

LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Project Identification

Project: Wastewater Treatment Lagoons

Applicant: Village of Hamler
500 East Hubbard Street
PO Box 435
Hamler, Ohio 43524

Loan Number: CS390423-0005

Project Summary

The Village of Hamler requested \$2,335,561 from the Ohio Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF) for the Wastewater Treatment Lagoons project. The village is eligible to receive the full amount as principal forgiveness, which does not need repaid. The project will expand the capacity of the wastewater treatment lagoons to better handle existing wastewater flows and bring the village into compliance with its National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit.

Due to the project area already being disturbed and the limited nature of the work, environmental impacts will be minimal.

History & Existing Conditions

Located in southern Henry County (see Figure 1), Hamler owns and operates their own wastewater treatment lagoons and associated sanitary sewer collection system which were constructed in 1970. The collection system consists of three pump stations, with the main one conveying all sanitary flow to the primary lagoon cell. The average pumped flow rate is 145,000 gallons per day. When the liquid volume in the primary cell reaches maximum depth, it flows into the secondary cell. After treatment, effluent is discharged to South Turkeyfoot Creek, part of the Maumee River watershed.

Since at least 2018, the village has had operational issues with their lagoons and has not met the effluent limits in their NPDES permit. Those issues include inadequate retention time (especially during wet-weather events), excessive algal growth, short-circuiting, and uneven sludge distribution. The major driver of these issues is a severe lack of capacity to handle current average flow. Existing volume is approximately 5 million gallons.



Figure 1. Henry County

Project Description

The proposed project will construct two new lagoons to the east of the existing ones, for a total of four lagoon cells (see Figure 2 below). The two existing lagoon cells will be enlarged and remain part of the system, becoming the secondary lagoons, while the new lagoon cells will function as the primary lagoons. This will increase total system volume from 5 million gallons to 12.5 million gallons, lengthening overall retention time of the system and allowing for adequate treatment.



Figure 2. The wastewater treatment lagoon property and project area. The red square represents the location of the new lagoon cells.

Implementation

The total estimated cost of the lagoon expansion is \$3,973,357. To pay for this, Hamler requested \$2,335,561 from the WPCLF and is eligible for the full amount in principal forgiveness, which does not need to be repaid. Additionally, the village received funds from the Ohio Department of Development, Ohio Public Works Commission, and a Community Development Block Grant to cover the remaining project costs.

Currently, the village is planning an annual 3% rate increase to meet operating costs, but the need is under evaluation. By 2026, Hamler residents can expect an average annual sewer bill of \$604, which is 1.2% of the median household income (\$51,198). This compares favorably to the average annual Ohio sewer bill of \$639. Anticipated loan award date is December 2023; construction is expected to begin early 2024 and last about 12 months.

Public Participation

This project has been discussed at both Board of Public Affairs meetings and village council meetings for a number of years; the potential rate increase has been mentioned specifically. These meetings are open to the public and advertised on the village's Facebook page. In addition, there have been several articles about the lagoon expansion published in local newspapers.

Ohio EPA is unaware of controversy about or opposition to this project. Ohio EPA will make a copy of this document available to the public on the following webpage and will provide copies upon request: <https://epa.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/epa/divisions-and-offices/environmental-financial-assistance/announcements>.

Conclusion

The proposed project meets the criteria for a Limited Environmental Review (LER); namely, it is an action within an existing public wastewater treatment system which involves functional improvements to an existing lagoon system. Furthermore, the project meets the other qualifying criteria for an LER; specifically, the proposed project:

Will have no significant environmental effect, will require no specific impact mitigation, and will have no effect on high-value environmental resources because the new lagoon cells will be built on former agricultural land which has no habitat of ecological importance. If necessary, tree cutting will only occur from October 1 through March 31 to avoid impacts to federally threatened and endangered bat species and the contractor will use best management practices to control erosion and dust.

Is cost effective because the other alternatives, such as regionalization with another nearby village's wastewater treatment system or building a new mechanical wastewater treatment plant, were not economically feasible for Hamler's location or population size.

Is not a controversial action since it is being funded almost entirely through grants and a principal forgiveness loan, which minimizes the economic impact on customers. Additionally, this project is necessary to meet NPDES requirements. Ohio EPA is not aware of any opposition to this project.

Does not create a new, or relocate an existing discharge to surface or ground waters, and 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 because this project will result in better wastewater treatment and improved water quality of the receiving stream.

Will not provide capacity to serve a population substantially greater than the existing population because the project is merely improving an existing lagoon system and no new connections will be added.

Based upon Ohio EPA's review of the planning information and the materials presented in this Limited Environmental Review, we have concluded that there will be no significant adverse impacts from the proposed project as it relates to the environmental features discussed previously. This is because these features do not exist in the project area, the features exist but will not be adversely affected, or the impacts will be temporary and mitigated.

As a result of this project, Hamler will be able to adequately treat wastewater and comply with their NPDES permit, improving the water quality of South Turkeyfoot Creek and ultimately the Maumee River and Lake Erie.

Contact Information

Isabella Aristizabal
Division of Environmental & Financial Assistance
Ohio Environmental Protection Agency
PO Box 1049
Columbus, Ohio 43216-1049

e-mail: Isabella.aristizabal@epa.ohio.gov



October 19, 2023

Limited Environmental Review and Finding of No Significant Impact

**Village of Hamler – Henry County
Wastewater Treatment Lagoons
Loan number: CS390423-0005**

The attached Limited Environmental Review (LER) is for a wastewater treatment project in Hamler 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 LER describes the project, its costs, and expected environmental benefits. Making available this LER 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. This project's relatively narrow scope and lack of environmental impacts qualifies it for the LER rather than a more comprehensive Environmental Assessment. More information can be obtained by calling or writing the person named at the end of the attached LER.

Upon issuance of this Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) determination, award of funds may proceed without further environmental review or public comment unless new information shows that environmental conditions of the proposed project have changed significantly.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Bernstein for

Kathleen Courtright, Assistant Chief
Division of Environmental and Financial Assistance

Attachment