



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

February 2, 2022

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

**City of Lancaster – Fairfield County
Upper Hocking Water Pollution Control Facility Expansion
Loan Number: CS390504-0028**

The attached Environmental Assessment (EA) is for a water pollution control facility expansion project in Lancaster 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 City of Lancaster can then proceed with its application for the WPCLF loan.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Courtright

Kathleen Courtright, Assistant Chief
Division of Environmental & Financial Assistance

Attachment

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Identification

Project Name: Upper Hocking Water Pollution Control Facility Expansion

Applicant: City of Lancaster
121 E. Chestnut Street, Suite 100
Lancaster, OH 43130

Loan Number: CS390504-0028

Project Summary

The City of Lancaster in Fairfield County has requested \$31,948,585 from the Ohio Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF) to expand the Upper Hocking Water Pollution Control Facility (UHWPCF) to accommodate potential growth and development near the U.S. 33 Bypass Corridor located on the northwest side of Lancaster. The UHWPCF expansion will consist of expanding the facility's average daily flow of 2.0 million gallons per day (MGD) to an average daily flow of 4.0 MGD. Construction for this project will occur within the footprint of the existing water pollution control facility, therefore limiting impacts to environmental features.

History and Existing Conditions

The original sewer system that serves the central part of Lancaster is combined and as the community grew and expanded outward, separate sanitary sewers were constructed for the new areas of development but were routed through the combined system to the wastewater treatment facility.

The original Upper Hocking Water Pollution Control Facility was constructed in 2011 to treat the separated systems of the new and potential growth areas along the Route 33 corridor and limit the amount of separated flow entering the combined system in the central part of the city. The UHWPCF provides secondary treatment using vertical loop reactors in an extended aeration activated sludge process followed by membrane technology for solids separation.

The facility is designed for 2.0 MGD average flow and can operate at a peak hourly flow rate of 8.0 MGD. It is designed to intercept flows from several existing separate sanitary sewer areas before they enter the combined sewer system. The facility is also able to accept flows from new development in the U.S. Route 33 Corridor. Effluent from the UHWPCF discharges to the Hocking River in accordance with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit issued by Ohio EPA.

Recently the city has been approached by several potential industrial users about moving into the UHWPCF service area. Due to the limited available capacity and service area development pressures, the city has decided to expand and improve the UHWPCF.

In 2020, the average daily flow to the UHWPCF was 1.6 MGD, which is nearing the 2.0 MGD design capacity of the treatment plant. Lancaster is proposing to increase the capacity of the facility from 2.0 MGD to 4.0 MGD and peak hourly flow rate from 8.0 MGD to 14.0 MGD to handle growth in the service area.

Alternatives

Two alternatives are available to address the existing and future conditions described above:

- 1) *Do nothing*: The city has the option to leave the current UHWPCF operating under its current capacity. However, this will leave the treatment facility unable to support the planned industrial growth within its service area.
- 2) *Expand the Upper Hocking Water Pollution Control Facility*: To accommodate the planned industrial growth, Lancaster can expand the existing facility so it can accept and treat a larger quantity of average daily flow.
 - In addition, two alternative approaches were considered regarding the facility's proposed expansion:
 - The first approach is to pursue an increase in the mass loadings that the plant is permitted to discharge to the Hocking River. If this option is selected, the expanded facility will be designed to reflect this selection and will utilize best available demonstrated control technology.
 - The second approach is to maintain the existing pollutant discharge limits. Since the facility's average daily flow will double under the expansion, that equates to halving the current pollutant concentrations.

Selected Alternative

The city has decided to expand the existing Upper Hocking Water Pollution Control Facility and is requesting permit limitations to allow for an increase in the average daily design flow from 2.0 MGD up to 4.0 MGD.

The facility expansion includes additions to the influent fine screening, oxidation ditches, membrane bioreactors (MBRs), ultraviolet (UV) disinfection, sludge reduction system, sludge storage tanks, and centrifuges for sludge dewatering. A flow splitter will be added between the influent fine screens and the oxidation ditches to ensure an even split of flow to the existing and new oxidation ditches. Dewatered solids will continue to be landfilled.

Additionally, Lancaster decided to seek an increase in the mass loadings discharged to the river through the anti-degradation process.

The construction footprint for this project will remain within the confines of the existing wastewater treatment plant, thereby minimizing effects on environmental resources. The contractor is responsible for best management practices to control erosion and sedimentation and minimize the creation of dust during construction.

Maps of the project location are provided in the exhibits below.

Implementation

Project Costs

Lancaster plans to borrow \$31,948,585 from the WPCLF to finance the project. During the 20-year loan period Lancaster will save approximately \$4,419,544 by using WPCLF dollars at the standard rate of 0.61%, compared to the market rate of 1.86%.

Project Schedule

The anticipated loan award will occur in March 2022 and construction is expected to begin after financial assistance is awarded and be completed by 2024.

Public Participation

Information regarding Lancaster's Upper Hocking Water Pollution Control Facility is available on the City of Lancaster's webpage under the department of Water Pollution Control. An Ohio EPA Public Notice for Permit Modification is available on this website as well. Ohio EPA is unaware of any public opposition to the project.

Ohio EPA will make a copy of this document available to the public on its web page: <https://epa.ohio.gov/divisions-and-offices/environmental-financial-assistance/announcements> and will provide it upon request to interested parties. Information supporting this Environmental Assessment (EA) is available from the project contact named below.

Environmental Impacts

Construction of this project could affect environmental features, but the effects will be reduced or mitigated to acceptable levels as explained below.

Construction will occur in previously disturbed areas within the existing water pollution control facility. No change to land use or topography will occur.

Air Quality

Fairfield County is in attainment for all regulated criteria air pollutants. The contractor will prevent unnecessary dust from construction activities from entering the atmosphere. Dust on unsurfaced streets or parking areas and any remaining dust on surfaced streets shall be controlled with water as needed. Because of this approach, there will be no significant adverse short-term or long-term impacts on local air quality.

Archaeological and Historical Resources

The planned area of construction has been previously developed and all excavation work will take place within the confines of the existing treatment plant. As no new excavations will occur, no impacts are expected to archaeological or historical resources.

In the event of archaeological finds during construction, Ohio Revised Code Section 149.53 requires contractors and subcontractors to notify the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) of any archaeological discoveries in the project area, and to cooperate with SHPO in archaeological and historic surveys and salvage efforts when appropriate. Work will not resume until a survey of the find and a determination of its value and effect has been made, and Ohio EPA authorizes work to continue.

Terrestrial Habitat and Endangered Species

Four federally listed species occur in Fairfield County: the endangered Indiana bat, the endangered running buffalo clover, the threatened northern long-eared bat, and the threatened eastern massasauga.

The area of disturbance during construction is limited to the existing facility. No habitat suited to the species listed above is in the project area. Based on this information, the project will have no significant adverse short-term or long-term effect on terrestrial habitat or endangered species.

Farmland Protection

Based on the review of the project planning and design, the project will not remove or change the use of prime farmland, so no farmland losses are expected as a result of this project.

Floodplains

According to project planning and design, no construction is scheduled to occur within designated flood hazard zones.

Ground Water Resources

To avoid adverse impacts to ground water resources, the construction contract includes specifications for appropriate and safe dewatering of deep excavations and management of ground water.

Safety, Noise, Traffic, and Aesthetics

Construction for this project will be confined to the footprint of the existing wastewater treatment facility. Therefore, construction work will not impact public traffic. Local aesthetics will be unchanged after construction is complete. For these reasons, the project will not adversely affect noise, traffic, public safety, or aesthetics.

Surface Water Resources

An Ohio EPA General Storm Water NPDES Permit for Construction Activities will be obtained and the contractor will minimize soil from eroding or otherwise entering onto all paved areas and into natural watercourses, ditches, and public sewer systems. Designated Wild and Scenic Rivers will be unaffected by this project as there are none located within the project's vicinity.

Wetlands

According to a review of project planning and design and the Ohio Wetlands Inventory, this project will contain no in-wetland work and therefore will have no impacts on wetland areas.

Energy Use

Through utilizing the existing wastewater treatment system in place and best available demonstrated control technology for the expanded components of the wastewater treatment facility, this project will have little effect on local regional energy supplies.

Local Economy

Lancaster has minimized project costs by obtaining a low-interest loan through the WPCLF. This allows a lower annual sewer bill for customers than otherwise would be possible. The projected residential sewer bills with the implementation of this project will be approximately \$620/year. This is approximately 1.5% of the median household income (MHI) of Lancaster, which is \$41,881.

Conclusion

Based upon the available facilities plans, detail plans, 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.

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 on the quality of the human environment or on sensitive resources.

The project will provide additional wastewater treatment capacity to the U.S. 33 Bypass Corridor to allow for industrial growth and development in Lancaster while simultaneously protecting human health and the environment.

Contact information

Kristin Parrish
Ohio EPA-DEFA
P.O. Box 1049
Columbus, OH 43216-1049
kristin.parrish@epa.ohio.gov

Exhibit 1: Project location map



Exhibit 2: Project location map

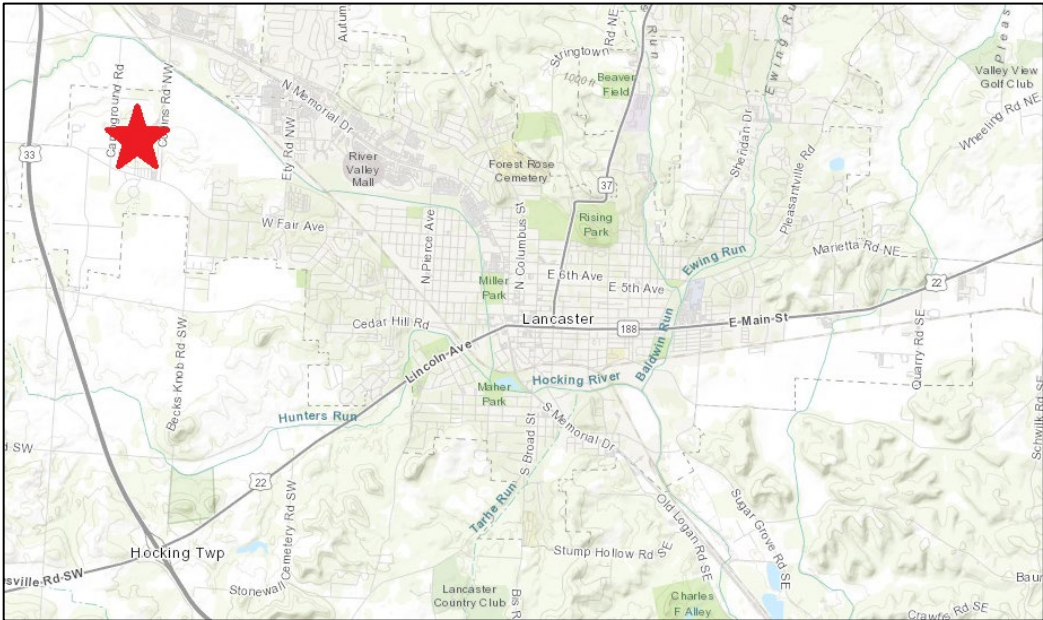


Exhibit 3: Project location map

