



## Division of Environmental and Financial Assistance 2019 Annual Report



*Providing technical, compliance and financial assistance programs to help Ohio communities and businesses with their environmental needs.*

February 2020

## Introduction

2019 marked another successful year of enhanced services to Ohio’s businesses and communities through Ohio EPA’s Division of Environmental and Financial Assistance (DEFA). Through our team’s efforts, we surpassed prior years of assistance and service to our customers. DEFA serves as a one-stop shop for customers seeking technical and financial resources to help them achieve compliance. Listed below are just some of the resources and services available.

- State Revolving Fund (SRF) loan programs to help communities construct and maintain wastewater and drinking water infrastructure.
- Funding to help communities address water quality issues from combined sewer overflows, failing home sewage treatment systems, nutrients, and lead.
- Technical assistance to help small community wastewater treatment plants improve operations and efficiency.
- Compliance assistance program to help small businesses with environmental regulations through on-site visits, help completing applications and forms, training, and plain-English publications.
- Funding to support recycling, litter cleanup, scrap tire management, and market development for recyclables such as glass, plastics, rubber, and construction and demolition debris.
- The Encouraging Environmental Excellence (E3) program, which recognizes the outstanding efforts of businesses, communities, and other entities making a commitment to environmental stewardship.
- The Ohio Materials Marketplace, an online tool to facilitate the reuse of materials through a collaborative network of businesses, organizations, and entrepreneurs.

In 2019, we reached out to hundreds of businesses and communities throughout Ohio to increase the awareness of services and resources available through DEFA, and we look forward to even greater technical and financial assistance in the coming year.

## Funding to Help Communities Address Wastewater and Drinking Water Needs

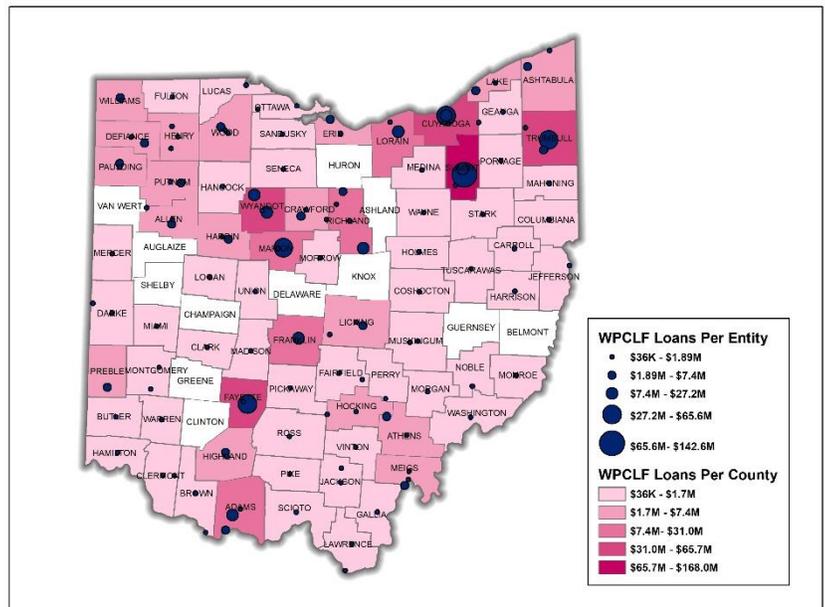
### Water Pollution Control Loan Fund

Through the Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF), Ohio EPA offers financial and technical assistance to public entities (villages, cities, counties, and sewer districts) for wastewater-related projects, including:

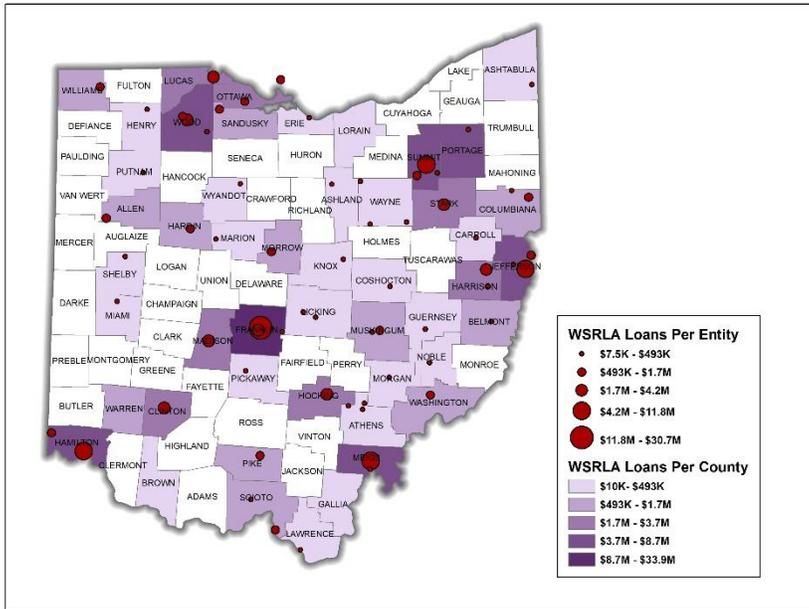
- improving and expanding wastewater treatment plants;
- installing/replacing sewers;
- eliminating sewer infiltration/inflow;
- addressing unsewered areas;
- repairing/replacing failing household sewage treatment systems; and
- infrastructure improvements to address combined sewer overflow (CSO) problems.

During 2019, Ohio EPA awarded WPCLF loans totaling more than \$542 million to Ohio communities. Principal forgiveness (grant-like) funding totalling approximately \$10 million was made available to help communities address failing household sewage treatment systems (HSTS). In addition, close to \$22 million in principal forgiveness was made available to provide collection capacity in unsewered areas and address other infrastructure priorities, particularly in economically disadvantaged and small communities.

The WPCLF in 2019: \$542 million



**The WSRLA in 2019: \$109 million**



**Water Supply Revolving Loan Account Program**

Ohio EPA’s Water Supply Revolving Loan Account (WSRLA) provides financial assistance to communities for planning, design, construction, and improvements to public water systems.

In 2019, Ohio EPA awarded WSRLA loans totaling close to \$109 million to help communities address drinking water infrastructure needs. In addition, about \$21 million in principal forgiveness funding was made available to help small, disadvantaged communities.

The table below summarizes WPCLF and WSRLA funding highlights and award totals.

**WPCLF and WSRLA Loan Programs 2019 Highlights**

**WPCLF Program (Wastewater Infrastructure)**

WPCLF Loans for Wastewater Infrastructure Planning, Design, and Construction	\$542,041,304
Household Sewage Treatment System (HSTS) Principal Forgiveness Funding	\$10,194,000
Principal Forgiveness for Non-HSTS Projects	\$21,600,438

**WSRLA Program (Drinking Water Infrastructure)**

WSRLA Loans for Drinking Water Infrastructure Planning, Design, and Construction	\$109,641,180
WSRLA Principal Forgiveness	\$14,199,936

**HAB and Nutrient Reduction Funding through Ohio’s SRF Programs**

WPCLF Nutrient Reduction Loan Total	\$96,917,885
WSRLA HAB Loan Total	\$15,919,242

**Addressing Statewide Priorities through Ohio’s SRF Programs**

Ohio EPA leverages financial resources through our SRF and grant programs to address some of the state’s most significant water quality challenges, including harmful algal blooms (HABs), failing septic systems, lead, and combined sewer overflows. Working in partnership with other public funding partners, providing incentives for innovative approaches, and offering flexible financing terms have been effective strategies to help our communities in addressing these challenges.

**Harmful Algal Blooms**

During 2019, the WSRLA program awarded more than \$15 million in loans for infrastructure improvements at drinking water treatment plants intended to address the effects of harmful algal blooms (HABs) on drinking water supplies. Nearly \$97 million was awarded through the WPCLF for projects to reduce phosphorus and nitrogen at wastewater treatment plants.

## Failing Household Sewage Treatment Systems

Local health districts were offered WPCLF funding to help their low- to moderate-income homeowners repair and replace failing household sewage treatment systems (HSTS). Through the program, more than \$10 million in principal forgiveness funding was made available to homeowners through their local health departments. Health departments in 71 counties applied for up to a maximum of \$150,000 each to distribute under the HSTS program. Since the program was initiated in 2016, more than \$50 million has been awarded, \$32 million has been disbursed, and approximately 2,800 systems have been repaired or replaced.

## Combined Sewer Overflows

Many Ohio communities have combined sewers to handle both storm water and sewage. Storm events and snow melt can overwhelm these combined systems, causing sewage to bypass treatment and make its way directly to streams and rivers. A combined sewer overflow (CSO) event can present a public health and environmental risk. The magnitude of the problem has resulted in many communities being under either long-term control plans or enforcement orders to address their CSO issues.

For many communities, addressing CSOs can be both time-consuming and costly. In 2017, Ohio EPA committed WPCLF funding at zero percent interest over a four-year period to help communities address aging and failing storm water and sewer infrastructure. During 2019, 15 loans totaling more than \$148 million were awarded for CSO projects, which included assistance to communities such as Akron, Bucyrus, Defiance, Marion, and Paulding.

Ohio's SRF programs are some of the largest in the country. Both the WPCLF and WSRLA programs are audited extensively each year by federal and state officials. In all audits of the SRF programs by U.S. EPA and the Ohio Auditor of State completed in 2019, no significant deficiencies of either program were identified.

## SRF Funding – Community Highlights

### Washington Court House Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements

In 2019, Ohio EPA awarded a \$65 million loan to the City of Washington Court House for its wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) improvements project. The city's original treatment and collection system was constructed in 1935 and consisted of combined sewers. The extensive renovations provided by this project will more than double the WWTP's treatment capacity and improve the general condition of the plant. The improvements will allow future combined sewer separation projects to proceed. The 0.98 percent, 30-year loan provides the city with huge savings compared to a market-rate loan.

### Continuing to Support Disadvantaged Communities with Regional Approaches

As the overall cost and complexity of infrastructure management has steadily risen, it has become increasingly difficult for some smaller communities to maintain their facilities. This is true of both drinking water and wastewater infrastructure. In some parts of the state, areas that need new centralized facilities are finding it very difficult to go it alone. For both drinking water and wastewater projects, Ohio EPA's SRF resources provide incentives for utilities to consolidate or regionalize. In 2019, principal forgiveness and zero percent interest rate funds were available to assist in these cost-effective solutions.

Recipient	Project	Loan Amount	Principal Forgiveness
<b>WSRLA Regionalization/Consolidation Projects</b>			
Akron	Druid Drive Neighborhood Water Main Extension	\$1,271,264	\$961,370
Canton	Canton South Water Line Extension	\$3,044,827	\$1,509,582
<b>WPCLF Regionalization/Consolidation Projects</b>			
Butler	Butler Regional WWTP	\$13,906,069	\$4,000,000
Nelsonville	Nelsonville Regional Collection System	\$5,042,463	\$3,000,000
West Union	Improvements and Additions to Sanitary Sewer System	\$10,035,618	\$3,496,526

## Wetland and Stream Preservation and Restoration

Created in 2000, the Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program (WRRSP) uses interest monies from WPCLF loan sponsor projects to fund preservation and restoration of aquatic habitat. Since 2000, more than \$206 million has been awarded for 158 projects to protect and preserve some of Ohio's highest water quality resources. In 2019, Ohio EPA approved 10 projects for \$11,713,920 in WRRSP funding.

Implementer	Project	County	Amount
Struthers	Struthers Dam Removal	Mahoning	\$1,237,820
Appalachia Ohio Alliance	Utzinger Bog Acquisition and Restoration Project	Franklin	\$473,000
Stark County Park District	Nimisila Creek Preserve Phase 2	Stark	\$1,675,500
Black Swamp Conservancy	St. Joseph River Protection	Williams	\$853,000
Appalachia Ohio Alliance	Cedar Run Watershed Initiative	Champaign	\$404,000
Cleveland Metroparks	Wetlands Protection in Chagrin River Watershed	Cuyahoga	\$4,150,000
Appalachia Ohio Alliance	Maxwell Addition- Big Darby Creek Conservation Corridor	Madison	\$1,122,000
Ashtabula County Metro Parks	Conneaut Creek Conservation Project	Ashtabula	\$810,600
Ashtabula County Metro Parks	Conneaut Creek/Smokey Run	Ashtabula	\$221,000
Appalachia Ohio Alliance	Henson Addition Paint Creek Conservation Corridor Initiative	Ross	\$767,000

### Project Spotlight

#### Struthers Dam Removal

With funding support from the WRRSP, the City of Struthers will have access to \$1.2 million to remove a deteriorating dam and approximately 35,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediment from the Mahoning River in Mahoning County.

Originally associated with a Youngstown Sheet and Tube plant, the dam was constructed in the early 1900s. Extending approximately 1.9 miles upstream of the dam, legacy contaminated sediments have accumulated for nearly a century as a result of numerous steel mills that lined the banks of the Mahoning. Once the dam is removed, water quality will be improved and healthy fish and macroinvertebrate populations will be reestablished both upstream and downstream of the dam, likely resulting in the full attainment of Warmwater Habitat Aquatic Life Use.



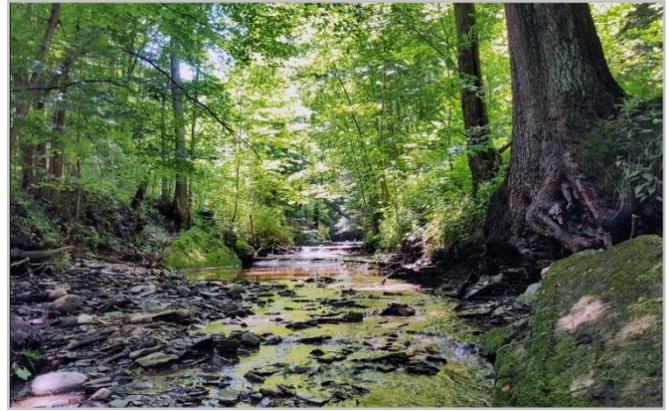
*The City of Struthers's Dam Removal project was sponsored by a WPCLF loan awarded to the City of Akron's WRF BioCEPT-NRD project.*

## Project Spotlight

### Conneaut Creek Conservation Project

This project involves the protection of 4,270 linear feet (LF) of Conneaut Creek, an Outstanding State Resource Water in full attainment of its Exceptional Warmwater Habitat Aquatic Life Use designation, 4,270 LF of Smokey Run, a direct tributary of Conneaut Creek, 31,299 LF of tributaries and seeps to both streams, and approximately 55 acres of wetlands by Ashtabula County Metroparks.

One of the most biologically diverse of all Lake Erie tributaries, Conneaut Creek is one of only three state-designated Wild and Scenic Rivers.



*Ashtabula County Metroparks – Conneaut Creek Conservation Project was sponsored by the City of Akron’s WRF BioCEPT-NRD project.*

## Helping Small Wastewater Systems

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### Hands-On Technical Assistance for Small Wastewater Plant Operations

The wastewater Compliance Assistance Unit (CAU) staff continued to conduct on-site technical assistance visits and work directly with small wastewater treatment plants to address their compliance issues, often helping them save money in the process.

During 2019, the wastewater CAU added staff who now work directly from locations in two of Ohio EPA’s district offices, Bowling Green (NWDO) and Logan (SEDO), helping make better use of our CAU resources and increase our effectiveness in assisting our customers throughout Ohio. Also in 2019, CAU kicked-off another round of wastewater treatment system training opportunities with a regional significant non-compliance (SNC) workshop in Northwest Ohio (Bellevue). This well-attended workshop was designed to help plant operators recognize and address the causes of SNC, hopefully before the facility falls out of compliance with its discharge permit. A second SNC workshop is currently being planned for 2020 in Southwest Ohio.



*Jon VanDommelen of DEFA’s CAU talks with plant operators during a training session.*

## Helping Businesses with Environmental Regulations and Permitting

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DEFA’s Office of Compliance Assistance and Pollution Prevention (OCAPP) provides free and confidential assistance to help businesses comply with environmental requirements. OCAPP responded to more than 12,500 environmental assistance requests from Ohio businesses, communities, and other organizations during 2019. This includes 166 site visits and assistance in completing 952 forms, including permit applications and other Ohio EPA paperwork. OCAPP staff participated in 63 presentations and training events, reaching more than 2,900 people with information on a variety of environmental compliance topics.

### Informational Webinars on Compliance and Resources

DEFA hosted 20 webinars covering a variety of topics, including environmental compliance, funding, and reporting. More than 3,500 people participated in DEFA’s webinars or viewed our archived library of training materials during 2019. Popular webinar topics in 2019 included:

- Air Services Overview
- Waste Generator Improvement Rules
- Recycling and Litter Prevention Grant Application Process
- Ohio’s Materials Marketplace

## Promoting Recycling and Environmentally Sustainable Practices

### Ohio EPA's Second Sustainability Conference

Ohio EPA held its second Sustainability Conference in Columbus in April 2019, with more than 200 attendees. A mix of Ohio EPA personnel and business representatives presented conference sessions. Ohio EPA Director Laurie Stevenson provided the keynote address and recognized Encouraging Environmental Excellence (E3) Silver, Gold, and Platinum Level recipients.

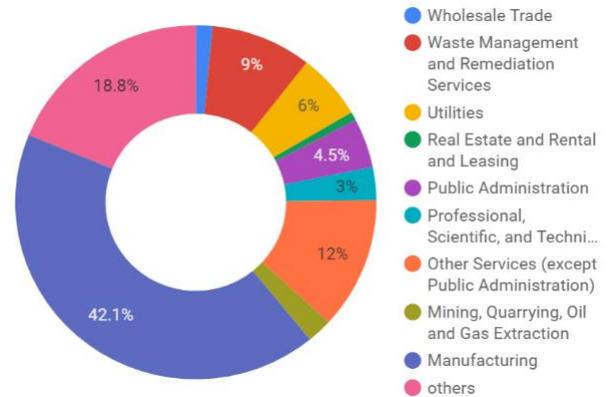
### Ohio's Materials Marketplace: Year Two Accomplishments

In April 2017, Ohio EPA launched the Ohio Materials Marketplace (OMM), a free online platform connecting businesses to recycling and reuse solutions for their waste and by-product challenges. Ohio businesses, not-for-profits, and government organizations can now list available products and materials that would otherwise be destined for disposal in landfills.

Ohio EPA manages and markets OMM with help from the United States Business Council for Sustainable Development, the Ohio By-Product Synergy Network, and Ohio's solid waste management districts.

To date, more than 1,000 members have joined OMM and 3.77 million pounds of materials have been exchanged for reuse and diverted from landfills, saving members more than \$222,000. Five OCAPP staff became zero waste certified advisors to support these and other sustainable materials management efforts.

Participant Business Breakdown



### Encouraging Environmental Excellence Program

Ohio EPA's E3 Program recognizes businesses, organizations and government entities for achievements in environmental stewardship. During 2019, Ohio EPA acknowledged five Gold Level, two Silver Level, and three Achievement Level E3 recipients. This was the third year Ohio EPA recognized organizations at the Platinum Level for their efforts to expand their environmental sustainability programs beyond their own facility to make a positive impact on their surrounding community with one organization recognized at the E3 Platinum Level.

### Funding Support for Recycling and Litter Prevention

Each year, Ohio EPA's Recycling and Litter Prevention (R&LP) Program awards grant funding to support recycling-related activities across Ohio. In 2019, the program awarded more than \$ 4 million in grants to support 66 projects throughout the state.

Grant Type	Projects	Amount
Community and Litter	54	\$2,328,418
Market Development	6	\$783,075
Scrap Tires	6	\$977,336
<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>\$4,088,829</b>



### Recycling Partnership

Ohio EPA is tackling the issue of non-recyclable trash in recycling by investing in education and outreach in pilot areas around the state. DEFA's Recycling and Litter Prevention Grant Program awarded six grants to a strategically and geographically diverse group of communities to work with The Recycling Partnership to create the best model for replicable success statewide. This two-year project, including grants of nearly \$211,000, focuses on outreach efforts in Akron, Centerville, Cincinnati, Columbus, Fairfield, and Lorain. It's anticipated that more than 105,000 households will benefit from these efforts. Material recovery facilities participating and investing in this project include Waste Management of Akron, Republic Services of Oberlin, Rumpke of Columbus, and Rumpke of Cincinnati.

### **Encouraging Environmental Excellence in Education**

Ohio EPA introduced the Encouraging Environmental Excellence in Education (E4) program at Newark schools as part of an Earth Day celebration with Governor Mike DeWine. The E4 program recognizes any K-12 public or private school for its achievements in environmental stewardship and efforts to educate students on environmental topics. The program has three recognition levels: root, branch, and leaf, which are based on how many of the three R environmental principles (reduce, reuse, and recycle) the school is incorporating in its curriculum or school activities. Schools can apply at any time through an online application. The new recognition program is based on the Encouraging Environmental Excellence program, which recognizes businesses, nonprofits, and government agencies for going above and beyond compliance with requirements while demonstrating environmental excellence.



*Governor Mike DeWine and Ohio EPA Director Laurie Stevenson announcing the E4 program.*

### **Reaching Our Customers Electronically**

DEFA's outreach efforts include monthly eBlasts, a quarterly newsletter, and blog posts. Our eBlasts contain information on upcoming regulatory changes, funding opportunities, training, and other resources. DEFA's quarterly newsletters contain more detailed updates and a range of articles related to environmental compliance, water, and wastewater infrastructure development, and sustainability efforts. Our 2019 eBlasts and newsletters reached an audience of more than 18,000 subscribers.

### **Looking Forward**

In 2020, DEFA continues to focus on proactive outreach efforts to ensure that our customers, Ohio's businesses and communities, are aware of the many resources available to help meet their environmental and financial assistance-related goals.

We appreciate the support from all our stakeholders and look forward to another busy and productive year in 2020. If you have any questions or need more information about our services, contact us at (614) 644-3469 or visit our website at [epa.ohio.gov/defa/](http://epa.ohio.gov/defa/).