



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

May 10, 2022

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

**City of Nelsonville – Athens County  
Regional Collection System Improvements Phase 3  
Loan Number: CS390649-0021**

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.

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 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 Nelsonville 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: Regional Collection System Improvements Phase 3

Applicant: City of Nelsonville  
211 Lake Hope Drive  
Nelsonville, OH 45764

Loan Number: CS390649-0021

### **Project Summary**

The City of Nelsonville in Athens County has requested \$2,700,000 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 Imperial, Doanville, and along Railroad Street. Improvements to the collection system will include installation of a gravity sewer that will convey sanitary waste to the site of Nelsonville's newly constructed wastewater treatment plant (WWTP). The project includes replacing sewers along Myers Street and replacing two lift stations.

Nelsonville qualifies for a WPCLF principal forgiveness loan in the amount of \$2,700,000. Principal forgiveness is a loan that will not need to be repaid.

Construction will occur within existing public rights-of-way, utilizing previously disturbed areas where roadways and utilities exist.

### **History and Existing Conditions**

Nelsonville currently owns and operates a sanitary sewer collection system and wastewater treatment plant (WWTP). It 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. Nelsonville has committed to accepting and treating sanitary waste from these surrounding communities.

Regionalization of unsewered areas in the surrounding communities of Buchtel, Murray City, and Carbon Hill is currently on-going. The city is also currently constructing a new wastewater treatment plant on Elm Rock Road that will have the increased capacity to treat waste from both Nelsonville and the surrounding areas. This will replace the existing WWTP. Both construction projects were funded through WPCLF funds.

This next phase of Nelsonville's regional collection system improvements will address failing on-lot septic systems in the unincorporated areas of Imperial and Doanville, as well as six currently unsewered homes and buildings on Railroad Street in the south-central portion of Nelsonville.

The sewers along Myers Street and the surrounding area present a continuous maintenance issue for the city due to poor capacity and condition. They are believed to be at an insufficient grade and require frequent jetting. The existing sanitary sewer also runs directly through a storm sewer catch basin presenting a direct risk of pollution to the Hocking River.

Additionally, the existing lift stations located near the water treatment plant (WTP lift station) and the Veterans of Foreign Wars building (VFW lift station) within the collection system are both undersized for the volume they receive. The city's WTP backwash is pumped through these stations although they were never sized to handle the significantly increased volume. The wet wells and pumps are both undersized and therefore reach the end of their useful life quickly. There have been several overflows due to issues at the VFW lift station. The WTP lift station is supplied with standby power from the water plant, but the VFW is not. During power outages, the WTP lift station pumps to the VFW lift station, which then overflows because of the lack of standby power. Both stations need to be upgraded to adequate capacity and standby power is needed at the VFW station.

A smaller lift station in the recently acquired Buchtel sewer system has stopped working, spilling raw sewage into the yards of residents and the village streets. This lift station is over 20 years old and requires new pumps and rails.

### **Population and Flow Projections**

Nelsonville currently serves approximately 1,700 incorporated customers, 300 outside city limits, and the regional connections from Murry City and Carbon Hill. Population changes in Nelsonville and the surrounding communities from 2000 to 2010 were used to project population trends until 2050. Overall, the populations in these communities were predicted to stay the same or slightly decrease. These trends were considered during the design stages of Nelsonville's new WWTP so it will have the capacity to treat additional waste from these surrounding communities.

### **Alternatives**

- *No action*: 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.
- *Replacement*: Residents could replace their individual on-lot systems, but this option is very costly, and many customers may not be able to afford it.
- *Installation of small WWTPs*: The surrounding unincorporated communities could construct their own individual WWTPs to be operated at a small scale. This is also a costly option that would place a burden on the residents to continue to fund their operation and maintenance.
- *Regionalization*: The dense spacing of homes in the unsewered areas and proximity to the regional treatment plant afford the option of gravity sewer installation to connect these areas to the Nelsonville wastewater collection system. This option will not require additional treatment system construction.

### **Selected Alternative**

Considering the need for reliable sanitary collection and treatment services in the area and 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 HSTS or constructing one or more small WWTPs. Regionalization of the unsewered areas to Nelsonville is the best alternative for treatment as it eliminates the need for additional treatment systems and discharges, as well as eliminates failing on-lot systems which can negatively impact public health and water quality. It was determined that constructing a gravity collection system was the most efficient in cost, constructability, and maintenance for the project.

This project will further expand Nelsonville's regionalization efforts by providing the installation of gravity sewers in the unsewered and unincorporated area of Imperial, Doanville, and within the City of Nelsonville in the unsewered area along Railroad Street. Replacement of sewers will also occur along Myers Street. In all, over 12,000 feet of new gravity sewer, 40 manholes, 4,000 linear feet of force main, and 84 unsewered new connections will be installed as part of the project. The Imperial and Doanville areas are less than one mile from the new regional WWTP being constructed and contain a cluster of seven homes to be served by gravity sewer construction.

The existing WTP lift station and VFW lift station will be replaced as part of the project to provide additional capacity. A standby generator will be provided at the VFW lift station to provide continuous operation. A lift station in Buchtel will also be improved with new pumps and rails.

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

### **Implementation**

#### *Project Costs*

Nelsonville plans to borrow \$2,700,000 from the WPCLF to finance the project. The project is eligible for \$2,700,000 in WPCLF principal forgiveness funds.

#### *Project Schedule*

The anticipated loan award will occur in June 2022 and construction will begin following the loan award.

### **Public Participation**

This project was discussed at multiple Nelsonville city council meetings which are open to the public for in-person or virtual attendance. Construction schedules are relayed to the public via the city website. Two public hearings were held specific for public questions or concerns pertaining to this project on June 30, 2021, and July 12, 2021.

Ohio EPA will make a copy of this document available to the public on its web page: <https://epa.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/epa/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. Because the project is designed to eliminate environmental hazards through the elimination of failing HSTS, the project is not expected to lead to new development or associated indirect or cumulative environmental impacts.

Construction will occur in previously disturbed areas, within roads and public rights-of-way. No change to land use or topography will occur.

#### Air Quality

Athens County is in attainment for all regulated criteria air pollutants applicable to this project. 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

Coordination was completed with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for this phase of the project as well as previous construction phases. It was determined that the planned area of construction has been previously developed and all excavation work will take place within previously disturbed roads and rights-of-way alongside other installed utilities. As no new excavations will occur, no impacts are expected to archaeological or historical resources.

However, in the event of archaeological finds during construction, Ohio Revised Code Section 149.53 requires contractors and subcontractors to notify SHPO of any archaeological discoveries in the project area, and to cooperate with the Office 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.

Although several buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places exist within the project area, SHPO agreed with the Ohio EPA conclusion that none will be adversely impacted.

#### Terrestrial Habitat and Endangered Species

Eight federally listed species occur in Franklin County: the endangered Indiana bat, the endangered fanshell mussel, the endangered sheepsnose mussel, the endangered pink pearly mussel, the endangered snuffbox mussel, the endangered running buffalo clover, the threatened northern long-eared bat, and the threatened American burying beetle.

Coordination was completed with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and determined that since planned area of disturbance during construction is limited to existing roads and previously disturbed rights-of-way, 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, no prime farmland losses are expected as a result of this project.

#### Floodplains

According to project planning and design, construction within the floodplain will be temporary and result in no new permanent structures above-ground.

#### 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

A traffic plan shall be developed by the contractor prior to commencing construction which includes all proper warning signs and lane closures. The contractor commits to minimize both the extent and duration of the disruption of traffic and disturbance to the neighborhood during construction. 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

A stream crossing of Monday Creek is planned during construction but will be horizontally directional drilled to not disturb aquatic habitat.

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

This project will have little effect on local or regional energy supplies. Through utilizing gravity sewers and the already existing Nelsonville wastewater treatment system in place, no additional energy from the county is required.

#### Local Economy

Nelsonville has minimized project costs by obtaining a principal forgiveness loan through the WPCLF. This allows a lower annual sewer bill for the new customers than otherwise would be possible. The project annual sewer bill for Nelsonville customers based on this project and other wastewater collection system improvement projects will be \$702, which is 2.4% of the local median household income of Nelsonville, \$28,886.

#### 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.

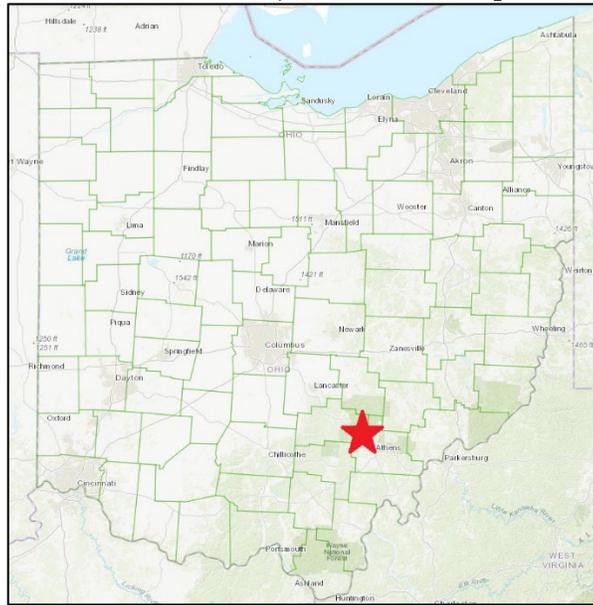
The project will provide wastewater collection system improvements and sanitary sewer service to currently unsewered residents to eliminate environmental and public health hazards as a result of faulty HSTS.

**Contact information**

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**Exhibit 1: Project location map**



**Exhibit 2: Project location map**

