



Mike DeWine, Governor
Jon Husted, Lt. Governor
Laurie A. Stevenson, Director

August 16, 2019

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

**City of Nelsonville – Athens County
Nelsonville Regional Collection System
Loan Number: CS390649-0017**

The attached Environmental Assessment (EA) is for a sewer infrastructure improvement project in Nelsonville, 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, as stated in the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) 3745-150-06.

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 me at the letterhead address. 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 City of Nelsonville can then proceed with its application for the WPCLF loan.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Bernstein, Assistant Chief
Division of Environmental & Financial Assistance

Attachment

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Identification

Project: Nelsonville - Regional Collection System

Applicant: Charles Barga, City Manager
Nelsonville City Hall
211 Lake Hope Drive
Nelsonville, OH 45764

Loan Number: CS390649-0017

Project Summary

The City of Nelsonville has requested financial assistance from the Ohio Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF) to make improvements to the City's sanitary sewer collection system to support the regionalization of unsewered areas in the surrounding communities of Buchtel, Murray City and Carbon Hill. Improvements to the collection system will include installation of a force main that will convey sanitary waste to the future site of the new waste water treatment plant (WWTP). The project consists of replacing a pump station, making improvements to a pump station, and installation of a new pump station, gravity sewers and force main.

Nelsonville qualifies for a WPCLF principal forgiveness loan in the amount of \$3,000,000. This loan will not be repaid. Nelsonville will borrow an additional \$260,000 from the WPCLF program to fund the project.

Construction will occur in the footprint of two existing and one proposed pump stations, at the site of the existing WWTP and involve trenching along roads and in residential lawns in areas where gravity sewers and a force main will be installed.

History & Existing Conditions

Nelsonville is surrounded by several small unsewered communities that utilize household sewage treatment systems (HSTS) to collect and treat sanitary waste. Many of these on-lot treatment systems are failing due to age or are improperly sized. The City of Nelsonville has committed to accepting and treating sanitary waste from these surrounding communities. The city plans to build a new regional WWTP on Elm Rock Road (as part of a separate construction project expected to begin in 2020) that will have the increased capacity to treat waste from Nelsonville and surrounding areas. The Village of Murray City and unincorporated area of Carbon Hill are currently being sewered with WPCLF funds under on-going construction projects.

Population and Flow Projections

Population changes in Nelsonville and the surrounding communities from 2000 to 2010 were used to project populations trends until 2050. Overall, the populations in these communities were predicted to state the same or slightly decrease. These trends were considered during the design stages of Nelsonville's new WWTP and it will have the capacity to treat additional waste from these surrounding communities.

Alternatives

Doing nothing is not an acceptable alternative because it would allow undersized and deteriorated home septic systems to continue to operate improperly which could contribute to surface water contamination and potentially create a public health threat. Residents could replace their individual on-lot systems, but this option is very costly and many customers may not be able to afford it.

Selected Alternative

Considering the need for reliable sanitary collection and treatment services in the area and considering the benefits of utility regionalization, it is more cost effective for communities surrounding Nelsonville to send their sanitary waste to a regional WWTP rather than replacing individual household treatment systems. The new WWTP will be designed for regionalization and have the additional treatment capacity to accept sanitary waste from surrounding areas.

Implementation

The project includes (see Figures 1-7 below):

- Rehabilitation of the Buchtel lift station
- Replacement of the Back Street lift station in Nelsonville
- Installation of a new pump station at the site of Nelsonville's existing WWTP
- Replacement of the trunk (large gravity) sewer along Chestnut Street in Nelsonville
- Installation of new residential gravity sewers in the areas near Carbon-Hill Buchtel Road and Burr Oak Boulevard
- Installation of a new force main along E. Canal/Old US 33 road from the site of the existing WWTP to the site of the future WWTP

Figure 1 – Back Street lift station (red box) in Nelsonville

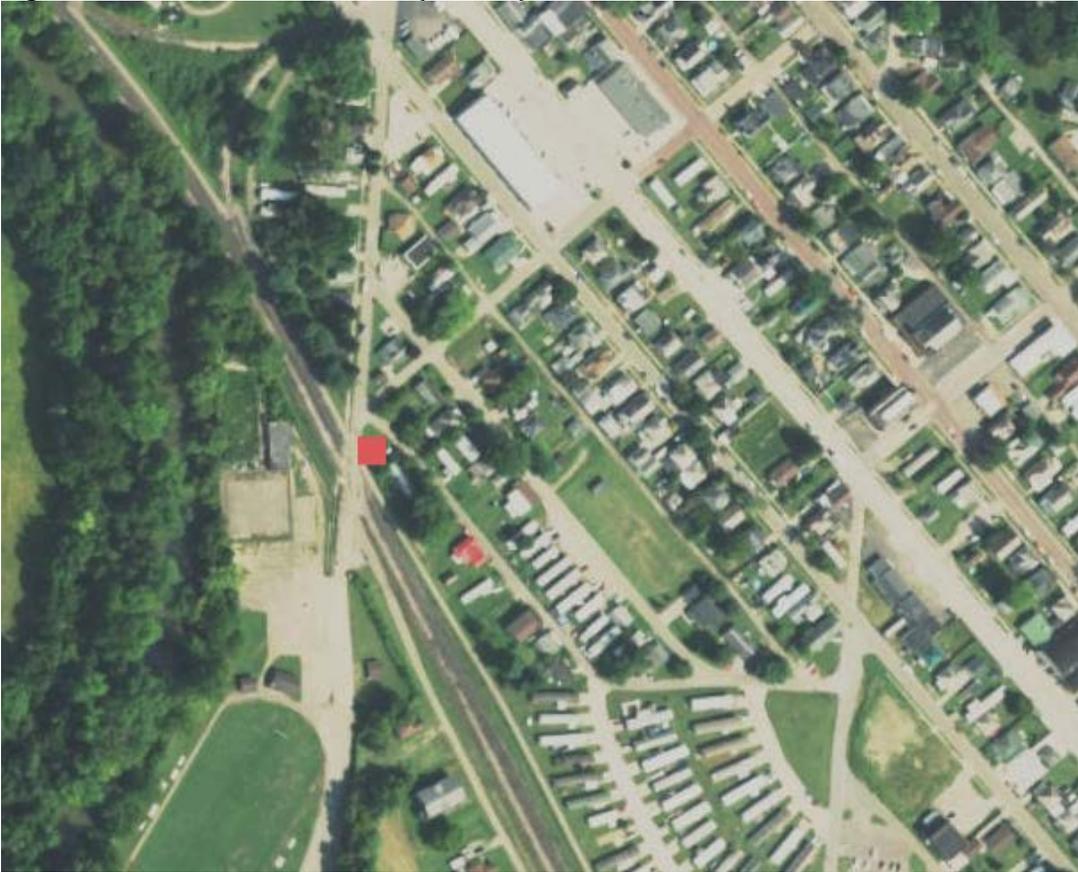


Figure 2 – Proposed gravity sewer (red line) location along Burr Oak Boulevard



Figure 3 – Proposed gravity sewer along Carbon Hill Buchtel Road and Buchtel lift station (red box)



Figure 4 – Proposed gravity sewer (blue line) along Chestnut Street in Nelsonville



Figure 5 – Proposed lift station (yellow circle) and force main (yellow line) in Nelsonville



Figure 6 – Proposed force main (yellow line) along E. Canal /Old US 33 to site of new WWTP



Figure 7 – locations of the existing WWTP (red pin) and future site of new WWTP (yellow pin) along E. Canal/Old US 33



Nelsonville anticipates the project will cost \$4,719,500. The project is eligible for \$3,000,000 in WPCLF principal forgiveness funds that will not be repaid. Nelsonville will also borrow \$260,000 from the WPCLF program at the disadvantaged community interest rate of 0%. During the 30-year loan period, Nelsonville will save approximately \$125,522 by borrowing WPCLF dollars at this rate, compared to the market rate of 2.79%.

Nelsonville is also receiving \$950,000 from the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE) and \$750,000 from the Ohio Development Services Agency (ODSA) under the Residential Public Infrastructure Program (RPIG).

Based on a loan award date of September 2019, the project is expected to commence in October 2019 and be completed by August 2020.

Public Participation

This project has been discussed at several Nelsonville city council meetings which are open to the public. The project was detailed in a December 5, 2018 online article in The Athens News and in an Ohio EPA News Release on May 25, 2018. Public meetings regarding the project were also held on June 24 and July 8 in 2019.

As part of its State Environmental Review Process, Ohio EPA will post this Environmental Assessment (EA) to the Division of Environmental and Financial Assistance (DEFA) web page located at:

<http://epa.ohio.gov/defa/ofa.aspx#169638769-wpclf-documents-for-review-and-comment>. The public notice for the EA will be open for 30 days to allow for public comment. Ohio EPA is unaware of any public opposition to this project.

Environmental Impacts

This project is designed to provide sewer service to areas previously served by aging and undersized on-lot systems. Installation of the gravity sewers and new force main will primarily occur in narrow trenches within or adjacent to the road right-of-way. Construction for the three list stations will occur in the existing footprint for two and at the existing WWTP for one.

No coastal zones, state-designated scenic rivers or state- or federally-designated wildlife areas are present in or near the project area. No farmland losses are expected from this project. It will have no impact on ground water resources since the work will primarily occur in shallow trenches approximately 5-feet deep. The proper floodplain development permit was obtained for this project from the local floodplain administrator.

Air Quality: There are no new permanent air contaminant sources being installed as part of this project. There will be short-term increases in dust and exhaust emissions from heavy equipment operations and construction activities which will be controlled with best management practices. For these reasons, the project should have no significant short or long-term adverse impacts on the local air quality.

Archaeological and Historical Resources: The Hocking Valley Railway Historic District is within the project area. The State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) determined there are no features or ruins of features of the railway in the project construction area. The City of Nelsonville has committed to restoring any brick paving disturbed on Chestnut Street using existing bricks. Based on these considerations, SHPO determined the project will not have an adverse effect on the historic district.

Ohio EPA has determined that the project will not cause any significant adverse effect to archaeological or historical resources (properties listed or eligible for the listing in the National Register of Historic Places). In the event of any archaeological find, Ohio Revised Code Section 149.53 requires contractors and subcontractors to notify the SHPO of any archaeological discoveries in the project area, and to cooperate with the SHPO on archaeological and historic surveys and in salvage efforts when appropriate.

Endangered Species and Aquatic and Terrestrial Habitats: The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) indicated that the endangered **Indiana bat** and threatened **northern long-eared bat** can be found in the project area. Tree clearing will only be done if necessary and only between October

1 and March 31 to protect sensitive bat species.

There is no suitable habitat for the following threatened, endangered or species of concern along paved roads and rights-of-way: **bald eagle, northern monkshood, timber rattlesnake, American burying beetle, running buffalo cover, and small whorled pogonia.**

Surface Water and Wetlands: Construction will not have significant adverse long-term impacts on surface water resources as there will be no in-water work and no wetlands are present in the project area. Work will be performed predominately in paved roads and lawn grass. Erosion and sedimentation impacts from construction are unlikely because contractors will use standard controls to minimize the potential for excavated soil to enter surface water or stormwater conveyances.

Dust, Noise, Odors, Safety and Traffic: Construction noise will be audible but insignificant compared to normal vehicle traffic and only during daytime hours. Public safety will be ensured by proper traffic management in the construction area and by covering or filling trench excavations at the end of each workday. Local aesthetics will be unchanged after construction and restoration are complete; road surfaces will be repaved, and the off-road easement will be planted with grass.

Local Economy: This project will have no impact on existing customers' sewer rates. New customers will pay a fixed monthly sewer rate that varies depending on whether they are in or outside of the Nelsonville city limits.

Conclusion

Based on the review of general planning, design, and other information for this project, Ohio EPA concludes that no significant short-term or long-term adverse direct environmental impacts will result from the project as related to the environmental features discussed in this Environmental Assessment. This is because these features do not exist in the project area, the features exist but will not be adversely affected, or the impacts of construction will be temporary and mitigated.

The project equally serves the entire project area and no segment of the community will be faced with additional adverse impacts or be deprived of environmental benefits, compared to any other segment.

For these reasons, this project, alone or in combination with other projects, is not expected to result in any significant indirect or cumulative short-term or long-term adverse environmental impacts.

Ohio EPA expects the economic impact of the project on the average user to be acceptable because it replaces failing and undersized HSTS with reliable public sewer service.

Contact

Lesley A. Jenkins
Ohio EPA – DEFA-OFA
P.O. Box 1049
Columbus, OH 43216-1049
(614)644-3667
Lesley.Jenkins@epa.ohio.gov

