



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

July 20, 2021

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

**Village of West Union – Adams County  
Panhandle Subdivision Sewer Extension  
Loan Number: CS390989-0035**

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 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 Village of West Union can then proceed with its application for the WPCLF loan.

Sincerely,

*Jonathan Bernstein*

Jonathan Bernstein, Assistant Chief  
Division of Environmental & Financial Assistance

Attachment

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

### **Project Identification**

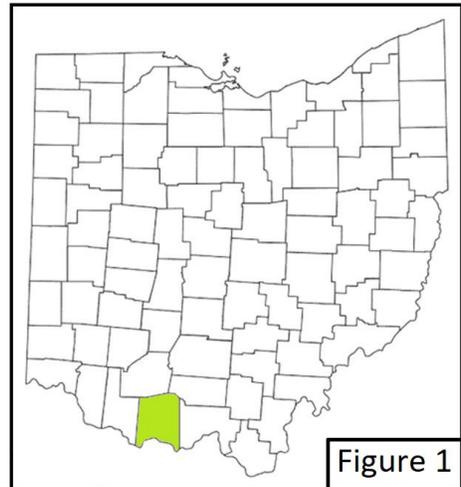
Project: Panhandle Subdivision Sewer Extension

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

Loan Number: CS390989-0035

### **Project Summary**

The Village of West Union in Adams County has requested \$3,244,928 from the Ohio Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF) to eliminate failing septic systems in the Panhandle subdivision. Adams County is under Director's Final Findings and Orders (DFFO) to remedy unsanitary conditions caused by failing household sewer treatment systems. This phase of the DFFO will be addressing the Panhandle subdivision and connecting 70 homes and small businesses to the West Union sewage collection system by December 2023, as required by the orders. This project continues the regionalization West Union began in 2008. West Union qualifies for state infrastructure grants, and principal forgiveness for the WPCLF loan, which is a loan that does not need repaid.



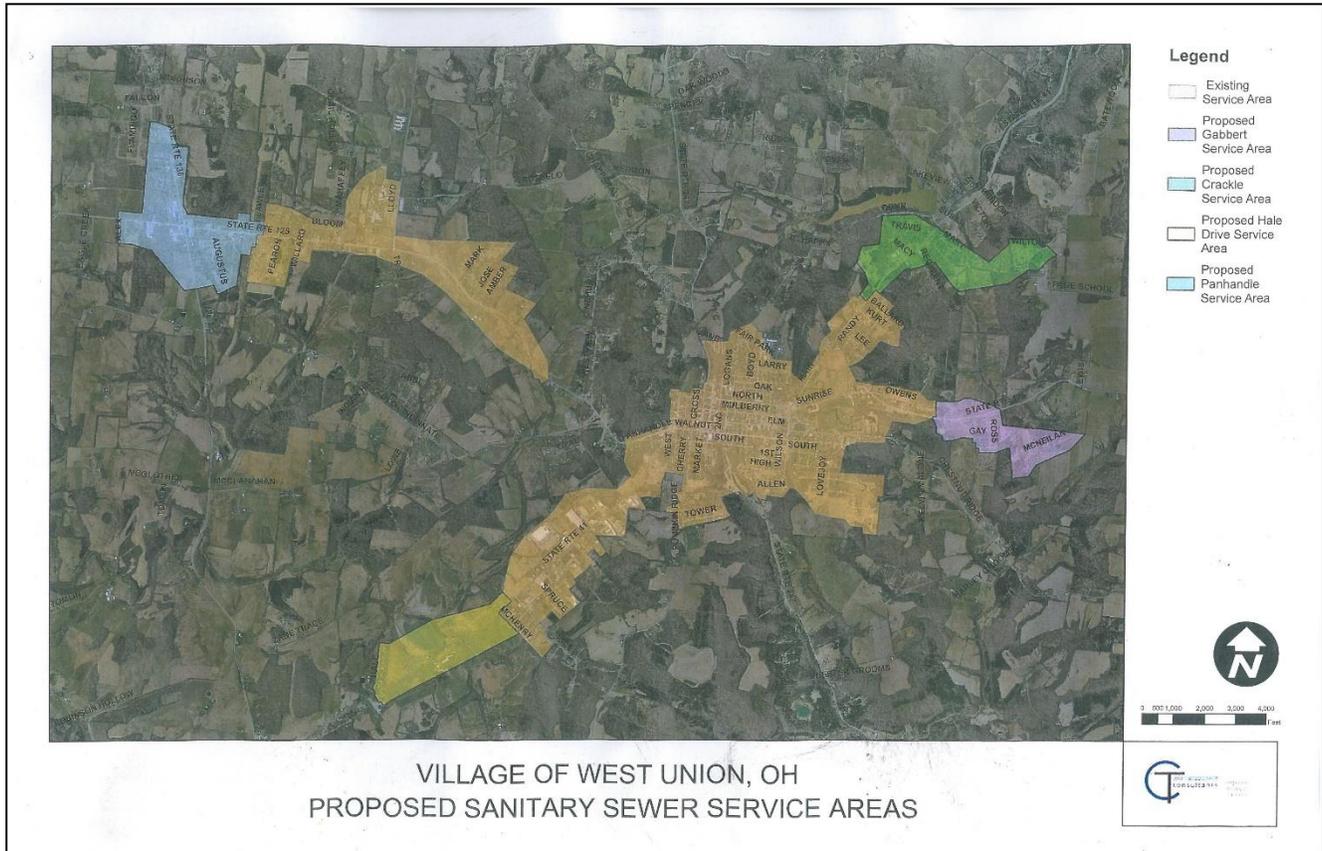
### **History and Existing Conditions**

The Village of West Union is located in the south-central part of Adams County (see Figure 1). State Routes 41, 125, and 247 all intersect in the downtown area. The village's wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) was originally constructed in 1949. A sewer system rehabilitation project was completed in 1993. After this work was completed, the village expanded its sewer system. The east side of the village was sewerred 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 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 sewer 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 DFFO to remedy unsanitary conditions due to household sewage treatment systems (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 septic systems by providing a new sewerage 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 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 wastewater treatment plant. 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 wastewater treatment plant (WWTP); and Phase 3 involves installing new sewers in unsewered areas near the village. The first two phases have already been completed and the village has begun the third phase of installing sewer in unsewered neighborhoods surrounding West Union.

## **Population and Flow Projections**

The population of West Union is 2,997 residents, according to the 2013-2017 American Community Survey, with a median household income (MHI) of \$20,183. The Village of West Union and Adams County population data was collected from the U.S. Census Bureau and population projections for Adams County were obtained from the Ohio Development Services Agency. 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 village's WWTP is located along SR 247, south of the village. It was constructed in 1949, underwent an expansion in 1979, and underwent a reconstruction in 2018. The plant discharges into Beasley Fork, a designated warmwater habitat stream. The plant is designed to treat 700,000 gallons per day (GPD). The average daily flow of 454,000 GPD will increase by approximately 78,500 GPD once the additional homes have been connected to the system.

## **Discussion of Alternatives**

As Adams County is under DFFO 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 septic tanks is not an option since this is more costly than building a new 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. Because of the hilly and rocky topography in this northeast area where Panhandle lies, gravity sewer is not a reasonable option for much of the project.

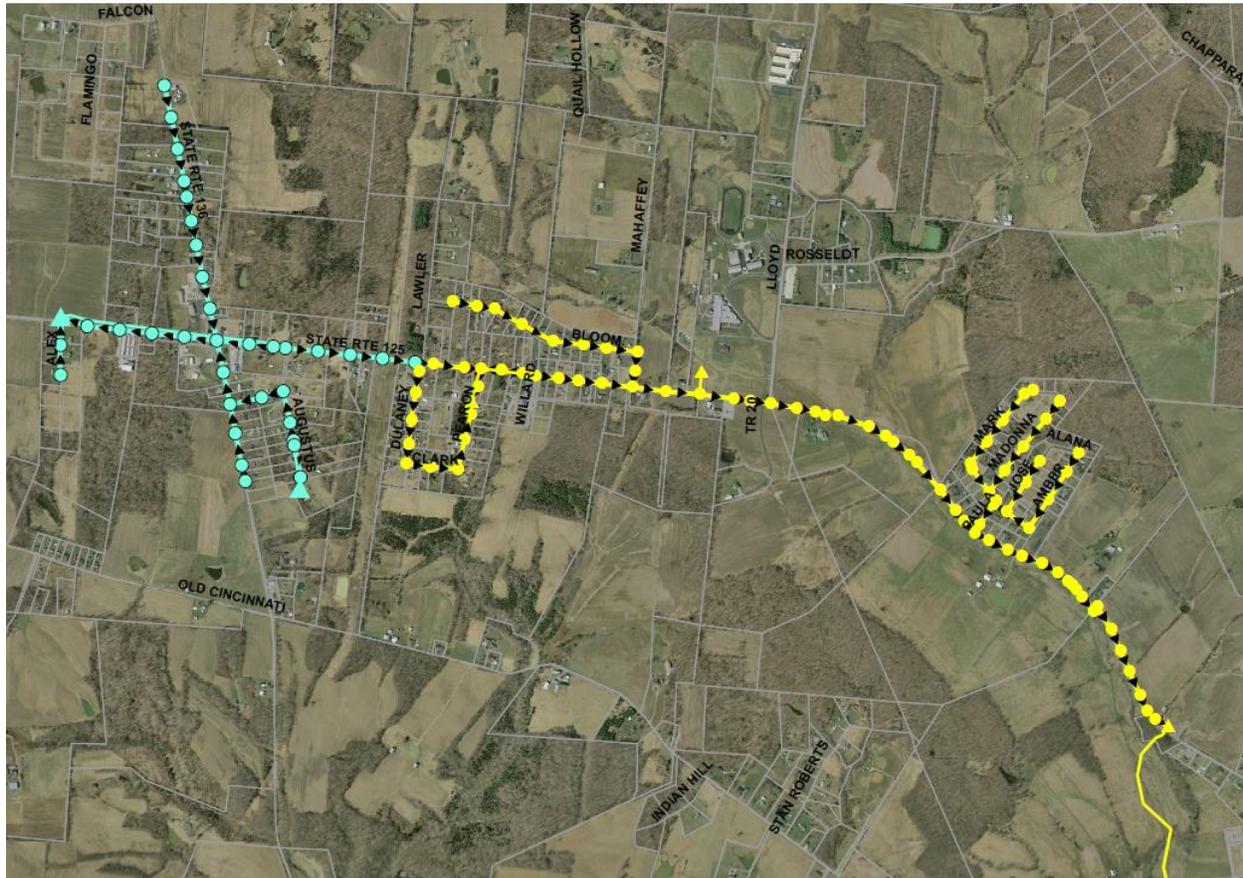
**Force main sewer:** Force main sewer allows the new sewer alignment to traverse hilly topography present in Adams County.

**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 new collection system for Panhandle at the intersections of SR 125 and SR 136. Sewer will be installed along SR 125 from Alex Lane to existing sewer on Lawler Road, Augustus Drive, and along SR 36. Laterals will be installed for approximately 70 homes and small businesses, and the old septic tanks will be decommissioned, crushed, and filled. Residents will be contacted where an easement may be needed to install the new collection system. The design flows of the proposed sewer would add

78,500 GPD 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 Lick Run along SR 125.



**Figure 3. Map of proposed new gravity (blue) sewer and force main (yellow) sewer in the Panhandle subdivision of West Union**

A combination of gravity sewer and force main sewer was chosen due to the steep topography and distance (see Figure 3). Approximately 15,000 linear feet (LF) of 8-inch to 12-inch gravity sewer and 8,700 LF of 2-inch to 6-inch HDPE force main sewer pipe will be installed. Two lift stations will be rehabilitated; one on SR 125 east of Paula Drive, and the Copeland lift station located off CIC Boulevard. A new lift station (Martin Lift Station) will be constructed on SR 125 and connected to the force main.

Suction lift stations were chosen over submersible design due to ease of access for maintenance. Force main sewer will be installed to transport collected flow from Panhandle to an existing pump station on SR 125.

### **Implementation**

The total project cost for the Panhandle sewer extension is approximately \$4,756,285. The Village of West Union will combine a \$500,000 grant from the Ohio Water Development Authority (OWDA) with a state infrastructure grant in the amount of \$1,000,000, and a principal forgiveness loan in the amount \$3,000,000 from the WPCLF. The principal forgiveness loan will not need to be repaid.

For the remaining \$244,928, West Union is eligible for a 0% regionalization discount interest rate. During the 30-year loan period, West Union will save approximately \$3.7 million dollars by using WPCLF 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.

### *Project Schedule*

Pending loan award in September 2021, the village plans to begin construction late this year and project completion is anticipated by the end of 2022.

### **Public Participation**

The residents of Panhandle 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 Panhandle sewer project at council meetings. Copies of the minutes are available on the village webpage: <https://www.westunionoh.net/water-and-sewer>.

Ohio EPA is not aware of any opposition to this project. Ohio EPA will make a copy of this document available to the public on its web page: [www.epa.state.oh.us/defa/ofa#169638769-wpclf-documents-for-review-and-comment](http://www.epa.state.oh.us/defa/ofa#169638769-wpclf-documents-for-review-and-comment) and distribute it to interested parties. Information supporting the Environmental Assessment (EA) is available from the project contact named below.

The following agencies reviewed this project's planning information and provided comments:

Ohio Environmental Protection Agency  
State Historic Preservation Office  
Ohio Department of Natural Resources  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

None of the review agencies opposes the project.

### **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:* Adams County meets standards for the six regulated air pollutants (carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, lead, particulate matter, and ozone). 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.

Agriculture, Farmland Protection, and Land Use: Because this project will be installing sanitary sewer lines underneath existing streets via narrow trenches dug, and horizontal directional drilled (HDD) pipe under the stream does not change land use, no agricultural land will be lost. Land use will be temporarily disrupted during construction but will be returned to pre-construction condition after the new sewer is installed.

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. Much of the sewer lines connecting Panhandle to existing sewer will be installed using horizontal directional drilling and will require very minimal disturbance. 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-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*). The following species of trees have relatively high value as potential Indiana bat roost trees to include: 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 bat roost trees consist of 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, Indiana 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 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 forcemain alignment.

The project is in the vicinity of records for the following federally endangered mussel species: clubshell (*Pleurobema clava*) fanshell (*Cyprogenia stegaria*), pink mucket (*Lampsilis orbiculata*), rayed bean (*Villosa fabalis*), sheepnose (*Plethobasus cyphus*), and snuffbox (*Epioblasma triquetra*). 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 (*Megaloniais nervosa*), yellow sandshell (*Lampsilis teres*), black sandshell (*Ligumia recta*), fawnsfoot (*Truncilla donaciformis*), and the threehorn wartyback (*Obliquaria reflexa*). This project will involve crossing under Lick Run on SR 125, 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 project is within the range of the timber rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*), a state endangered species, and a federal species of concern. The timber rattlesnake is a woodland species, utilizing dry slopes and rocky outcrops. In addition to using wooded areas, the timber rattlesnake utilizes sunlit gaps in the canopy for basking and deep rock crevices for overwintering. 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 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.

Running Buffalo Clover (*Trifolium stoloniferum*), a federally endangered species, is found in partially shaded woodlots, mowed areas (lawns, parks, cemeteries), and along streams and trails, and requires periodic disturbance and a somewhat open habitat to successfully flourish, but cannot tolerate full-sun, full-shade, or severe disturbance. Because the project area is in residential tree-lawns, farmfield, and woodland edge, it is unlikely that this species will be present in the project

area. The project was reviewed by USFWS and ODNR and they concur that there will be no adverse effects to this species.

Energy Use: This project will have an increase in energy use due to the installation of pump stations, but the amount of additional energy will be minimal and will not require a substantial new amount of electricity demand.

Ground Water Resources: There are no public or private ground water supply wells that could be affected by pumping from temporary dewatering wells in the project vicinity.

Local Economy: New sewer fees will be implemented for benefitting users of the Panhandle Subdivision. Residents will pay a monthly sewer fee that is an average of \$34.49/month, or \$414/year. The average annual sewer rate of \$414/year equates to 2% of the median household income (MHI) of West Union (\$20,183). This may be a considerable new expense for residents, but it is understood that the new sewer improvements are necessary. The new sewerage collection system alternative 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 and state infrastructure grants, West Union has minimized the project cost and the economic impact on customers.

Safe Drinking Water: West Union purchases their drinking water from Adams County, and this project will not affect local private well drinking water resources.

Surface Water Resources, Aquatic Habitat, and Wetlands: To avoid negative effects on the Lick Run stream crossing made by the new sewer forcemain 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 runoff into streams and ditches. There are no wetlands in the project area or new sewer forcemain alignment.

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. It is not anticipated that trees will need cut down, and construction will be in right-of-way-, residential yards, or previously disturbed field.

This project will have no negative impacts on Coastal Zones, Unique or Major Landforms, Floodplains, or Wild and Scenic Rivers because these resources are not present in the project area or vicinity.

## **Conclusion**

Based on its review of this project's general plans and other information, 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.

The Panhandle Sewer Extension project will benefit surface water quality, public and environmental health, and reduce pathogens from HSTS.

Ohio EPA expects the economic impact of the project on the average user to be minimized because West Union will receive principal forgiveness and a state infrastructure grant for the construction of the new sewer. Residents will not be charged a tap-in fee to connect to the sewer or to have their home septic systems taken offline, crushed, and filled. Residents understand that this is a necessary project and do not oppose the new sewer.

The project will improve surface water quality by removing failing septic systems from use and eliminating pathogen sources. 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 surface water resources.

### **Contact Information**

Megan Osika  
Ohio Environmental Protection Agency  
Division of Environmental and Financial Assistance  
P.O. Box 1049  
Columbus, OH 43216-1049  
(614) 644-3661  
[megan.osika@epa.ohio.gov](mailto:megan.osika@epa.ohio.gov)