noise and Odors: Muskingum County air quality meets standards for the six regulated air pollutants (carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, lead, particulate matter, and ozone). During construction, dust and vehicle exhaust will be insignificant sources of local air pollution. Dust due to excavation in dry weather will be controlled by good housekeeping measures (minimizing the area of disturbed soil, road sweeping, dust suppression with water or other benign dust suppressant). Because of its temporary nature and the use of emissions controls on motorized equipment, construction vehicle exhaust will be an insignificant pollution. Once the project is complete, the water mains will operate with no noise, dust, or odors.

Based on this information, the project should have no significant adverse short-term or long-term impacts on local air quality.

Safety and Traffic: Construction in road rights-of-way could cause temporary traffic disruption and potential threats to public safety. Contract documents require contractors to implement standard traffic controls to minimize traffic disruption and public safety risks. With these precautions, the project is unlikely to create significant traffic disturbance or threats to public safety.

Once construction is complete, road areas will be restored and returned to pre-construction conditions. The project will not permanently alter traffic patterns. Therefore, the project will have no long-term change or adverse impacts on safety and traffic.

Archaeological and Historical Resources: Based on the extensive pre-design review and historic structure avoidance that went into siting of the water line project, combined with proposed water line installation occurring primarily in previously-disturbed areas, and with the findings of the *Phase I Cultural Resource Management Survey for the Proposed Pidcock and Norwich Valley Waterline Extension in Highland and Union Townships, Muskingum County, Ohio* report, Ohio EPA has concluded that no features listed on, or eligible for listing on, the National Register of Historic Places will be adversely impacted by the proposed project.

Based on this information, Ohio EPA believes that, due to the extent of disturbance in the project area, unrecorded archaeological sites or properties eligible for listing or listed on the National Register of Historic Places are not likely to be present.

In the event that archaeological properties are found during construction, contractors and subcontractors are required under Ohio Revised Code Section 149.53 to notify the Ohio State Historic Preservation Office and Ohio EPA and to cooperate with those entities in archaeological and historic surveys and salvage efforts when appropriate.

Local Economy: Any debt for this project will be repaid from Muskingum County's Water Fund without rate increases based on this project. The median household income (MHI) of the project area is \$56,810. Under the water rates that are effective in 2024, the residential water bill, based on 4,500 gallons per month usage, will be \$30 per month, or \$360 per year, compared to the state average of \$477 for 4,000 gallons.

Residents will be responsible for paying the connection fees, per household, of \$500 if paid prior to the start of project construction, \$600 if paid during project construction, and \$1,000 if paid after project construction is completed, and are also responsible for constructing their own service laterals, which has an estimated cost of \$2,000. Residents will be responsible for paying \$65 for Zanesville-Muskingum County Health Department water inspections of their connections. Residents of this project area are neither required to connect to this public drinking water supply nor to abandon private wells if they connect to private water.

Unaffected Environmental Features: The installation and operation of the proposed project will have few indirect, development-related impacts. This is because the current and expected levels of population growth are low in the region as a whole, and because of geographic limitations to development within the project area. No state-designated scenic rivers or state-designated or federally designated wildlife areas are present in or near the work sites. No wetlands or floodplains are present. The project is not located in the Lake Erie coastal zone. No sole source aquifers are present under the project.

Conclusion

Based upon Ohio EPA's review of the planning information and the materials presented in this Environmental Assessment, we have concluded that there will be no significant adverse impacts from the proposed project as it relates to the environmental features discussed previously. This is because these features do not exist in the project area, the features exist but will not be adversely affected, or the impacts will be temporary and mitigated. It will have long-term benefits associated with the provision of a safe and adequate supply of potable water that is maintained according to the standards of the Safe Drinking Water Act to support the needs of residential customers and businesses throughout the project area.

Contact information

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Figure 1. General project area

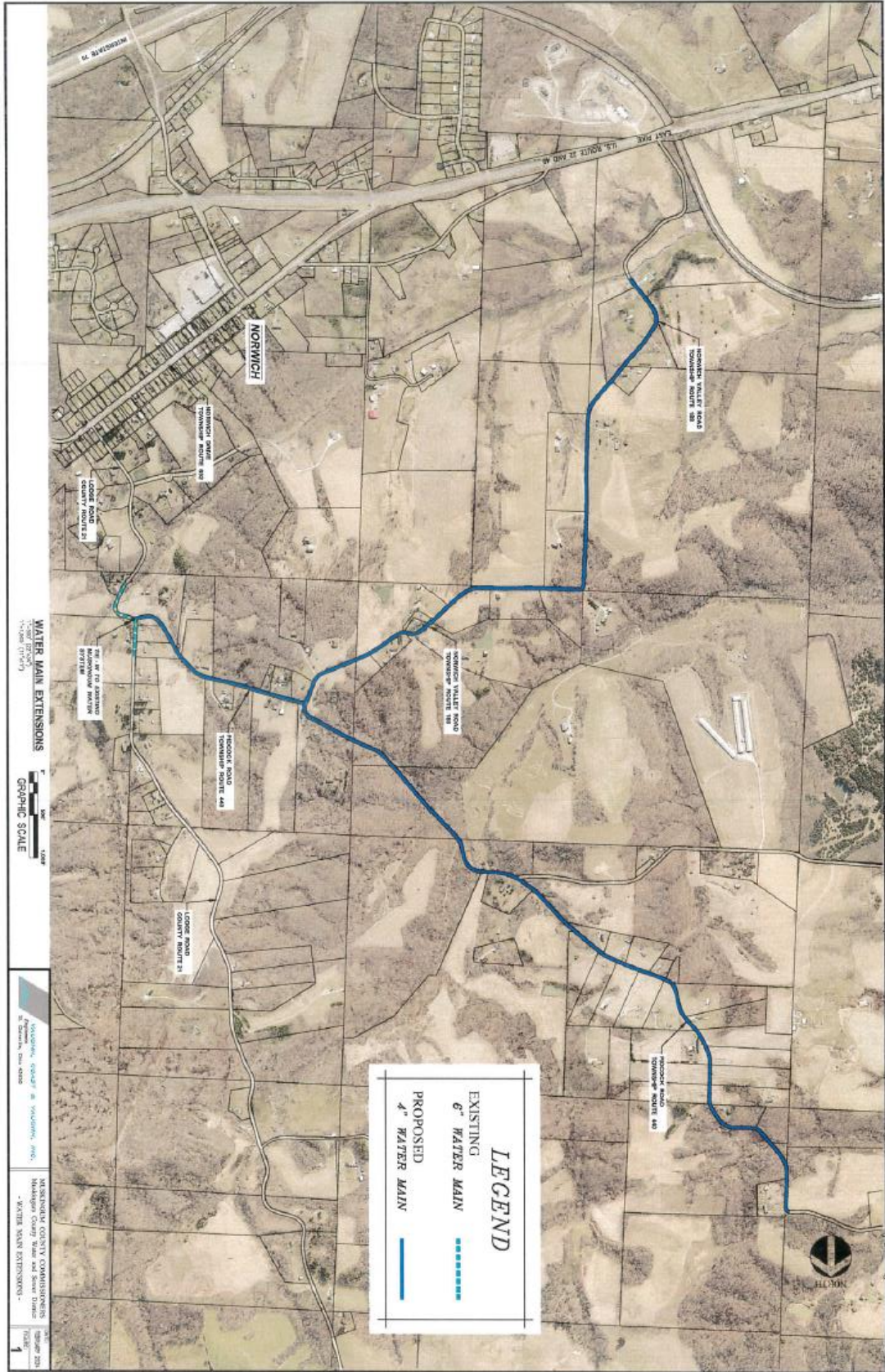


Figure 2. Project area