



February 13, 2026

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

**Licking Regional Water District – Licking County
Summit Road and Morse Road Sanitary Sewer and Water Line Extension
Loan Numbers: CS391436-0020, FS391436-0022**

The attached Environmental Assessment (EA) is for a combined wastewater and drinking water project in Licking County which the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency intends to finance through its Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF) and Water Supply Revolving Loan Account (WSRLA) below-market interest rate revolving loan programs. 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 the loan programs.

Ohio EPA analyzes environmental effects of proposed projects as part of its 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 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 Licking Regional Water District can then proceed with its applications for the WPCLF and WSRLA loans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kathleen Courtright".

Kathleen Courtright, Assistant Chief
Division of Environmental & Financial Assistance

Attachment

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Identification

Project: Summit Road and Morse Road Sanitary
Sewer and Water Line Extension

Applicant: Licking Regional Water District
PO Box 215
Etna, Ohio 43018

Loan Numbers: CS391436-0020, FS391436-0022



Figure 1. Licking County

Project Summary

Licking Regional Water District (LRWD), in Licking County (Figure 1), requested funding from the Ohio Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF) and Water Supply Revolving Loan Account (WSRLA) to finance the Summit Road and Morse Road Sanitary Sewer and Water Line Extension project. The project involves the installation of new sanitary sewers and water mains to extend district services to part of LRWD's designated service area in Lima and Jersey townships. Providing sewer and water services to the area will allow property owners to eliminate household sewage treatment systems (HSTS) and private water wells. No significant adverse impacts are anticipated based on the nature and location of construction, thoughtful design, and proposed protection measures to be implemented, as discussed in the conclusion.

History & Existing Conditions

LRWD is a regional sanitary sewer and water utility located in western Licking County. They serve approximately 16,300 individuals within the townships of Etna, Harrison, Jersey, and Union, as well as the City of Pataskala, which is part of Lima Township. For wastewater treatment, LRWD operates the Gale Road Environmental Control Facility (ECF), which has a 4.3-million-gallons-per-day (MGD) permitted treatment capacity and a current design flowrate of 2.65 MGD. The WWTP discharges treated effluent to the South Fork of the Licking River. For drinking water treatment, LRWD operates a water treatment plant (WTP) with a total design treatment capacity of 3 MGD and a current average daily demand of 1.61 MGD; however, the plant has experienced peak demands reaching 2.39 MGD. The plant sources raw water from six nearby wells.

LRWD intends to extend their services further into the northwestern portion of the City of Pataskala and into another part of Jersey Township. Residences located along the proposed extension route currently utilize HSTS for handling sanitary flows and private wells for water. The Jersey Baptist Church is also located along the route. The church utilizes an onsite waste handling system and operates a non-transient non-community water system. Extending LRWD services to this area would allow for the elimination of an estimated 50 HSTS and private wells, in addition to the church's on-site waste handling system and water system.

Population and Flow Projections

LRWD estimates that the sanitary sewer and water infrastructure will initially serve 50 homes and the Jersey Baptist Church, which equates to about 200 individuals. The initial average daily water consumption and daily sanitary sewer flow from the area is estimated at 35,000 gallons. LRWD understands that further development of the area is possible once sanitary sewer and water service is available. LRWD estimates that future flows will be 160,000 gallons based on a complete buildout of the area capable of being serviced by the sanitary sewer and water infrastructure included in this project. Additionally, the sewer and water mains that will be tied into for this extension were designed and installed with capacity considerations for serving more customers.

Gale Road ECF has sufficient capacity to accommodate the initial and potential future flows from the new service area. Likewise, LRWD's WTP has sufficient capacity to provide water service for current and projected needs. LRWD has expansion needs in other parts of their service area as well, and as such, is currently drilling additional raw water wells to expand the capacity of their WTP. The planned expansion will increase the plant's treatment capacity from 3 MGD to 5 MGD. This will better position LRWD to handle anticipated, continued growth in Etna and Harrison townships and the City of Pataskala area. LRWD has also contracted with the Licking County Commissioners to service Jersey and St. Albans townships with sanitary sewer and water services.

Alternatives

1. City of Pataskala: The City of Pataskala could provide sewer and water services to the area; however, it would require installation of over 30,000 linear feet of sanitary sewer and water main to extend city service to the area. This was determined to be cost prohibitive to do. Additionally, Pataskala is not the contractual service provider for Jersey Township or this area of the city.
2. City of New Albany: The City of New Albany could provide sewer and water services to the area. This would require installation of sanitary sewer and water mains of similar lengths as would be required for LRWD to extend services to the area; however, New Albany would also have to install a lift station and force main to do so. Additionally, New Albany is not the contractual service provider for Jersey Township or the City of Pataskala.
3. LRWD: LRWD is the contractual service provider for sewer and water services for Pataskala and Jersey Township in the project area. It would require roughly a third less sanitary sewer and water main to extend LRWD services to the project area compared to Pataskala, and it would require no additional infrastructure such as lift stations or booster stations. LRWD's existing infrastructure, which would be extended, was originally constructed with future extensions of services to the project area in mind. No additional capital costs other than the extension of sanitary sewer and water main would be required to implement this alternative.

Selected Alternative

LRWD determined Alternative 4 to be the most cost-effective solution for providing sewer and water services to the project area. This decision was based on monetary and non-monetary factors.

LRWD will install an estimated 10,300 linear feet (LF) of 12-inch polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipe conventional gravity sewer main to extend district sewer service beginning at an existing connection point along Summit Road, near the entrance to Lima Ridge Elementary School. LRWD will install an estimated 11,360 LF of 16-inch PVC pipe water main to extend district water service from an existing connection point along Summit Road, near the east entrance to Licking Heights High School. Both the sanitary sewer and water main will terminate on Morse Road adjacent to the Jersey Baptist Church. Mains will be installed mostly via open trenching, but some sections beneath roadways and driveways will be installed using jack-and-bore, while sections underneath streams and a wetland will be installed using horizontal directional drilling (HDD). Sanitary laterals and private water services on private property will be the responsibility of property owners. Work also includes installation of fire hydrants, service taps, manholes, valves, fittings, and other associated appurtenances.

The sanitary sewer mains and water mains will follow roughly the same route with minor deviations. See Figure 2 for an overview of the proposed routes. These locations include rural roadsides within the public rights-of-way where there are mowed roadside and roadside ditches. These areas are bordered by agricultural fields, wooded areas, and mowed lawns. The sanitary sewer deviates from this in two locations along Summit Road where it follows new utility easements and extends into agricultural fields.

Implementation

LRWD requested \$4,908,598 from the Ohio WPCLF at the regionalization rate of 0% to finance the wastewater portion of the project. Borrowing this amount in WPCLF monies could save LRWD roughly \$4,340,000 over the 30-year loan term compared to the current market rate of 4.74%. LRWD reports that they will also receive \$307,327 in Ohio Public Works Commission funding and will utilize \$351,059 in local funds towards this portion of the project.

LRWD also requested \$3,118,896 from the Ohio WSRLA at the regionalization rate of 0% for the drinking water portion of the project. Borrowing this amount in WSRLA monies could save LRWD roughly \$2,757,000 over the 30-year loan term compared to the current market rate of 4.74%. LRWD reports that they will also receive \$192,673 in Ohio Public Works Commission funding and will utilize \$220,090 in local funds towards this portion of the project.

The debt associated with the project will be recovered from user charges. LRWD's monthly sewer and water bills are composed of a minimum charge based on the first 2,000 gallons of water used plus an additional consumption rate for water used more than the first 2,000 gallons. The sewer bill also includes a set debt elimination fee. The LRWD Board of Trustees recently approved a rate increase scheduled to take effect on the March 1, 2026, bill, which will reflect charges for services administered from January 9, 2026, to February 9, 2026. This includes a 6.5% increase to both the water and sewer rates and a reduction in the debt elimination fee to \$4.

The annual residential sewer and water bills for customers served by LRWD based on a monthly water usage of 4,000 gallons are \$696 and \$425, respectively. This represents 0.88% and 0.54% of the median household income for Licking County (MHI; \$78,505). The sewer bill is higher than the Ohio average annual sewer bill of \$528, while the water bill is lower than the Ohio average annual water bill of \$481.

Construction is anticipated to begin following loan award and take 12 months to complete.

Public Participation

LRWD Board of Trustees holds regular public meetings on the second and last Thursdays of each month and reports that the Summit Road and Morse Road Sanitary Sewer and Water Line Extension project has been discussed at these meetings. LRWD has also been coordinating with the Licking County Engineer's Office and the City of Pataskala on this project. LRWD intends to send mailers to property owners along the project route to inform them of the project, its intended benefits, and to provide a means of contact should there be questions or concerns.

Ohio EPA is unaware of any controversy about or opposition to this project. This Environmental Assessment (EA) and preliminary Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) will be posted on the Ohio EPA Division of Environmental and Financial Assistance website. Additionally, the EA and FNSI have been provided to LRWD to be made available according to their public notification procedures.

Environmental Impacts

The project has the potential to affect the following features, but the effects will be reduced or mitigated to acceptable levels as explained below.

Archaeological and Historical Resources

LRWD hired a consultant to perform a Phase I archaeological survey of the project area to determine what effects, if any, the project might have on historical properties or undocumented archaeological sites. The survey involved visual inspection and subsurface excavation. The survey resulted in the identification of two previously unrecorded archaeological sites, which the consultant recommended were not eligible for the National Register of Historic Preservation and that no further archaeological investigations are warranted. These findings were provided to the Ohio State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Based on the results of the survey, the SHPO concurs with Ohio EPA that the proposed undertaking will have no effect on historic properties and that no further investigations are warranted.

Threatened and Endangered Species

Review of the project was coordinated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) for consideration of potential impacts to state and federally listed threatened and endangered species.

The project area is located within the known ranges of several state and federally listed threatened and endangered bat species including the Indiana bat, the northern long-eared bat, the tricolored bat, and the little brown bat. During the spring and summer (April 1 through September 30), these bat species predominantly roost in trees behind loose and exfoliating bark, in crevices and cavities, and in leaf clusters. These species are also dependent on forest structure surrounding roost trees. LRWD will restrict tree clearing, should any be encountered and determined necessary during construction, to between October 1 and March 31, per USFWS and ODNR recommendations, for the protection of these bat species.

The project area otherwise contains no suitable or typical habitat for other threatened or endangered species known to be found in Licking County.

Terrestrial Habitat and Farmland Protection

Some sections of the sanitary sewer and water main deviate from the public rights-of-way and will be installed in new utility easements, some of which are located through agricultural fields. This includes the section of sanitary sewer main near the intersection of Graham Road SW and Summit Road where the sewer routes around a designated wetland. Impacts to these sections of agricultural fields will be temporary and limited to the duration of construction. All disturbed areas will be restored upon project completion, and there will be no permanent surface modifications to this land.

Wetlands, Surface Water Resources, and Aquatic Habitat

LRWD hired a consultant to perform a surface water delineation of wetlands and waterbodies within the project area. The purpose was to determine the extent and quality of surface waters within the project area that may require regulatory permitting. Results of the delineation determined the presence of one Category 1 wetland with a continuous surface connection to relatively permanent waters. Two streams were also delineated, a perennial stream known as Muddy Creek, and an intermittent unnamed tributary to Muddy Creek. The wetland and both streams are likely federally jurisdictional and would require permitting for any work falling within them.

The project was designed such that there are no sanitary sewer crossings of wetlands or streams. The water main will cross the streams and wetland. All stream and wetland crossings will be installed via HDD. HDD is a trenchless installation method that eliminates the need for open trenching or in-water work, which will effectively avoid impacts to these resources in the project area. The contractor will be responsible for preparing a contingency plan prior to beginning any stream crossing work for implementation in the event of an inadvertent frac-out. The contractor will provide further protection for the wetland and streams by implementing erosion and sediment control measures in the areas of these resources.

Air Quality, Noise, Traffic, Safety, and Aesthetics

The contractor will be responsible for implementing all necessary construction best management practices (e.g., erosion and sediment control, noise and dust control, proper storage and handling of materials, worker and public safety, site security, traffic maintenance, property owner notification, legal disposal of waste and excess materials, and like factors) throughout the duration of the project to avoid or minimize all short term impacts to the area.

Local Economy

Property owners wishing to connect to LRWD's system for sanitary sewer service are responsible for paying a sanitary sewer tap and capacity fee, which totals \$10,000. LRWD's sanitary sewer tap fee is based on the size of the water line servicing a property, and the total cost of \$10,000 is based on a ¾-inch water connection. Property owners are also responsible for any associated fees including the cost to have a sewer lateral installed and abandonment of their HSTS. Property owners wishing to connect for drinking water service are responsible for paying a water tap, capacity, and meter fee, which totals \$8,280 based on a ¾-inch water connection. Property owners are also responsible for any associated fees including the cost to install a private-side water service line. All connection and related fees are available on LRWD's website: <https://www.lickingregionalwater.gov/billings-and-connection-fees>.

The cost of work on private property necessary to connect for sanitary sewer and water services varies depending on the size of the existing HSTS, distance of the home to the utility connection point, depth, soil conditions, and other site-specific considerations. Recent metrics suggest that the cost to install a private sewer lateral and abandon a HSTS ranges from \$4,500 to \$21,000 with an average of around \$10,000 per household. Water service lines generally range between \$10 and \$20 per linear foot.

Unaffected Resources

The following resources are not present and therefore will not be impacted by the project: Coastal Zones, Local and Regional Energy Supplies, Floodplains, Safe Drinking Water, Groundwater Resources including Sole Source Aquifers and Source Water Assessment and Protection Areas, and Wild and Scenic Rivers. Likewise, the project will have no impact on land use as it pertains to public recreational space.

Conclusion

Based upon Ohio EPA's review of the planning information and the materials presented in this Environmental Assessment, 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.

LRWD designed the project to be effective and affordable, the results of which will make public sanitary sewer and drinking water services available to currently unserved individuals. Project completion will also provide environmental benefits by providing a means to eliminate private HSTS and a small on-site wastewater handling system.

Contact Information

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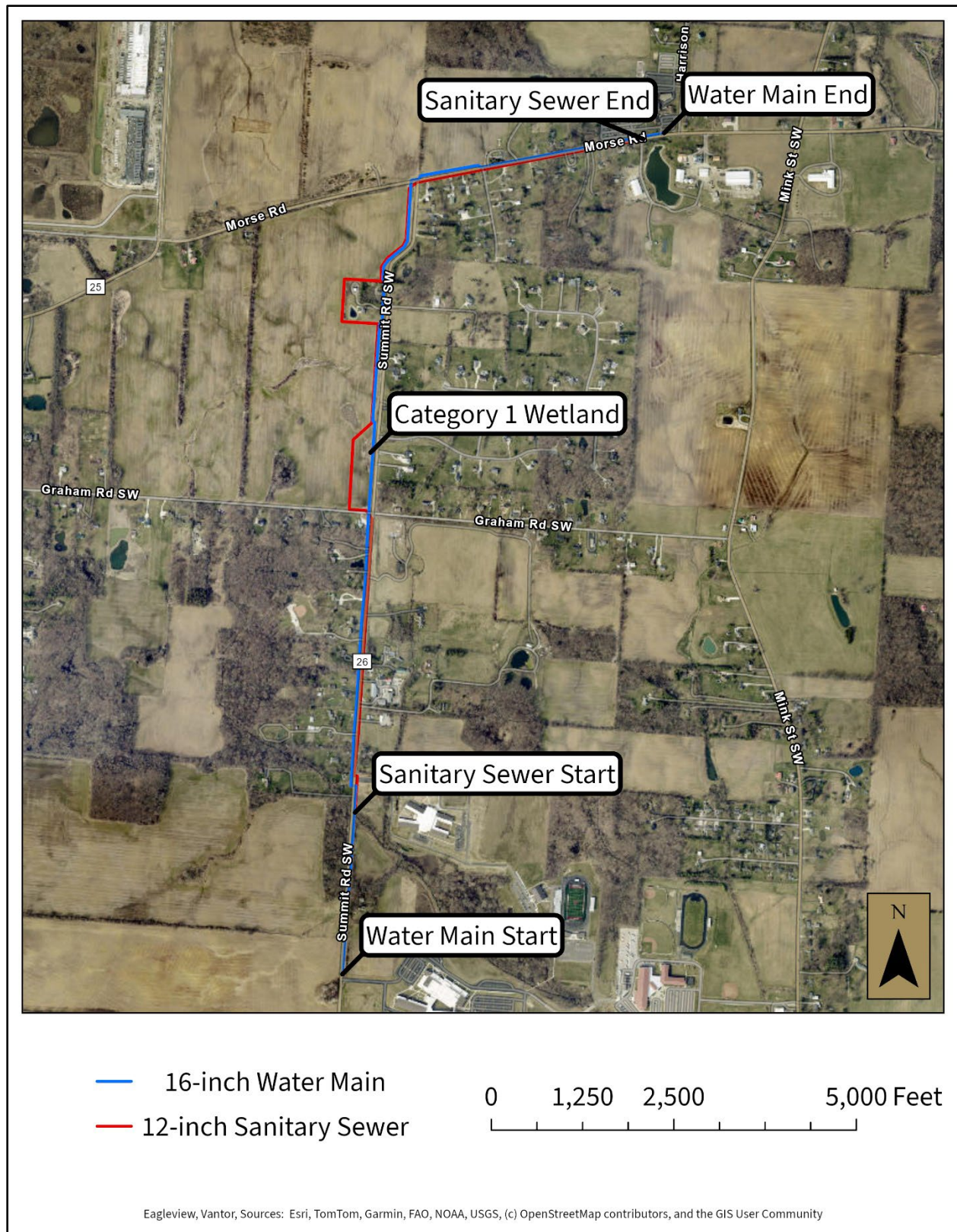


Figure 2. Project location