



John R. Kasich, Governor
Mary Taylor, Lt. Governor
Craig W. Butler, Director

July 5, 2018

Notice of Issuance of a Limited Environmental Review and Final
Finding of No Significant Impact to All Interested Citizens,
Organizations, and Government Agencies

City of Port Clinton
Coastal Wetlands Restoration
WR390768-0011

The purpose of this notice is to advise the public that Ohio EPA has reviewed the above referenced project and finds that neither an Environmental Assessment (EA) nor a Supplemental Study (SS) is required to complete the environmental review of the project. Instead, this project meets the criteria for a Limited Environmental Review (LER). These criteria are summarized below in this document and in the attached LER.

The proposed project is to restore and preserve in perpetuity the city-owned approximately 12.2-acre coastal wetland/beach complex and approximately 1.4 acres of adjacent upland.

The LER that was completed for this project found that it will not individually, cumulatively over time, or in conjunction with other Federal, State, local, or private actions have a significant adverse effect on the quality of the human environment. Consequently, a Finding of No Significant Impact can be issued now for this project.

The Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF) program requires the inclusion of environmental factors in the decision-making process for project approval. Ohio EPA has done this by incorporating a detailed analysis of the environmental effects of the proposed action in its review and approval process. Environmental information was developed as part of the facilities planning process. A subsequent review by this Agency has found that the proposed action does not require the preparation of an EA or an SS.

Our environmental review concluded that because the proposed project is limited in scope and meets all applicable criteria, a Limited Environmental Review is warranted. Specifically, the project constitutes protection of existing high quality aquatic resources. Furthermore, the proposed project:

- has no significant environmental effect;
- does not require extensive specific impact mitigation;
- has no effect on high value environmental resources;
- is cost effective;
- is not a controversial action;
- does not create a new, or relocate an existing discharge to surface or ground waters;
- will not result in substantial increases in the volume of discharge or the loading of pollutants from an existing source or from new facilities to receiving waters; and
- will not provide capacity to serve a population substantially greater than the existing population.

A map depicting the location of the project is included as part of the LER. The LER presents information on the proposed project, its costs, and the basis for our decision. Further information can be obtained by calling or writing the contact person listed on the back of the LER.

Upon issuance of this determination, a loan award may proceed without being subject to further environmental review or public comment, unless information is provided which determines that environmental conditions for the proposed project have changed significantly.

Sincerely,



Jerry Rouch, Assistant Chief
Division of Environmental & Financial Assistance

JR/LMM

Attachment

LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

July 5, 2018

A. PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

1. **Project Name:** Port Clinton Coastal Wetlands Restoration
 2. **Project Sponsor:** Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District
Westerly Storage Tunnel CSO
 3. **Project Implementer:** U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Buffalo District
1776 Niagara Street
Buffalo, N.Y. 14127
 4. **Owner:** Mayor Hugh Wheeler
City of Port Clinton
1868 East Perry Street
Port Clinton, OH 43452
- WRRSP No.:** WR390768-0011

B. PROJECT SUMMARY

The City of Port Clinton, in Ottawa County, is partnering with the Black Swamp Conservancy to restore and preserve in perpetuity the city-owned approximately 12.2-acre coastal wetland/beach complex and approximately 1.4 acres of adjacent upland. The property includes two emergent, semi-permanently flooded coastal wetlands totaling 4.6 acres with low-quality habitat for wildlife species, particularly for migrating birds, primarily because of the dominance of invasive plant species. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Buffalo District will implement the restoration. The Black Swamp Conservancy holds a conservation easement over the entire preserve, requiring that the land be permanently maintained as a nature preserve. Port Clinton and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will cooperate in maintaining the preservation area after restoration.

The project goal is to improve wetland quality by removal and control of invasive species and establishment of a variety of native wetland and wetland fringe species.

Figure 3 Project Location Aerial Showing Wetland 1 (left) and Wetland 2 (right)



C. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND DESCRIPTION

The project site lies within what was once known as the Great Black Swamp, which was historically covered with wet prairies, forests and shallow lakes, and was characterized by very poor drainage. This changed as the wetland was gradually drained and settled in the second half of the 19th century. Soils in the greater project area are very fine-grained, and hydric soils (developed in conditions of poor drainage and typically found in wetlands) dominate the project area.

Port Clinton lies on the southern shore of Lake Erie, approximately 33 miles southeast of Toledo, Ohio and 65 miles west of Cleveland. The project site resides on portions of the City Beach/Lakefront Preserve/Waterworks Park complex, which is located along a 0.8-mile stretch of waterfront. The proposed coastal wetland restoration and expansion project site lies just east of the Port Clinton Harbor and Federal navigation channel where the Portage River empties into Lake Erie and stretches east to Oak Street. The southern boundary of the site is East Perry Street, Port Clinton.

Historically, the wetlands within the project area supported several now rare in Ohio plant species. In July 2010, the state-threatened *Cyperus schweinitzii*, dependent upon sandy flats and dunes, was documented on the site.

Property Management and Maintenance

Extensive efforts by the Corps of Engineers will be employed to control invasive vegetative species, including *Phragmites* at the site prior to planting restoration species.

The property will be protected in perpetuity through use restrictions spelled out in an Environmental Covenant, which will be attached to the deed on the property. Above any other competing management objectives, the protection and preservation of the water resources, as specified in the Environmental Covenant, shall rule the management of the WRRSP-restored property. These restrictions include:

- There shall be no agricultural, industrial, commercial, or residential activity undertaken or allowed on the Property.
- The Property may not be divided, partitioned, subdivided or conveyed except in its current configuration.
- No buildings, or other structures including, but not limited to, billboards or advertising of any kind, camping accommodations, and mobile homes shall be erected or placed on the Property.
- There shall be no mining, drilling, exploring for or removal of minerals, oil or gas from the Subject Property.
- Except as may be necessary for reasonable preservation, management and restoration purposes, there shall be no ditching; draining; diking; filling; excavating, or removal of topsoil, sand, gravel, rock or other materials.
- There shall be no manipulation or alteration of wetlands, creeks, streams, surface or subsurface springs or other bodies of water. Reasonable alterations to surface water bodies and their associated riparian zones within the Subject Property may be permitted for the purpose of protecting or improving water quality or aquatic habitat, upon the condition that prior to any such alterations, a plan for such activities shall be proposed in writing by the Owner or any Transferee and shall be approved by Ohio EPA or shall be approved as an amendment to the Plan.
- There shall be no open dumping.
- There shall be no building of new roads or other rights-of-way. Existing roads may be maintained but shall not be widened or improved.
- There shall be no operation of automobiles, trucks, snowmobiles, dune buggies, motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles or any other motorized recreational vehicles.

- In order to maintain the ecological balance of the Property or to protect human health and safety, hunting and trapping may be permitted only in accordance with State regulations and as authorized by the Owner.
- Except in areas already identified in the Plan as being disturbed, and as may be necessary for reasonable preservation, management or restoration purposes, to protect human health and safety, or to maintain a diversity of naturally occurring habitat types and control of exotic non-native and exotic species of plants, there shall be no removal, destruction, cutting, trimming or mowing of any trees or other vegetation. No non-native species shall be introduced to the Property.
- Except as may be necessary for reasonable preservation, management, or restoration purposes, to protect human health and safety, or to prevent the spread of non-native species, there shall be no use of fertilizers, insecticides, fungicides, or rodenticides. Herbicides may be used for the control of state designated noxious weeds and for the control of other invasive exotic plant species consistent with best management practices.

The Corps of Engineers will submit annual reports on the status of the property and project to Ohio EPA on January 15th of each year following the first full year of property ownership, for up to five years. After that time a new reporting schedule can be agreed upon with Ohio EPA.

Port Clinton will work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to continue invasive species control and site management to maintain the site's conservation values after the initial 5-year post-restoration monitoring period.

D. ESTIMATED PROJECT COSTS AND SCHEDULE

Ohio EPA in April 2018 will award Port Clinton approximately \$269,605 in Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program (WRRSP) funding for this project through a Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF) loan to the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORS). Work will begin on-site after loan award. The \$160,000,000 loan for the Westerly Storage Tunnel project will provide the WRRSP funds for this project.

The WRRSP is an Ohio EPA initiative that provides funds, through loans for publicly-owned wastewater treatment works, to counter the loss of ecological function and biological diversity that jeopardizes the health of Ohio's water resources. Funds for WRRSP projects are made available by advancing to the WRRSP implementer a portion of the estimated amount of interest to be repaid by the sponsor over the life of the loan. WRRSP projects protect and / or restore high quality aquatic habitat in Ohio streams, rivers, or wetlands. The sponsor benefits by receiving an interest rate reduction on its WPCLF loan up to 0.1 percent off its below-market interest rate.

E. PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

As part of its State Environmental Review Process, Ohio EPA will post this Limited Environmental Review (LER) to the Division of Environmental and Financial Assistance's (DEFA) web page located at: <http://epa.ohio.gov/defa/ofa.aspx> (WSRLA Documents for Review and Comment) and make it available upon request. Ohio EPA is unaware of any public opposition to the project.

F. CONCLUSION

Ohio EPA conducts environmental reviews of all projects prior to awarding WPCLF financing. The planning information was reviewed in terms of potential direct, indirect and cumulative short- and long-term environmental impacts. The proposed project meets the project type criteria for a LER; namely, it is a water protection project consisting of non-structural practices. Furthermore, the project meets the other qualifying criteria for a LER; specifically, the proposed project:

- has no significant adverse environmental effect, as the planning activities for the project identified no potential adverse impacts on the quality of the human environment or on sensitive resources such as floodplains, wetlands, state or federally-designated wild, scenic or recreational rivers, riparian areas, prime or unique agricultural lands, aquifer recharge zones, archaeological or historically significant sites, air quality, or threatened or endangered species. In fact, the proposed project will have beneficial environmental impacts by enhancing and preserving high-quality wetland habitat.
- does not require extensive specific impact mitigation, as the proposed project will restore and protect high-quality aquatic resources.
- has no adverse effect on high-value environmental resources, as the proposed restoration will only eliminate invasive species and restore and permanently protect high-quality wetland habitat.
- represents a long-term solution to an identified water quality threat currently facing the surface waters. The project will permanently protect and maintain aquatic resources. Enhancing and preserving high-quality aquatic resources is less expensive than, and preferable to, trying to construct them; thus, the project cost is reasonable.
- is not a controversial action, as it will benefit the environment and no significant public opposition has been expressed.
- does not create a new, or relocate an existing, discharge to surface or ground waters, since the proposed project does not involve a point source discharge.

- will not result in substantial increases in the volume of discharge or loading of pollutants from an existing source or from new facilities to receiving waters, since the proposed project does not involve a point source discharge.
- will not provide capacity to serve a population substantially greater than the existing population, since the proposed project is not a publicly-owned wastewater treatment works, designed to serve a designated area. Instead, it is an enhancement and protection project of high-quality aquatic resources.
- will cause no potentially significant short- or long-term adverse impacts on the quality of the human environment or on sensitive resources. The project will benefit water quality by permanently protecting high-quality aquatic resources.

G. Contact Person

For further information, please contact:

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