



September 18, 2023

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

**Muskingum County
Licking View Sanitary Sewer
Loan Number: CS390060-0043**

The attached Environmental Assessment (EA) is for a sewer infrastructure improvement project in Muskingum County which the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency intends to finance through its Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF) 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 WPCLF 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, the Muskingum County can then proceed with its application for the WPCLF 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: Licking View Sanitary Sewer

Applicant: Muskingum County
401 Main Street
Zanesville, Ohio 43701

Loan Number: CS390060-0043

Project Summary

Muskingum County has requested financial assistance from the Ohio Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF) for the Licking View Sanitary Sewer project. The project, which is a wastewater collection and conveyance project designed to regionalize sanitary sewer service and eliminate aged household sewage treatment systems, includes the installation of gravity sewers, force main sewers, and two wastewater lift stations. The estimated loan amount is \$4,330,708. The project is scheduled to begin construction in late 2023 and be completed in 24 months. Up to \$4,000,000 of WPCLF financing will be in the form of principal forgiveness, a loan that does not need to be repaid.

History & Existing Conditions

Licking View is an unincorporated community in Muskingum County that is located near the Licking River and the western border of Zanesville (see figures 1 and 2). The Licking View project area is primarily residential, with a limited number of businesses. Licking View's residences are closely spaced together, with lots typically less than 0.25 acres in size. Most homes are served by aged household sewage treatment systems (HSTS), which generally consist of a septic tank and leach field. The Zanesville-Muskingum County Health Department and Ohio EPA have received numerous complaints regarding failing HSTS in Licking View, including missing septic tank lids, overflowing septic tanks, and untreated wastewater in yards, streets, and roadside ditches.

Muskingum County owns and operates a sanitary sewer system along U.S. Route 40 (West Pike), which consists of a gravity sewer collection system, the West Pike sewage lift station, and 14-inch diameter sanitary sewer force main. The West Pike sewage lift station conveys sewage to the City of Zanesville wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) for treatment, and Licking View is located along the route of the existing force main.

The City of Zanesville constructed its WWTP in 1959 and has undergone several improvements through 2009. The current plant processes are screenings, grit removal, primarily clarification, trickling filters, aerated biological treatment, anaerobic digestion, chlorine disinfection, and a sludge dewatering process. This advanced secondary treatment facility is rated for 11 million gallons per day (MGD) treatment, a peak flow of 32 MGD, and has an average daily flow (ADF) of 7.5 MGD. Treated wastewater is discharged to the Muskingum River.

Population and Flow Projections

Muskingum County has purchased wastewater treatment capacity from the City of Zanesville and is permitted to convey 4 MGD to the city for treatment. The county currently has 2.15 MGD of its capacity available for future expansion of the county sewer system. This capacity is more than enough to accommodate the 0.067 MGD average daily flow of the proposed project.

Licking View encompasses a small area of 115 homes and is generally built out: without much room for population growth and development. Population growth in the project area is expected to be very low, and no proposed development is expected in the 20-year planning period.

Alternatives

Alternative 1. Improve or Replace Household Sewage Treatment Systems

Due to small lot sizes and high housing density in the project area, this alternative is not feasible.

Alternative 2. Low-Pressure Sewer System

This alternative includes installation of smaller diameter sewer lines with grinder pumps at each residence and a small diameter collection sewer. Licking View has many older homes with marginal electrical systems that would require expensive upgrades to accept a grinder pump. In the event of a large-scale power outage, the grinder pump systems would be rendered inoperable, and basements and yards would be susceptible to sewage backups. Grinder pumps also require extensive monitoring, maintenance, and replacement to ensure their functionality. This level of oversight would be staffing prohibitive for Muskingum County.

Alternative 1. Gravity Sewers, Sewer Lift Stations, and Sewer Force Main

This alternative would construct a gravity sewer system that would drain to two sanitary lift stations. Wastewater collected at the lift stations would be conveyed by sanitary force main to the existing, nearby force main, and conveyed to Zanesville's WWTP for treatment. This alternative will also require relatively shallow construction of gravity sewers due to the sloping topography of the area.

Selected Alternative

The selected alternative includes the installation of approximately 16,150 linear feet (LF) of gravity sanitary sewers, 480 LF of force main sewers, two sanitary lift stations, and two grinder pumps. Wastewater will be conveyed by force main to the existing West Pike force main, and to the Zanesville WWTP for treatment. The project also includes sewer laterals, manholes, catch basins, improvements to roadside ditches, sediment and erosion controls, and restoration activities. The vast majority of the project will take place in previously disturbed roads and rights-of-way. The project includes open cut and directional bores of roads, and culverts, and within easements on private properties. The new sewer lines will be owned and maintained by Muskingum County.

Implementation

The total estimated cost for the proposed project is \$4,330,708. Muskingum County will receive \$4,00,000 in WPCLF principal forgiveness, a loan which will not need to be repaid, leaving an estimated balance of \$330,708. Muskingum County proposes to borrow this amount from the WPCLF, and qualifies for a 20-year, zero-percent interest rate for regionalization projects. Borrowing \$330,708 at zero percent will save Muskingum County approximately \$237,000 for the 20-year loan period compared to borrowing the same amount at the current market rate of 3.95 percent.

Public Participation

Public sewer service has been requested from Muskingum County by many residents in the project area. As a result, the Board of Muskingum County Commissioners gave notice of its intent to file an application for financial assistance in multiple public meetings, and multiple letters have been sent to property owners within the project area regarding the proposed project, and to conduct income surveys. The project has also been reported in the local newspaper and television. 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 and directional boring could occur. Excavation of the 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.

A Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), which describes the measures that will be taken to prevent pollution caused by runoff into surface waters, is required, as is a frac-out contingency plan for horizontal drilling, which describes how inadvertent escapes of drilling slurry to the surface (known as “frac-outs”) will be managed.

All residents in the project area are connected to public drinking water.

Based on the above, the proposed project will not result in significant adverse impacts to surface or ground 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 street trees and scrubby brush, and other mature trees are located outside of the work area and would provide alternative habitat. 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.). 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 sheepsnose, 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; paddlefish, and channel darter, state threatened fish; and eastern hellbender, a state endangered and federal species of concern salamander. No stream crossings or in-water work will take place as part of this project. All directional drilling methods to install sewer lines will adhere to the SWPPP and frac-out contingency plan to minimize potential impacts to these 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 source compared to background sources of motorized vehicle exhaust in the greater project area. Work will be restricted to weekdays from 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM. Once the project is complete, the water line extensions 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 will 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. For example, contractors are required to cover or close trenches overnight, maintain access for emergency vehicles at all times, and utilize traffic direction devices such as flaggers, cones, and barricades. With these precautions, the project is unlikely to create significant traffic disturbance or threats to public safety.

Once construction is complete, the project 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 the routing of the sanitary sewer project, combined with proposed sewer installation occurring primarily in previously-disturbed areas, and through the completion of the "*Phase I Cultural Resource Management Survey for the Proposed Licking View Sewer Line in the City of Zanesville, Muskingum County, Ohio*," 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.

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: Debt for this project will be repaid from Muskingum County's sewer rates without rate increases based on this project. The median household income (MHI) of the project area is \$48,350. Under the sewer rates that are effective in 2023, the average residential sewer bill is expected to be \$48.50 per month, or \$582 per year, based on 4,500 gallons per month usage. This annual sewer bill represents 1.2 percent of the MHI, which is equal to the state average of 1.2 percent.

Residents will be responsible for paying for installation of sewer laterals, decommissioning of existing HSTS, and inspections, which is estimated to be \$3,000-\$5,000. Residents are also responsible for a tap fee of \$4,850 and a \$75 inspection fee.

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 (e.g., the project area is largely built out). No state-designated scenic rivers or state-designated or federally designated wildlife areas are present in or near the work sites. The project is not located in the Lake Erie coastal zone. No sole source aquifers are present under the project, and no Prime farmland will be impacted.

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. Once implemented, the project will provide a cost-effective way to address aged and failing HSTS, thereby eliminating threats to human health and the environment related to discharges of untreated wastewater. Also, by using WPCLF financing, Muskingum County has minimized the project cost.

Contact information

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Figure 1: General Project Area

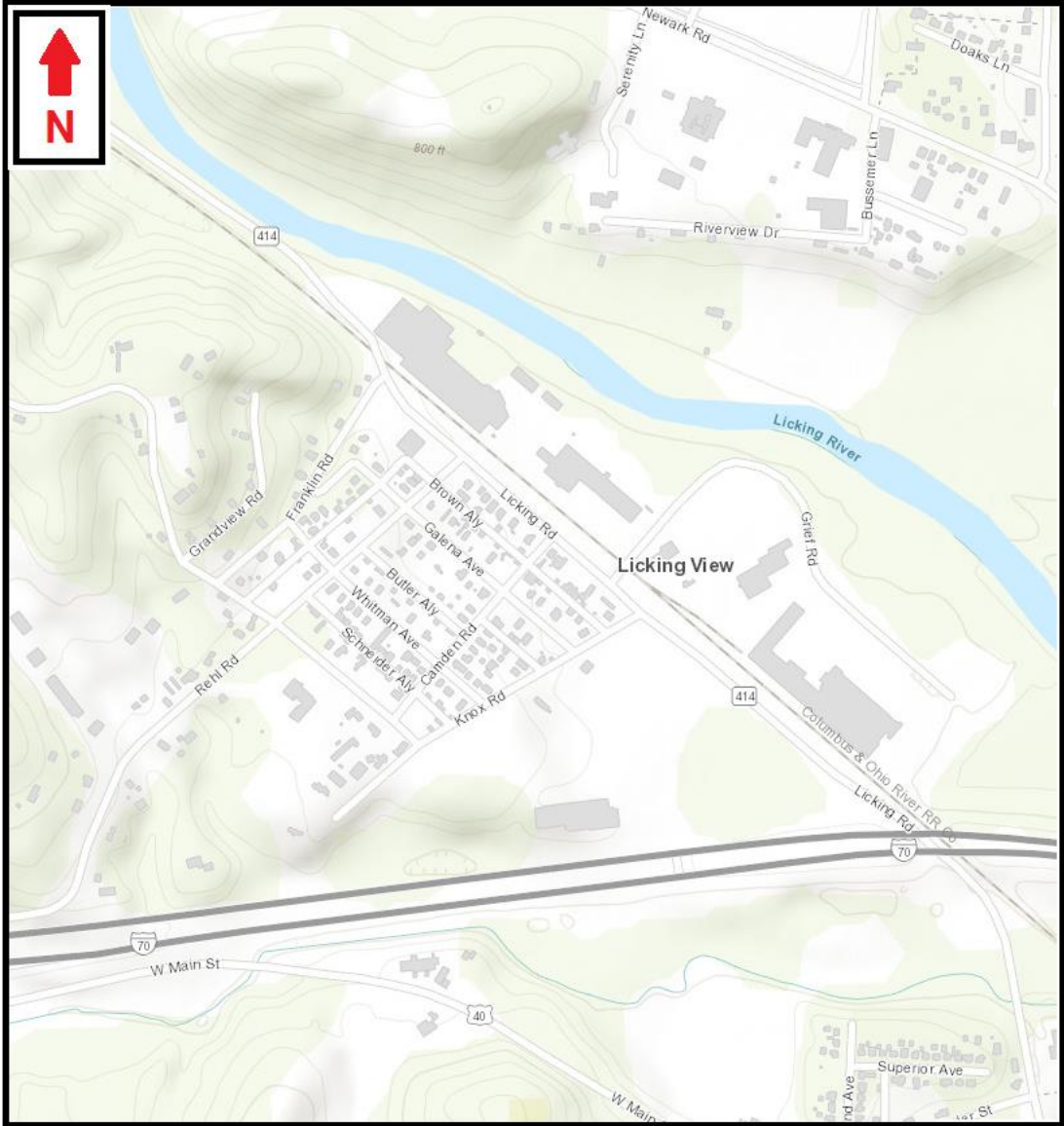


Figure 1: Specific Project Area