May 28, 2025

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

Village of West Union - Adams County
SR 41 Sewer Extension
Loan Number: CS390989-0038

The attached Environmental Assessment (EA) is for a sewer extension project in West Union 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 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 Village of West Union 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: SR 41 Sewer Extension

Applicant: Village of West Union
33 Logan Lane
West Union, Ohio 45693

Loan Number: CS390989-0038

Project Summary

The Village of West Union in Adams County (Figure 1) has requested $565,000 from the Ohio Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF) to eliminate failing household sewage treatment systems (HSTS) in the Hale subdivision. Adams County is under Director's Final Findings and Orders (DFFOs) to remedy unsanitary conditions caused by failing HSTS, issued in 2018. This phase of projects to address the DFFOs will connect the remaining 12 unsewered homes in the Hale subdivision to the West Union sewage collection system. This project continues the regionalization West Union began in 2008. West Union qualifies for principal forgiveness for the WPCLF loan, which means the loan need not be repaid.

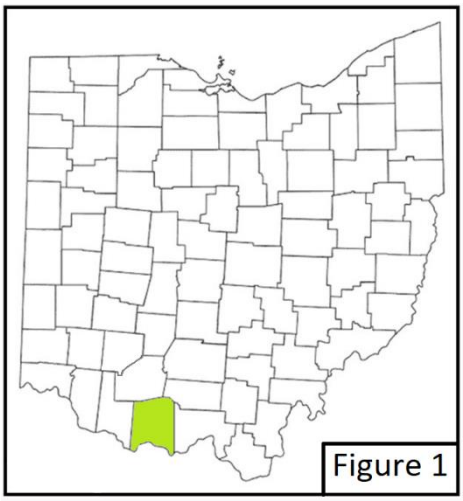
Figure 1

History & Existing Conditions

The Village of West Union is located in the south-central part of Adams County. State Routes 41, 125, and 247 all intersect in the downtown area. The village's WWTP is located along SR 247, south of the village. It was constructed in 1949, underwent an expansion in 1979, and a reconstruction in 2018. The plant discharges into Beasley Fork, a designated warmwater habitat stream.

After the WWTP was expanded, the village expanded its collection system. The east side of the village was sewered along SR 125 and Owens Drive. The East Side Sewer Upgrade project included the installation of gravity sewer, a lift station, and force main. In 2008, Phase 1 of the Adams County Wastewater Improvements (ACWWI) project was completed, which extended sewer along SR 125 to the northwest end of the village. Phase 1 of the ACWWI included gravity sewer from the high school extending down SR 125 to a lift station which pumped flows to the lift station at Columbus Industries. Phase 2 of the ACWWI project followed in 2013 to connect the neighborhoods near the high school to West Union's sanitary sewer system.

Adams County is under DFFOs to remedy unsanitary conditions due to failing HSTS found in several areas in and near West Union. The seven subdivisions where unsanitary conditions were found are: Crackel subdivision, Locust Grove, Panhandle subdivision, Gabbert subdivision, Cherry Fork, Lawshe subdivision, and Hale Drive subdivision. As outlined in these orders, Crackel must have sewer constructed by December 2021, Gabbert by December 2022, Panhandle by December 2023, Cherry Fork by June 2024, and Locust Grove by December 2024.

The DFFOs were originally issued to Adams County to correct the failing HSTS by providing a new sewage collection system for the above-mentioned subdivisions and outlying areas of West Union. However, Adams County and the Village of West Union have come to an agreement that West Union will construct a sewage collection system for each of the named areas, and accept the wastewater flows at the West Union WWTP. See Figure 2 for a map of unsewered subdivisions.

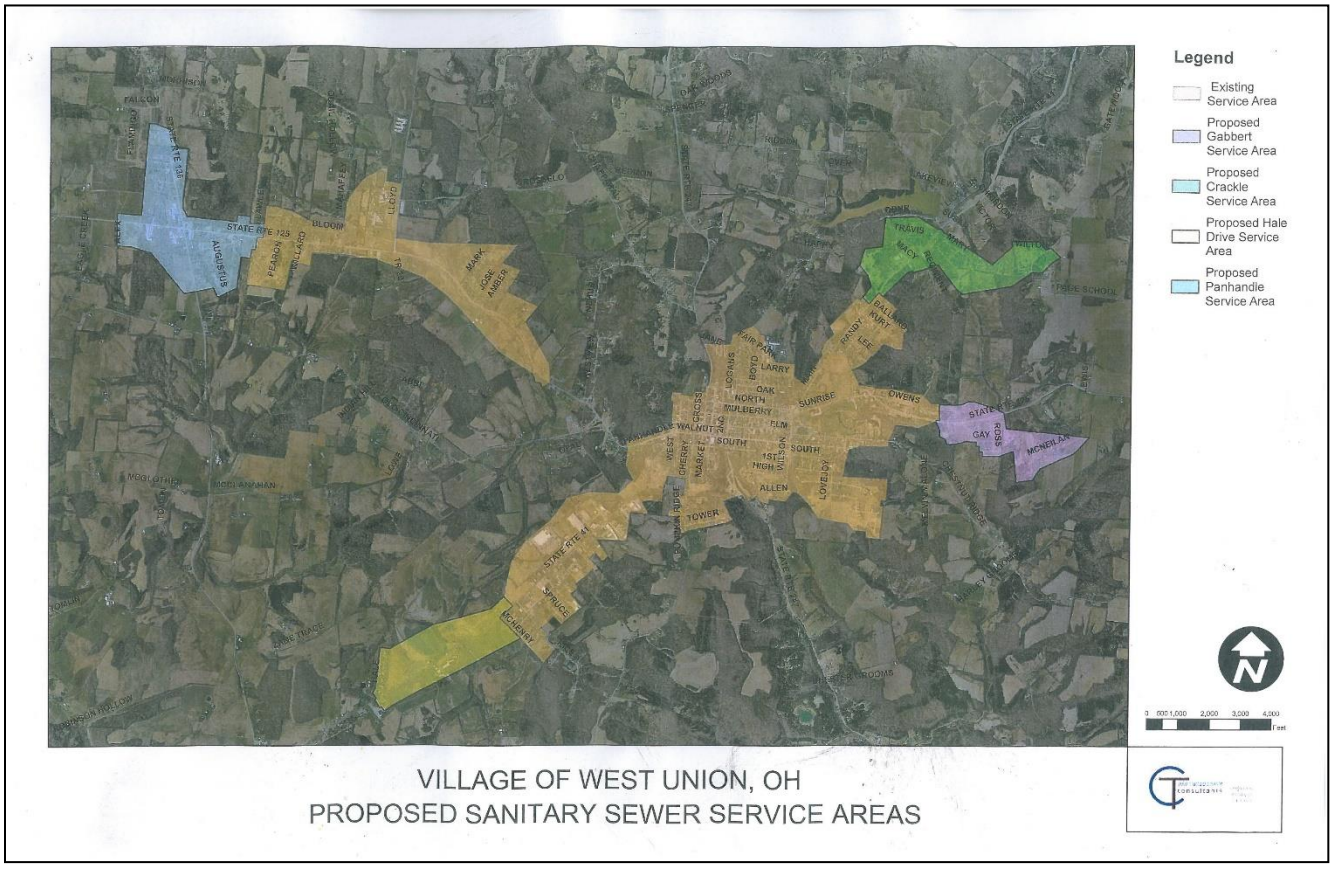

Figure 2. Map of all proposed upcoming sewer projects shaded in color around West Union. Crackle subdivision is shown in green, Panhandle in blue, Hale in yellow, and Gabbert in purple. Orange shaded areas are where sewer service already exists.

In 2017, the village began to investigate options for additional improvements to the sanitary sewer collection system and the WWTP. It was determined that work should be divided into three separate phases of work: Phase 1 included upgrading and replacing the village's existing sewage pump stations/lift stations; Phase 2 included upgrading and/or replacing the existing WWTP; and Phase 3

involves extending sewers to unsewered areas near the village. The first two phases have already been completed; this project involves the third phase of installing sewer in unsewered neighborhoods surrounding West Union. Projects have already been completed to sewer the Panhandle and Crackle subdivisions, while Gabbert, Cherry Fork, and a portion of Hale subdivisions are currently underway. The Gabbert Subdivision and Hale Drive subdivision were sewered by a project in 2021. Due to funding constraints, a portion of the Hale Drive Sewer was not constructed as part of the original project and will be finished with this phase of the sewer extension.

Population and Flow Projections

The population of West Union is 3,132, according to the 2014-2018 American Community Survey, with a median household income (MHI) of $31,493. The average population increase over the last 20 years was 5.4% for Adams County and 5.5% for West Union. However, the Ohio Development Services Agency predicts an overall 3.13% decline in population for Adams County through 2040.

The WWTP is designed to treat 700,000 gallons per day (GPD). The average daily flow of 454,000 GPD will increase by approximately 19,000 GPD once the additional homes have been connected to the system.

Discussion of Alternatives

As Adams County is under DFFOs to address failing HSTS that are creating pathogenic discharges, these failing systems must be eliminated. The following collection system alternatives were considered for this project.

No action: A 'no action' alternative is not feasible as it would violate DFFOs, health, and discharge requirements established by Ohio EPA. This would result in continued threats to human health and the environment caused by release of untreated sewage from failing HSTS.

Replacement of septic tanks: Replacing the HSTS is not an option since this is more costly than extending the collection system to residents and requires them to continue maintenance of their systems.

Gravity sewer: Gravity sewer is the most cost-effective option in terms of energy but is limited by topography. Where the topography is reasonably flat, gravity sewer is a feasible option.

Force main sewer: Force main sewer allows the new sewer alignment to traverse the hilly topography present in Adams County.

Suction pump lift station and submersible pump lift station: Suction and submersible lift stations were considered for the length of new sewer that travels through a hilly area. Suction lift stations were preferable because they require less maintenance. Suction lift stations also remove valves and the pump from the wet well, minimizing the need to perform work in confined spaces.

Selected Alternative

This phase of the West Union sewer system improvements will construct a combination of new gravity sewer collection system and force main sewer for the Hale subdivision (see Figure 3). Approximately 1,650 linear feet of 8-inch sewer and five manholes will be installed. Hale is located southwest of West Union and includes homes along State Route 41. The majority of Hale Drive was sewered in a previous phase, and this project will include the remaining unsewered homes along SR 41. Approximately 12 home sewer laterals will be installed and connected to the extended gravity sewer, and the existing septic tanks will be decommissioned, crushed, and filled.

Easements have been obtained where proposed sewer will cross private property. Residents will be contacted where an easement may be needed to install the new collection system. The flows from the proposed sewer will be sent to the West Union WWTP, which has the capacity to accept these flows. One stream crossing will be made by horizontal directional drilling (HDD) under the headwaters East Fork Eagle Creek along SR 41 to avoid impacting the stream habitat. Some trees may need to be cut down during the seasonal tree cutting times, but this will be avoided wherever possible.

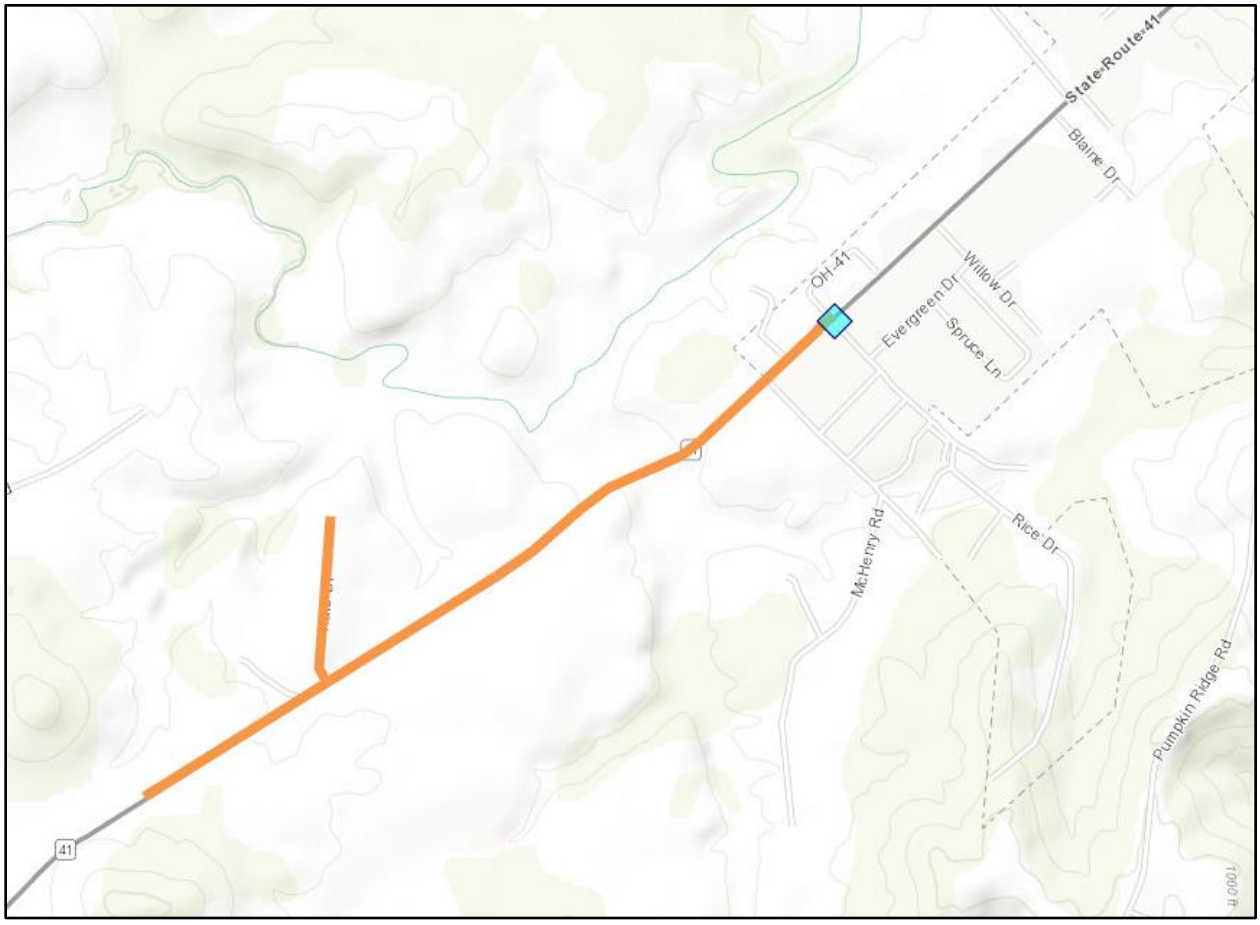

Figure 3. Map of proposed new gravity sewer and force main in the Hale subdivision of West Union marked in orange, and pump station connection in blue.

Implementation

The total project cost for the Hale sewer extension is approximately $565,000. The Village of West Union is eligible for this amount in principal forgiveness, from the WPCLF, which means this amount need not be repaid. During the 30-year loan period, West Union will save approximately $720,000 by using WPCLF principal forgiveness funding.

To pay for infrastructure maintenance and continuing improvements, West Union already implemented a 5-year sewer rate increase of 11.25% each year. These rate increases began in 2018 when the WWTP improvements were constructed.

Pending loan award in July 2025, construction will begin shortly after and will be complete by 2026.

Public Participation

The residents of the project area have been well informed about the upcoming sewer project. Many public meetings have been held updating the residents about the progress of the project schedule, new sewer rates, and easements needed to install sewer laterals and decommission the septic systems on each private residence. The village met individually with residents whose property would require an easement to discuss impacts to their property. Letters detailing the project work and new sewer arrangements have been sent to affected residents, and meeting notes and letters have been made available on the village website.

The village discussed the Gabbert and Hale sewer projects at council meetings. Copies of the minutes are available on the village webpage: https://www.westunionoh.net/water-and-sewer.

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 the Village of West Union 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.

Air Quality, Aesthetics, Dust, Noise, and Safety: The proposed project will result in temporary increases in dust, exhaust fumes, and noise from construction activities. This will be mitigated by standard construction best management practices, including emission control on motorized equipment and limiting work hours to the daytime. For these reasons, any effects on air quality will be short-term, and the project should have no significant adverse long-term impacts on local air quality. Any non-preferable aesthetics will be temporary during construction, and land and streets will be returned to pre-construction conditions. Residents will be notified before construction begins on their property or the newly acquired sewer easement near their property, and access to their driveways will be available

during the project. Construction best-practice and safety standards will be followed by the contractor for this project as outlined in detail plan notes.

Archaeological and Historical Resources: The proposed sanitary sewer system will be installed in residential and urban areas that have already undergone grading, development, and disturbance. The force main sewer lines connecting the Hale subdivision to existing sewer will be installed using horizontal directional drilling and will require very minimal disturbance, and gravity sewer will be installed along roads and residential tree-lawn which has already been disturbed. The State Historic Preservation Office concurred with Ohio EPA's determination that this project will not cause a significant adverse effect to properties listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, because there are no historic or listed archaeological sites in the project area.

In the event of archaeological finds during construction, Ohio Revised Code Section 149.53 requires contractors and subcontractors to notify the State Historic Preservation Office of any archaeological discoveries in the project area, and to cooperate with the Office in archaeological and historic surveys and salvage efforts. 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.

Endangered Species and Fish and Wildlife: Review of US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) endangered species list identified several federal and state threatened and endangered species in Adams County:

The project is within the vicinity of records for the federally endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) and northern long-ear bat. The following species of trees have relatively high value as potential bat roost: shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata*), shellbark hickory (*Carya laciniosa*), bitternut hickory (*Carya cordiformis*), black ash (*Fraxinus nigra*), green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*), white ash (*Fraxinus americana*), shingle oak (*Quercus imbricaria*), northern red oak (*Quercus rubra*), slippery elm (*Ulmus rubra*), American elm (*Ulmus americana*), eastern cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*), silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*), sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*), post oak (*Quercus stellata*), and white oak (*Quercus alba*).

Indiana bats and northern long-eared bats roost in trees that include dead and dying trees with exfoliating bark, crevices, or cavities in upland areas or riparian corridors and living trees with exfoliating bark, cavities, or hollow areas formed from broken branches or tops. However, bats are also dependent on the forest structure surrounding roost trees. Where trees must be cut, cutting is to occur between October 1 and March 31 to avoid cutting trees during active bat roosting and foraging seasons. This project will require the clearing of some trees, which will be as minimized as possible.

Seasonal tree clearing restrictions will be followed by the contractor, and erosion control silt fence will be installed around the project area to prevent soil erosion into streams and woodland area adjacent to much of the force main alignment.

The project is in the vicinity of records for the following federally proposed endangered mussel species: salamander mussel (*Simpsonias ambigua)*. The project is also within the vicinity of records for the following state threatened and endangered mussel species: butterfly (Ellipsaria lineolata), ebonyshell (*Fusconaia ebenus*), long-solid (*Fusconaia maculata maculata*), wartyback (*Quadrula nodulata*), washboard (*Megalonaias nervosa*), yellow sandshell (*Lampsilis teres*), black sandshell (*Ligumia recta*), fawnsfoot (*Truncilla donaciformis*), and the threehorn wartyback (*Obliquaria reflexa*). This project will

involve crossing under a small tributary stream, using HDD to drill under the stream to avoid disturbance. The stream bed and aquatic habitat will not be disturbed; therefore, this project will not impact these species.

The entire state of Ohio is within the range of the federally proposed endangered Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexipus).* Monarch butterflies breed using milkweeds and feed from meadow wildflowers. Because the project will be limited to residential tree lawn, and force main sewer will be installed by HDD, this habitat will not be disturbed if any may be present along roadsides. Therefore, the project will not affect this species.

The project is within the range of the green salamander (*Aneides aeneus*), a state endangered amphibian; the cave salamander (*Eurycea lucifuga*), a state endangered species; and the midland mud salamander (*Pseudotriton montanus diastictus*), a state threatened species. The project is within the range of the eastern spadefoot toad (*Scaphiopus holbrookii*), a state endangered species. This species is found in areas of sandy soils that are associated with river valleys. Breeding habitats may include flooded agricultural fields or other water holding depressions. Because wetlands, caves, seeps, and other sensitive woodland habitat are not in the project area, this project is not likely to impact these species.

The project is within the range of the Allegheny woodrat (*Neotoma magister*), a state endangered species. The Allegheny woodrat utilizes rocky outcrops such as cliffs and caves in forested areas. To avoid impacts to this species, impacts to cliffs and rocky outcrops should be avoided. In addition, a buffer of 100 feet above and 200 feet below cliffs and rocky outcrops should be maintained. Due to the location, the type of habitat within the project area, and the type of work proposed, this project is not likely to impact this species.

The project is within the range of the lark sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*), a state endangered bird. This sparrow nests in grassland habitats with scattered shrub layers, disturbed open areas, as well as patches of bare soil. These summer residents normally migrate out of Ohio shortly after their young fledge or leave the nest. Because this habitat will not be impacted, this project is not likely to impact this species.

The project is within the range of the loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*), a state endangered bird. The loggerhead shrike nests in hedgerows, thickets and fencerows. They hunt over hayfields, pastures, and other grasslands. Because this habitat will not be impacted, this project is not likely to impact this species.

Local Economy: New sewer fees will be implemented for new users of the Hale Subdivision. Residents will pay a monthly sewer fee that is an average of $34.49, or $414 annually. The average annual sewer rate of $414 equates to 1.3% of the MHI of West Union ($31,493). This may be a considerable new expense for residents, but the new sewage collection system is the lower cost alternative compared to requiring residents to purchase and replace individual on-lot septic systems. To help mitigate these project costs, homeowners will not be charged a sewer tap-in fee. There will be no direct assessment of costs to the property owners for the installation of the private laterals and septic tank closure, if the property owner donates the easement required for the installation of the work on the private property.

By using the WPCLF principal forgiveness financing, West Union has minimized the project cost and the economic impact on customers.

Surface Water Resources and Aquatic Habitat: To avoid negative effects on the East Fork Eagle Creek stream crossing made by the new sewer force main crossing, horizontal directional drilling (HDD) will be used to bore under this stream. Therefore, no surface water resources will be negatively impacted. Stormwater erosion control barriers will be put in place by the contractor to prevent silt run-off into streams and ditches.

Terrestrial Habitat: This project will not negatively impact terrestrial habitat. The new collection system will be installed along local highways, rights-of-way, and in residential tree-lawn, which do not contain valuable ecological resources. Trees will be preserved as much as possible, particularly near the two streams. If trees need to be cut down it will be during the seasonal tree cutting window described above.

Unaffected Features: This project will have no negative impacts on *Coastal Zones, Groundwater Resources, Wetlands, Safe Drinking Water, Prime Farmland, Recreational Land Use, Floodplains, or Wild and Scenic Rivers* because these resources are not present in the project area or vicinity.

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.

The project will improve surface water quality by removing failing HSTS. Regionalization is more cost-effective in the long term to prevent pathogenic HSTS discharges from contaminating Beasley Fork, Lick Run, Eagle Creek, Brush Creek and other local surface water resources.

Contact information

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