



Division of Surface Water Response to Comments

Project: Village of Otway PTI and NPDES Permits
Ohio EPA ID #: NPDES 0PA00115; PTI 1057684

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Ohio EPA held a public hearing and/or comment period March 24, 2016, regarding an NPDES and Permit to Install application for the village of Otway's proposed wastewater treatment plant (WWTP). This document summarizes the comments and questions received at the public hearing and/or during the associated comment period, which ended March 31, 2016.

Ohio EPA reviewed and considered all comments received during the public comment period. By law, Ohio EPA has authority to consider specific issues related to protection of the environment and public health. Often, public concerns fall outside the scope of that authority. For example, concerns about zoning issues are addressed at the local level. Ohio EPA may respond to those concerns in this document by identifying another government agency with more direct authority over the issue.

In an effort to help you review this document, the questions are grouped by topic and organized in a consistent format.

Monitoring Concerns

Comment 1: **As long as it is done in a way that is affordable and maintainable, and the math works so it is not a burden for people living on low incomes, we certainly support that.**

Response 1: The PTI and NPDES permit application review process takes into consideration affordability and technical feasibility of the sewerage systems.

Comment 2: **What was the cost of the EPA permits?**

Response 2: The cost of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit application was \$200 and has to be renewed every 5 years. The Permit to Install permit application for the wastewater treatment/collection system cost \$11,325.79. There will be a \$200 NPDES issuance fee and a \$200 annual discharge fee.

Comment 3: Who determined that the sewage systems had failed all along Brush Creek?

Response 3: Failure of sewage systems along Brush Creek was not a factor in Ohio EPA's review of the permit applications and Ohio EPA did no survey to find failing systems. Ohio EPA studied the water quality in portions of the Scioto River watershed in 2006. During the 2006 TMDL study, bacteria sampling of the stream was performed to detect and estimate the level of bacterial contamination from all sources.

Comment 4: How did we get such a great reading of the quality of Brush Creek's water if so many systems are failing?

Response 4: The rating of superior high quality water was given to Scioto Brush Creek as a result of the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) study performed on the creek in 2006. A TMDL is a written, quantitative assessment of water quality problems in a waterbody and contributing sources of pollution. The study takes into account the results from water chemistry data, fish and macroinvertebrate data and several other factors. A thorough review of the entire watershed data set resulted in the determination.

Comment 5: If some of the surveys were taken in Bloody Run, all you've got to do is put the top down in your car or ride a motorcycle or a bicycle and go up 348 east of town, you don't smell anything until you get out of town. All of the people on the windward side of Bloody Run have failing systems that flow into Bloody Run. The people of Otway shouldn't be penalized because of that.

Response 5: Ohio EPA does not have an active enforcement case against the Village of Otway for any violations of laws or rules pertaining to protection of water quality. There are no Ohio EPA issued notices of violation against the Village. Ohio

EPA received a permit application from the village and as required by law is acting on a permit application.

Comment 6: **I have been swimming in Brush Creek for 60 years and I love Brush Creek and, you know, I am as concerned as anybody that it's clean, but I can guarantee you 60 years ago it was filthy compared to what it is now. Everybody went to the creek and dumped their cans and their plastic and nobody had septic tanks or aerators. Aerators have done a good job and the only difference is they want to treat with UV disinfection, but the aerator is good enough.**

Response 6: Ohio EPA has recognized the improved water quality in Scioto Brush Creek by giving the creek a rating of Superior High Water Quality. The Village of Otway in conjunction with their engineering consultant has selected the option to provide a central sewage collection and treatment system. Aerator systems without disinfection provide no removal of pathogens that can cause disease and illness in humans. UV disinfection is not the only approved method of disinfection. Ohio EPA (and Ohio Department of Health) still approves chlorination with dechlorination.

Comment 7: **I think this is just totally unneeded. I'm not against the EPA. I just don't think it's necessary.**

Response 7: Ohio EPA does not have an active enforcement case against the Village. The Village of Otway has received no violation notices from Ohio EPA. As required by Ohio law, Ohio EPA is acting on permit applications submitted to the Agency by the village.

Comment 8: **The collection system is a pressure system, which is a disaster waiting to happen with leaks and failing valves.**

Response 8: As with any newly constructed wastewater treatment and/or collection system, the construction will be overseen by an approved and qualified inspector(s) to ensure the workmanship and installation is completed per the approved plans and specifications approved by the Ohio EPA and, as outlined in the contract between the village and the contractor.

Comment 9: **The engineer has said each house will have less than 100 gallons of capacity and if the homeowner does not**

purchase a generator, you will not be able to use the bathroom if the power is out for an extended amount of time. Our power has been known to go out for 3 or 4 days at a time.

Response 9:

If power goes out, a home owner could still use the bathroom, but reduction of water usage will be very important, e.g. no laundry, dish washing, showers and don't flush the toilet after each use, or flush with collected gray water from the sink or tub. For a worst case scenario, there should be no less than a 100-gallon capacity, which is a reasonable amount of emergency capacity, based on industry standards for any type of a pressurized pump system from a residence (based on several gallons of water per toilet flush and residential discretion for bathing, cleaning, etc.). Each residential dwelling will have at least a 1,000 gallon septic tank, and the 100-gallon emergency capacity is based on the level above the high-level pump float (when the pump is activated to convey wastewater to the Village's force main), and the top of the septic tank. If power were to be interrupted, this volume would be the emergency capacity. The village will own and operate the proposed sewer system which includes the individual pumping systems. The village would therefore be required to pump the septic tank, or provide temporary power to convey the wastewater to the wastewater treatment plant, during those times where there may be an extended power outage. Homeowners who have adequately sized generators may be able to connect those to the pump station. This will be discussed with each homeowner during the scheduled on-site meeting when the location of each pumping unit will be discussed.

Comment 10: The majority of the citizens in Otway are not in favor of this project.

Response 10: By law and rule, Ohio EPA does not have a mechanism to address the popularity of a project within a jurisdiction when acting on an application. As required by law, Ohio EPA acted on a permit applications received..

Comment 11: If flood waters come up, it is our own waste that comes into our house. But with a centralized system anyone's waste could be coming into our house.

Response 11: There will be several check valves between the septic tank and the common force main that conveys wastewater to the wastewater treatment plant. These types of valves prevent the backflow of any sanitary sewer waste from the common force main from coming back into an individual septic tank. Additionally, any floods that impacted the existing individual home sanitary systems in the past (surface water, increased water table, etc.), should not impact the new system because it will be constructed in such a way to only allow for sewage flows from the home to enter into the sanitary sewer system.

Comment 12: Someone should have to prove the high levels of E. Coli are from our septic systems.

Response 12: Ohio EPA does not have an active enforcement case against the Village. The Village of Otway has received no violation notices from Ohio EPA. As required by Ohio law, Ohio EPA is acting on the permit applications submitted to the Agency..

Comment 13: What will happen to the storm sewer lines when the sewer lines are installed?

Response 13: Any storm sewer lines in the area would remain, and would be completely separate from the sanitary sewer lines.

Comment 14: We need more documentation that this is cost effective.

Response 14: The village's consultant analyzed several alternatives, and the septic tank effluent pump (STEP) collection system was determined to be cost-effective alternative that is affordable for the village of Otway. An operator will regularly attend to the wastewater treatment facility. Additionally, there is a warranty for the selected facility type.

Comment 15: The WWTP is going to be located in a flood plain, Brush Creek floods at least twice a year.

Response 15: The wastewater treatment facility will be located outside of the floodway. The project engineering plans show the facility will be located in a floodplain, but the components have been designed for appropriate protection from flooding. The treatment system should remain in operation up to the once in 25 year flood elevation and be protected from damage between the 25 year and 100 year flood elevation.

Comment 16: **There is not much room between the highway and the houses. If the sewer is installed, our foundations will be adversely affected.**

Response 16: The installation of force mains within the right-of-way only requires a depth of 4 feet for this type of project, which minimizes the impact to the construction area; unlike deeper gravity sewers which could be more problematic for structures in the vicinity. The location of each pumping unit will be discussed with each homeowner. In almost all cases the pumping unit will be placed at least 10 feet from the foundation. If the unit has to be closer than this, this will be carefully reviewed by the engineer and the contractor. Any other structural concerns regarding the foundation will be addressed at the meeting.

Comment 17: **A lot of people rent in Otway or are elderly and the population will decrease when the sewer bills are instituted. Otway cannot maintain a sewer system.**

Response 17: Once the system is installed, the village will be held responsible for maintaining the entire system. Failure to properly maintain the system will result in an enforcement action against the village by Ohio EPA.

Comment 18: **People burn their trash and don't maintain their yards and you want to install a high - dollar wastewater system that may or may not work.**

Response 18: The Village of Otway, using the services of their consultant, selected the treatment technology which when properly operated and maintained will meet the discharge requirements that will be in the discharge permit. Individual homeowners will not be responsible for operation and maintenance of the individual pump units. A trained certified operator will be operating and maintaining the system. Homeowners, however, will be responsible for preventing waste being placed in the home's plumbing, e.g. excessive grease, sanitary wipes, plastic objects that could cause problems.

Comment 19: **In prior meetings, the village residents were told this was coming right from the state.**

Response 19: Ohio EPA does not have an active enforcement case against the Village. The Village of Otway has received no violation notices from Ohio EPA. As required by Ohio law, Ohio EPA is acting on the permit applications submitted to the Agency..

Comment 20: Each house will have a pump protected by a filter with 1/8” holes. What happens when the filter clogs and the pump burns out?

Response 20: There will be routine operation and maintenance on the systems to minimize the chances of something like that happening. On a regular schedule the operator would inspect the pumping unit to determine if the unit’s filter needs to be cleaned. The openings into the pump chamber are in the “clear” zone of the septic tank above settled solids and below the floating scum. If the openings to the pump chamber completely plug, the pump’s low level float should keep the pump from running preventing the pump from burning out and there should be an alarm activated. Therefore, it is important for the residents to be careful what is discharged into the homes plumbing and into the septic tank so as to not overburden the system, which may result in excessive sludge or other materials introduced into the tank, which could clog the system (i.e. , minimize grease discharges, no rags, minimize excessive bleaching, etc.).

Comment 21: If it clogs up will it back up into your house?

Response 21: If there is a pump failure for any reason, the sewage could back up into the residence. But an alarm will alert of a malfunction preventing this from happening when the operator responds to the alarm and takes the necessary action to get the system properly operating.

Comment 22: Who is going to come out and pump out the tanks if the power is out for an extended amount of time?

Response 22: The Village of Otway will maintain and operate the entire wastewater treatment and collection system and would pump or contract with a septage pumper to pump any tanks. The village may also use a portable generator could also be used to operate the pumps that would be moved from house to house. Homeowners may also be able to have the option to use their own portable generator to operate the pump.

This will be discussed with each homeowner during schedule meetings prior to placement on the pumping units.

Comment 23: **The Otway zip ZIP code is the poorest zip ZIP code in the state of Ohio. At the first meeting, the bill was going to be \$17 dollars. During the second meeting, it went from \$21 to \$23 dollars in the same meeting. Then it was \$23 with a \$10 dollar maintenance fee. Then the last meeting, I heard it could be as high \$60 to \$120 plus the \$10 maintenance fee. We could barely afford the \$17 a month let, alone \$130.**

Response 23: Per page 62 of the village of Otway's Preliminary Engineering Report (authored by Hunt Engineering, LLC), funding for the construction of the project would be paid for by grants and funding assistance from several different agencies (Ohio EPA, Ohio Water Development Authority, Community Development Block Grant Program, etc.), and Ohio Rural Community Assistance Program is assisting the village in securing these funds to pay for the construction project. However, there would be an estimated user charge of approximately \$28 per month from each user of the system (these fees would be used to operate and maintain the sanitary sewer system).

Comment 24: **If there is raw sewage in Bloody Run, let's trace it to where it's coming from and make them fix their system.**

Response 24: Ohio EPA did not make a determination that there was raw sewage in Bloody Run. Ohio EPA studied the water quality in portions of the Scioto River watershed in 2006. The results from bacteria sampling performed during the 2006 TMDL study indicated impacts that could be contributed to underperforming sewage systems. Also as indicated in other responses, Ohio EPA did not order the village to construct the sewerage system.

Comment 25: **During the last meeting a council member asked the engineer who was in charge of what will happen if they cannot afford to maintain the system.**

Response 25: The Village of Otway will maintain and operate the entire wastewater treatment and collection system based on the determined rate structure. If revenues cannot fund the operation and maintenance (and replacement) costs, user rates would have to be adjusted.

Comment 26: **This town has 52 homes and 12 are vacant. The village is under fiscal watch and has no money to maintain the system. So what happens when repairs are needed?**

Response 26: The village would own the system (where easements were provided) and would maintain the entire system for operation, maintenance and repairs. These maintenance repairs have been budgeted and will be funded from the monthly sewer rates.

Comment 27: **This environmental, health, and safety project will result in elimination of unsanitary conditions within the Village as indicated by the Scioto County Health Department and will realize elimination of excessive pathogenic loading to the recreational waters of Bloody Run and Scioto Brush Creek as identified in the extensive water quality survey completed by Ohio EPA in 2006 and published in the Total Maximum Daily Loads for the Scioto Brush Creek (USEPA Approved 2007). It will also allow 13 unpermitted commercial systems within the Village to gain compliance with the Ohio Water Pollution Control Act without incurring capital costs for these small businesses.**

Response 27: Water quality and compliance with State and Federal water quality regulations are expected to improve when an unsewered community installs, operates and maintains an approved centralized wastewater collection and treatment system.

End of Response to Comments