



Mike DeWine, Governor
Jon Husted, Lt. Governor
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December 6, 2021

Limited Environmental Review and Finding of No Significant Impact

**Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks – Hocking County
Clear Creek Bank Stabilization and Fish Habitat Project
WRRSP loan number: WR391490-0010**

**Sponsor: Akron Sanitary Sewer Reconstruction 2019 Large Diameter Lining Project
Sponsoring loan number: CS390095-0192**

The attached Limited Environmental Review (LER) is for a nonpoint source project in Hocking County which the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency intends to finance through its Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program (WRRSP). 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 WRRSP 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

Jonathan Bernstein, Chief
Division of Environmental and Financial Assistance

Attachment

LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Project Identification

WRRSP Project:	Clear Creek Bank Stabilization and Fish Habitat Project
WRRSP Applicant:	Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks
WRRSP Loan:	WR391490-0010
Sponsoring Community:	City of Akron
Sponsoring Project:	Sanitary Sewer Reconstruction 2019 Large Diameter Lining
Sponsoring WPCLF Loan:	CS390095-0192

Project Summary

Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks seeks \$733,250 in funding through Ohio EPA's Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program (WRRSP) to restore and protect the Clear Creek Bank Stabilization and Fish Habitat project by restoring three sites within Clear Creek located in Hocking County (Figure 1 and Figure 2). The project includes a former bridge site that has failed and presently acts as a low head dam and two bank areas that are highly unstable and erode during flooding events.

It is anticipated that the City of Akron will sponsor the project through a Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF) loan administered by Ohio EPA's Division of Environmental and Financial Assistance (DEFA). Funds for the Clear Creek Bank Stabilization and Fish Habitat project may be provided by advancing a portion of the interest to be paid by Akron on its Sanitary Sewer Reconstruction 2019 Large Diameter Lining project. It is expected that other WPCLF loans may be used to sponsor the Metro Park's project. By voluntarily agreeing to sponsor the Clear Creek project, Akron and other sponsors will receive up to an additional 0.1% reduction on its WPCLF loan rate.

The purpose of the WRRSP is to counteract the loss of ecological function and biological diversity that jeopardizes the health of many of Ohio's water resources. In the program, entities such as park districts and land conservancies (implementers) undertake ecologically restorative and protective projects. Borrowers from the WPCLF voluntarily sponsor such projects in return for interest rate discounts. Ohio EPA foregoes a portion of the interest that borrowers would repay to the WPCLF and advances it to implementers to carry out the ecologically beneficial projects. Properties are acquired, restored, and managed in perpetuity under a management plan and an environmental covenant, which establishes use restrictions on the land.

History & Existing Conditions

The Clear Creek Watershed is just under 92 square miles. Clear Creek's headwaters originate in western Fairfield County near Royalton, and it flows east/southeast to its confluence with the Hocking River in Good Hope Township in Hocking County. These headwaters are surrounded by

tiled agricultural fields. During heavy rain and flooding events, sediments are transported downstream from the fields and Clear Creek Metro Park quickly receives the rising water levels causing erosion and depositing sediment into the riffle areas through a nearly closed canopy forest cover.

Clear Creek bisects the area known as Clear Creek Metro Park and Clear Creek Dedicated State Nature Preserve. Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks opened Clear Creek Metro Park in 1996. The park is over 5,000 acres. And at 4,769 acres, Clear Creek State Nature Preserve is the largest dedicated State Nature Preserve in Ohio. Nearly 40 species of plants and animals that have been documented in the preserve are listed on Ohio's endangered, threatened and rare species plant and animal lists including records of the federally endangered Indiana Bat and federally threatened northern long-eared bat. And over 100 species of birds breed in the Clear Creek Valley each year. The area is one of only a few locations in Ohio that supports this type of avian breeding annually.

Clear Creek Metro Park is approximately 95 percent forested with a variety of forest types present including oak-hickory, southern Appalachian oak, mixed mesophytic, and mixed bottomland forests. Metro Parks maintains several bottomland and ridgetop open fields to promote a diversity of habitat, and to provide opportunities to view wildlife. Within these forest ravines, intermittent streams, fed from ground-water seeps, host a variety of salamanders and several dragonfly species including the state potentially threatened tiger spiketail dragonfly. This species is found only in streams with very little to no fish populations and requires very high water quality. The soils within the park are typical for the region and contain a high content of sand because of the dominant black hand sandstone bedrock and geology typical of the Hocking County area.

Project Description

Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks' Clear Creek Bank Stabilization and Fish Habitat project consists of restoration work at three distinct sites: Site 2, Site 3, and Site 4. At Clear Creek Site 2 a former concrete bridge crossing installed in the 1930s has collapsed. The project will involve the removal of the bridge structure to enhance natural fish migration and movement in Clear Creek. Work will also include the stabilization and revegetation of eroded stream bank in this area. At Clear Creek Site 3, work consists of approximately 500 feet of stream bank restoration and stabilization. The north bank of this location is Clear Creek Road. And at Clear Creek Site 4, work consists of approximately 500 feet of stream bank restoration and stabilization. The north bank of this location is also Clear Creek Road. Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks will place environmental covenants on each of the three project areas. This project will allow Clear Creek to continue to be in full attainment of its warmwater habitat aquatic life use designation and will increase aquatic health, species diversity, habitat structure and species movement in the lower Clear Creek watershed.

Property Management and Maintenance

The property will continue to be managed as a passive use park. Since the three sites are located in the stream, they are not readily accessible. Each of the three sites will be protected in perpetuity through use restrictions spelled out in an environmental covenant, which will be part of the deed. Above any other competing management objectives, the protection and preservation of the water resources, as specified in the environmental covenant, shall rule the management of the WRRSP-protected property.

These restrictions include:

- There shall be no agricultural, industrial commercial or residential activity undertaken or allowed.
- The property may not be divided, partitioned, subdivided or conveyed except in its current configurations.
- There shall be no buildings or other structures, including, but not limited to, billboards or advertising of any kind, camping accommodations, and mobile homes shall not be erected or placed.
- There shall be no mining, drilling, exploring for or removal of minerals, oil or gas.
- There shall be no ditching, draining diking, filling, excavating, or removal of topsoil, sand, gravel, rock or other materials, except as may be necessary for reasonable preservation, management and restoration purposes.
- There shall be no manipulation or alteration of wetlands, creeks, streams, surface or subsurface springs or other bodies of water. Reasonable alternations to surface water bodies and their associated riparian zones may be permitted for the purpose of protecting or improving water quality or aquatic habitat, upon the condition that prior to any such alterations, a plan for such activities shall be proposed in writing by the Owner or any Transferee and shall be approved by Ohio EPA or shall be approved as an amendment to the Project Management Plan.
- There shall be no open dumping.
- There shall be no building of new roads or other rights-of-way. Existing roads may be maintained but shall not be widened or improved.
- There shall be no operation of automobiles, trucks, snowmobiles, dune buggies, motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles or any other motorized recreational vehicles.
- In accordance with State regulations and as approved by Ohio EA and authorized by the Owner, hunting and trapping may be permitted in order to maintain ecological balance or to protect human health and safety.
- Except in areas already identified in the Plan as being disturbed, and as may be necessary for reasonable preservation, management or restoration purposes, to protect human health and safety, or to maintain a diversity of naturally occurring habitat types and control of exotic non-native and exotic species of plants, there shall be no removal, destruction, cutting, trimming or mowing of any trees or other vegetation and no non-native species shall be introduced.

Implementation

The WRRSP loan award for Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks Clear Creek Bank Stabilization and Fish Habitat project may be made possible through Akron's Sanitary Sewer Reconstruction 2019 Large Diameter Lining project WPCLF loan award.

Public Participation

Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks staff members will carry out public awareness and educational outreach elements resulting from the Clear Creek Bank Stabilization and Fish Habitat project. Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks maintains a website (www.metroparks.net/parks-and-trails/clear-creek/) where they will share information about the project.

As part of its State Environmental Review Process, DEFA will post this LER and Finding of No Significant Impact to its web page located at: <https://epa.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/epa/divisions-and-offices/environmental-financial-assistance/announcements>.

Conclusion

Ohio EPA conducts environmental reviews of all projects prior to awarding WPCLF financing. The proposed project meets the project type criteria for a Limited Environmental Review (LER); namely, it is a water quality protection project consisting of non-structural practices. Furthermore, the project meets the other qualifying criteria for an LER; specifically, the proposed project:

Will have no significant environmental effect and will require no specific impact mitigation as the planning activities for the project identified no potential adverse impacts to the quality of the human environment or to sensitive resources such as floodplains, wetlands, state or federally-designated wild, scenic or recreational rivers, riparian areas, prime or unique agricultural lands, aquifer recharge zones, archaeological or historically significant sites, air quality or threatened or endangered species. In fact, the proposed project will have beneficial environmental impacts by restoring and preserving Clear Creek stream within Clear Creek Metro Park.

Will have no effect on high-value environmental resources since it will protect the quality of Clear Creek.

Is not a controversial action as it will benefit the environment and no significant public opposition has been expressed.

Does not create a new or relocate an existing discharge to surface or ground waters since the proposed project does not involve a point source discharge.

Will not provide capacity to serve a population substantially greater than the existing population since the proposed project is not a publicly owned wastewater treatment works designed to serve a designated area. Instead, it is a restoration and protection project of high-quality aquatic resources.

Contact info

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Figure 1. Clear Creek Bank Stabilization and Fish Habitat Project Location

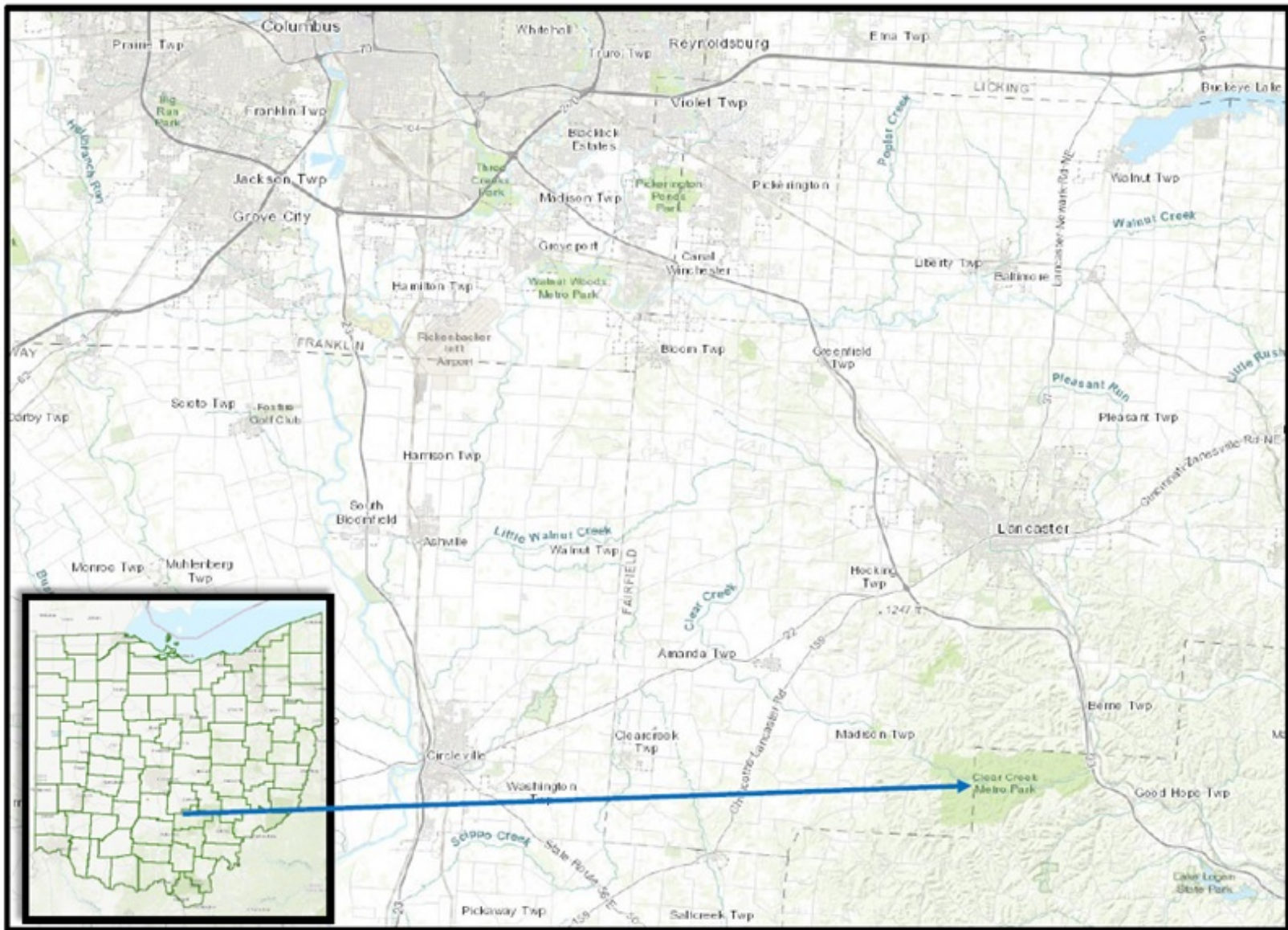


Figure 2. Property water resources – Clear Creek Bank Stabilization and Fish Habitat Project

