May 8, 2026

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

City of Nelsonville – Athens County
Regional Collection System Improvements Phase 5
Loan Number: CS390649-0031

The attached Environmental Assessment (EA) is for a sewer installation and improvement project in Nelsonville 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 City of Nelsonville 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: Regional Collection System Improvements Phase 5

Applicant: City of Nelsonville
211 Lake Hope Drive
Nelsonville, Ohio 45764

Loan Number: CS390649-0031

Figure 1. Athens County

Project Summary

The City of Nelsonville in Athens County (Figure 1) requested $3,786,500 from the Ohio Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF) to make improvements to the city's sanitary sewer collection system and support the regionalization of unsewered areas within the city and in surrounding communities. The fifth phase of this project will expand upon these improvements through sewer lining and lift station improvements, as well as extending sewers to Wend Road and Crihfield Drive.

Nelsonville is eligible for the whole project cost as principal forgiveness, which means the loan will not need to be repaid.

Construction will occur within existing public rights-of-way, utilizing previously disturbed areas where roadways and utilities exist.

History & Existing Conditions

Nelsonville owns and operates a sanitary sewer collection system and wastewater treatment plant (WWTP). Areas within the city as well as several small surrounding unsewered communities utilize household sewage treatment systems (HSTS) to collect and treat sanitary waste. Many of these on-lot treatment systems are failing due to age or incorrect sizing. Nelsonville has committed to accepting and treating sanitary waste from these areas and new sewers have been constructed in previous phases of the project. Regionalization is ongoing in unsewered areas in the surrounding communities of Buchtel, Murray City, and Carbon Hill. Various repairs to existing sewers and lift stations have also occurred.

In 2023, Nelsonville began operating a new WWTP on Elm Rock Road that has sufficient capacity to treat waste from Nelsonville and the surrounding areas. This has replaced Nelsonville's previous WWTP.

This next phase of Nelsonville's regional collection system improvements will address failing on-lot septic systems in the areas along Wend Road and Crihfield Drive. Wend Road is within the city limits

and has four homes that currently rely on HSTS. Crihfield Drive, off Hillside Drive, has five homes on HSTS. An extension of the collection system will be necessary to serve these customers.

Failing sewers are also a problem within Nelsonville's aging collection system. A 15-inch- to 18-inch-diameter trunk sewer runs through Nelsonville on Chestnut, Fayette, and Columbus streets. It has been in service for decades. Replacement of the lower portion was constructed as a part of the first phase of this project. The remaining portion of the trunk sewer needs to be rehabilitated to promote sustainability of the system.

Additionally, the city had a report of sanitary sewer overflow at the Buchtel main lift station in March 2024. The station needs pump upgrades to maintain reliable operation. The chemical feed system has also failed and needs to be upgraded to alleviate the hydrogen sulfide gas odors at the discharge location, which has prompted numerous complaints along Burr Oak Boulevard. Additionally, the aged Dorr Run lift station needs new piping and the Delbert and Buckeye lift stations need upgrades to increase reliability.

Located just outside of Nelsonville city limits, the Athens-Hocking Landfill currently utilizes trucking to haul leachate to the City of Logan's WWTP. Through recent upgrade, a sewer line has been installed adjacent to the landfill that facilitates a physical piped connection to transport the leachate. Nelsonville has agreed to take over the treatment of this waste once connection to the Buckeye lift station is established.

Population and Flow Projections

Nelsonville currently serves approximately 1,700 incorporated customers, 300 outside city limits, and 330 additional regional connections from Buchtel, Murray City, and Carbon Hill for a total of 2,330 customers. Population changes in Nelsonville and the surrounding communities from 2000 to 2010 were used to project population trends until 2050. Overall, the populations in these communities were predicted to stay the same or decrease slightly. These trends were considered during the design stages of Nelsonville's new WWTP so it will have the capacity to treat additional waste from these surrounding communities and sewer extensions within city limits. Additionally, Nelsonville has agreed to the collection and treatment of 30,000 gallons per day (GPD) of landfill leachate from the Athens-Hocking Landfill.

Alternatives

- *No action*: Doing nothing is not an acceptable alternative because it would allow undersized and deteriorated HSTS to continue to operate improperly which could contribute to surface water contamination and potentially create a public health threat.
- *Replacement:* Residents could replace their individual on-lot systems, but this option is very costly, and many customers may not be able to afford it.
- *Installation of small WWTPs:* The surrounding areas could construct their own individual WWTPs to be operated at a small scale. This is also a costly option that would place a burden on the residents to continue to fund their operation and maintenance.
- *Regionalization:* The dense spacing of homes in the unsewered areas and proximity to the regional treatment plant afford the option of sewer installation to connect these areas to the

Nelsonville wastewater collection system. This option will not require additional treatment system construction.

Selected Alternative

Considering the need for reliable sanitary collection and treatment services in the area and the benefits of utility regionalization, it is more cost effective for areas surrounding Nelsonville to send their sanitary waste to a regional WWTP rather than replacing individual HSTS or constructing one or more small WWTPs. Regionalization of the unsewered areas to Nelsonville is the best alternative for treatment as it eliminates the need for additional treatment systems and discharges, and it eliminates failing on-lot systems which can negatively impact public health and water quality.

This project consists of extending sewers to the unsewered areas along Wend Road and Crihfield Drive. It was determined that a gravity collection system was the most efficient in cost, constructability, and maintenance for the Wend Road area as they are near existing gravity sewers and only a small extension is necessary. A pressure system will be utilized for the Crihfield Drive area due to the elevation of the existing homes. In all, over 1,000 linear feet of new 1.25-inch to 8-inch gravity sewer will be installed in the unsewered areas.

Rehabilitation of aged trunk sewer along Chestnut, Fayette, and Columbus streets is the only feasible option that will sufficiently address the maintenance issues. Due to difficult ground conditions, the depth of the sewers, and the preservation of existing brick streets, cured-in-place-pipe (CIPP) lining will be utilized. CIPP lining is the less intrusive and cost-efficient approach for trunk sewer rehabilitation. Planned CIPP lining totals 4,740 linear feet.

Four lift stations will be improved to maintain the efficiency and reliability of Nelsonville's wastewater collection system. The Buchtel lift station will be upgraded with new pumps and the chemical feed system will be replaced to prevent overflows and odor issues along Burr Oak Boulevard. The Delbert lift station will get new electrical components and new pumps. The Dorr Run lift station will receive new railings for the pump and internal piping replaced. The Buckeye lift station will be completely replaced and designed to receive 30,000 gallons per day (GPD) of landfill leachate from the Athens-Hocking Landfill. Nelsonville has confirmed the ability to treat this additional waste.

See Figure 2 below for a map of the project area.

Nelsonville Regional Collection System Improvements, Phase 5
Project Location Map

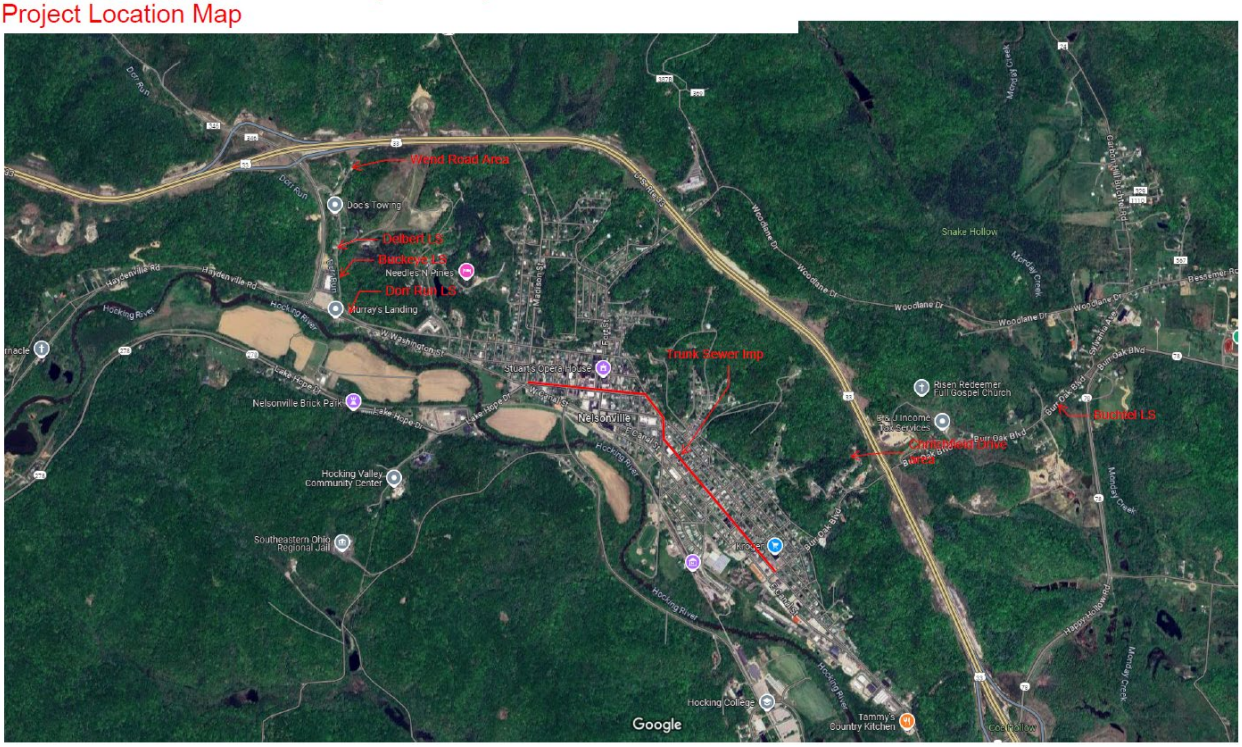

Figure 2. Project location within City of Nelsonville

Implementation

Nelsonville is eligible to receive the entire project cost of $3,786,500 as WPCLF principal forgiveness, which will not need to be repaid.

The anticipated loan award will occur in June 2026. Construction will begin following the loan award and is expected to be completed by August 2027.

Public Participation

Letters were sent in November 2025 to residents informing them of the project and detailing the homeowner's responsibility to pay for connection to sewer laterals and HSTS abandonment/demolition, as well as available financial assistance. Contact information was provided for any questions or concerns.

The city council meets twice per month where public participation is encouraged and generally well attended virtually or in person. The project has also been discussed in utility committee meetings that are also open to the public. Construction schedule updates can be easily relayed to the public via the city website.

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 City of Nelsonville 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

This project includes no activities that will impact Athens County's air quality standards. The contractor will prevent unnecessary dust from construction activities from entering the atmosphere. Dust on unsurfaced streets or parking areas and any remaining dust on surfaced streets shall be controlled with water as needed. Because of this approach, there will be no significant adverse short-term or long-term impacts on local air quality.

Archaeological and Historical Resources

Coordination was completed with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for previous construction phases of this project. It was determined that the planned areas of construction have been previously developed and all excavation work will take place within previously disturbed roads and rights-of-way alongside other installed utilities. CIPP lining will be utilized within the Nelsonville Historic District. Because of this approach, no impacts are expected to archaeological or historical resources.

Although several buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places exist within the project area, SHPO agreed with the Ohio EPA conclusion that none will be adversely impacted.

However, in the event of archaeological finds during construction, Ohio Revised Code Section 149.53 requires contractors and subcontractors to notify SHPO of any archaeological discoveries in the project area, and to cooperate with the office in archaeological and historic surveys and salvage efforts when appropriate. 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.

Terrestrial Habitat and Endangered Species

Ten federally listed species occur in Athens County: the Indiana bat, the northern long-eared bat, the tricolored bat, the American burying beetle, fanshell mussel, sheepnose mussel, pink mucket pearly mussel, snuffbox mussel, round hickorynut mussel, and salamander mussel.

Coordination was completed with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources in previous phases of the project and it was determined that since planned area of disturbance during construction is limited to existing roads and previously disturbed rights-of-way, no habitat suited to the species listed above is in the project area. Based on this information, the project will have no significant adverse short-term or long-term effect on terrestrial habitat or endangered species.

Floodplains

According to project planning and design, a portion of the project will occur within a 100-year

floodplain. Construction within the floodplain will be temporary and result in no new permanent structures above-ground. Coordination with the city's floodplain administrator was completed.

Ground Water Resources
To avoid adverse impacts to ground water resources, the construction contract includes specifications for appropriate and safe dewatering of deep excavations and management of ground water.

Safety, Noise, Traffic, and Aesthetics
A traffic plan will be developed by the contractor prior to commencing construction which includes all proper traffic control devices and adequate lights, signs, and barriers to minimize the extent of disruption of traffic and disturbance to the neighborhood during construction. Local aesthetics will be unchanged after construction is complete.

Surface Water Resources
A stream crossing of Dorr Run is planned during construction but will be installed using horizontal directional drilling to avoid impacts to aquatic habitat.

The contractor will minimize soil from eroding or otherwise entering onto all paved areas and into natural watercourses, ditches, and public sewer systems with the use of storm water pollution prevention tools such as buffer zones, silt fencing, inlet protection, and seeding.

Energy Use
This project will have little effect on local or regional energy supplies. Through utilizing gravity sewers and the already existing Nelsonville wastewater collection system in place, no additional energy is required.

Local Economy
New customers will be responsible for private contractor fees associated with connecting to sewer laterals and HSTS decommissioning and abandonment.

Nelsonville has minimized project costs by obtaining principal forgiveness through the WPCLF. This allows a lower annual sewer bill for the new customers than otherwise would be possible. The projected annual sewer bill for Nelsonville customers based on this project and other wastewater collection system improvement projects will be $764, which is 1.8% of the local median household income of Nelsonville, $42,281.

Unaffected Features
Prime farmland, wetlands, coastal zones, and Wild and Scenic Rivers will remain unaffected as there are none located within the project area. No changes to land use will occur.

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 expand Nelsonville's regionalization efforts and provide sanitary sewer service to a number of unsewered residents, where failing HSTS can adversely impact public health and the environment. Additionally, the project will extend the life of the existing collection system through repairs and rehabilitation.

Contact information

Kristin Parrish
Division of Environmental and Financial Assistance
Ohio Environmental Protection Agency
50 West Town Street, Suite 700
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Email: kristin.parrish@epa.ohio.gov
Phone: 614-644-3662