August 7, 2020

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

Aqua Ohio – Summit County
New Franklin Waterline Extension
Loan Number: FS391577-0004

The attached Environmental Assessment (EA) is for a waterline extension project in New Franklin which the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency intends to finance through its Water Supply Revolving Loan Account (WSRLA) 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 WSRLA 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, Aqua Ohio can then proceed with the application for the WSRLA loan.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Bernstein

Jonathan Bernstein, Assistant Chief
Division of Environmental & Financial Assistance

Attachment
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Identification

Project: New Franklin Waterline Extension

Applicant: Aqua Ohio, Inc.
6650 South Avenue
Boardman, OH 44512

Loan Number: FS391577-0004

Project Summary

Aqua Ohio, Inc. has requested financial assistance from the Ohio Water Supply Revolving Loan Account (WSRLA) to regionalize and extend water service to New Franklin in Summit County, where the groundwater quality is marginal. Up to 13 small public water systems will be eliminated. All work will be in road rights-of-way, areas lacking important environmental resources.

History & Existing Conditions

In the greater project area, poorly drained soils, failing septic systems, and poor well water quality have limited significant economic development. Groundwater routinely exceeds safe standards for iron and manganese, and sodium and total dissolved solids are elevated.

Aqua Ohio owns and operates a water treatment plant (WTP) in nearby Massillon, Ohio. The WTP is groundwater-sourced and has a 15 million gallon per day (MGD) capacity with average production of 10 MGD. The WTP provides water to the nearby City of Green, as well as Massillon, parts of North Canton, Village of Hills and Dales, and parts of the townships of Jackson, Perry, Tuscarawas, Lake, and Plain.

Along a business corridor on State Route 93 (see Figure 1), there is a concentration of non-community public water systems (NCPWSs), some of which are highly susceptible to contamination. The NCPWS owners/operators are supportive of regionalization with the Massillon WTP, as 10 of the 13 PWSs have received notices of violation from Ohio EPA for exceeding coliform and manganese.

Population and Demand Projections

The City of New Franklin is located in southwestern Summit County, has a population of 14,180, and is relatively close to Akron and Canton. The available land and proximity to job centers has led to growth. Over the next 20 years, the City anticipates increased economic development along State Route 93 that depends on extending centralized water and sewer service.

The project area includes 178 homes and 98 commercial lots. Aqua Ohio has letters of commitment from all 13 of the NCPWSs. Residential participation is voluntary and total demand projections are not known yet. However, the Massillon WTP has sufficient capacity to add New Franklin.
Alternatives

Aqua Ohio evaluated two feasible alternatives – regionalization with Aqua Ohio WTP and construction of a new water treatment facility in New Franklin. Doing nothing, the “no-action” alternative, is not feasible because it leaves the area reliant on unsafe public water supplies.

Aqua Ohio regionalization

This alternative involves extending Aqua Ohio waterlines from the adjacent City of Green into New Franklin. New waterlines would most importantly extend along State Route 93 for about 1½ miles so the NCPWSs can be eliminated. The system would be owned and operated by Aqua Ohio.

Construction of new water treatment facility in New Franklin

Under this option, the City would form a new city-owned public water system and construct a new water treatment facility. Groundwater is the only reasonable option for source water. It is uncertain whether a groundwater supply of sufficient quantity and quality could be found. A new well field would be needed, as well as a treatment facility, transmission main, and elevated storage tank. The cost of this alternative is approximately twice that of regionalization and is cost-prohibitive.

Selected Alternative

Aqua Ohio proposes extending waterlines from the City of Green water main located at East Caston Road and South Main Street (see Figure 2). The project includes approximately 21,000 linear feet of 12-inch water main, valves, hydrants, and appurtenances. Following connection to the new water service, the 13 NCPWSs along State Route 93 will be eliminated.

Implementation

The estimated cost for the waterline extension project is $4,204,000. Aqua Ohio will borrow approximately $2,102,000 from the WSRLA as a 30-year loan at the discounted regionalization interest rate of 0% to finance this project. Additionally, the project is eligible for up to $2,102,000 in principal forgiveness, which does not need to be repaid. Aqua Ohio, and therefore New Franklin, will save approximately $3,600,000 by using WSRLA money at this rate, compared to the market rate of 2.13%.

Assuming an October loan award, construction will start in autumn 2020 and be completed by November 2021.

Public Participation

There have been numerous newspaper articles about this project and many letters of support from the PWS owners/operators. Participation is voluntary, so there should be minimal controversy. Ohio EPA is unaware of opposition to or controversy about the project.

Ohio EPA will make a copy of this document available to the public on its web page (https://epa.ohio.gov/defa/ofa#169638770-wsrla-documents-for-review-and-comment) and will provide it on request to interested parties.
Environmental Impacts

The project has the potential to adversely affect the following environmental attributes, but the impacts will be avoided, mitigated or reduced to acceptable levels, as described below.

Surface Water or Ground Water Resources: The majority of the project area will not have significant adverse long-term impacts on surface water resources as there will be no in-water work, and no wetlands or scenic or recreational rivers are present in the project area. Stream crossings will be bored by directional drilling and will not affect surface waters.

Clearing activities are limited to those areas necessary for construction and the movement of construction equipment. Minor, short-term impacts from construction could occur. In the event of severe storms, the project location could be prone to runoff and deposition, necessitating the use of construction mitigation best management practices, as outlined in the detail plans.

Dewatering to enable work below grade will be necessary. Engineering controls are part of the specifications to minimize the impacts of discharging pumped water to a stream or storm sewer.

Many properties in the project area are served by private wells. Construction trenches will average a depth of four feet, significantly shallower than wells, and are unlikely to affect well water.

The contractor will implement erosion and sediment controls to prevent water pollution. The project will have no long- or short-term adverse effect on surface waters and no significant adverse impacts to groundwater is expected from construction.

Terrestrial Habitat and Endangered Species: The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) indicates that the project is within the range of the endangered Indiana bat and threatened northern long-eared bat. Limited tree removal may be necessary as part of this project. Trees within the project disturbance area include a few mature trees and ornamental trees and bushes. Other mature trees are located outside of the work area and would provide alternative habitat for bats that may use the trees that will be removed. Tree removal will only be permitted to occur October 1 - March 31 and tree trimming and removal is limited to only those trees necessary for completion of the project (e.g., trees within the excavation location or within the path of heavy equipment, etc.). These tree clearing restrictions will further ensure that any potential impacts to Indiana bats or northern long-eared bats are avoided.

While the species of concern bald eagle’s range includes Summit County, they are not believed to be present in the project area. This is due to the project area's habitat (urban roads) not being conducive to the species as described on USFWS webpages. Therefore, we have determined that the project is not likely to adversely affect the bald eagle. Similarly, the threatened eastern massasagua snake and threatened northern monkshood flower are not likely to be present in the project area because of lack of preferred habitats.

Based on this, the project as designed will have no short- or long-term adverse impact on terrestrial habitat or endangered species.

Air Quality: Summit County is in attainment of the national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS) for ozone (smog), oxides of nitrogen (an ozone precursor), oxides of sulfur, lead, particulate matter and carbon monoxide. The operation of mobile construction equipment for this project will produce pollutant emissions in quantities too small, due to the limited scope and timeframe of construction,
to place Summit County out of attainment of the NAAQS. These emissions will be reduced through the use of emission control equipment and the use of fuels that produce lower emissions of particulates, oxides of nitrogen and oxides of sulfur.

Based on this, the project as designed will have no short- or long-term adverse impact on air quality.

**Dust, Noise, Odors, and Aesthetics:** There will be unavoidable but temporary effects of construction. Construction equipment noise and diesel odors will be controlled by the use of emissions equipment and mufflers. Dust will be suppressed as needed with water. The construction site will be restored to original condition or better upon completion.

Based on the above, the project will have no adverse impact on existing levels of dust, noise, odors, and aesthetics.

**Archaeological and Historical Resources:** Based on the project’s alignment along road rights-of-way, and through review of State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) mapping data, Ohio EPA has made a finding that the proposed project will have no effect on unrecorded archaeological sites or properties eligible to be or listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In the event of archaeological finds during construction, contractors and subcontractors are required under Ohio Revised Code Section 149.53 to notify the SHPO of any archaeological discoveries in the project area, and to cooperate with that entity and Ohio EPA in archaeological and historic surveys and salvage efforts when appropriate.

**Safety and Traffic:** The detail plans require the use of typical traffic management measures during temporary lane closures. Residents will be notified of street and driveway closures. Access will be maintained at all times for emergency vehicles. The project will not result in permanent traffic rerouting. Based on this, the project will have no significant adverse short- or long-term impact on local traffic patterns.

**Local Economy:** To tie into the waterline, the household fee will be approximately $1,200. Additionally, there is expected to be a “lot fee,” which has not been determined. Connection is voluntary. The expected monthly residential water rate is $42 ($504 annually). This is 0.74% of the New Franklin median household income (MHI) of $68,537. Water bills less than 1.8% of MHI are generally considered affordable.

**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.

This project equally serves the project area and no particular segment of the community will be faced with additional adverse impacts or be deprived of environmental benefits, compared to any other segment.
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.

Ohio EPA expects the economic impact of the project on the average user to be acceptable because new customer residential rates will be reasonable, below the Ohio average, and Aqua Ohio has a favorable construction financing package.

The project will ensure a safe, reliable source of drinking water to the project area and eliminate unsafe public water systems.

Contact information

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Figure 1. Public water system locations
Figure 2. Project Location