



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

October 11, 2019

Limited Environmental Review and Finding of No Significant Impact

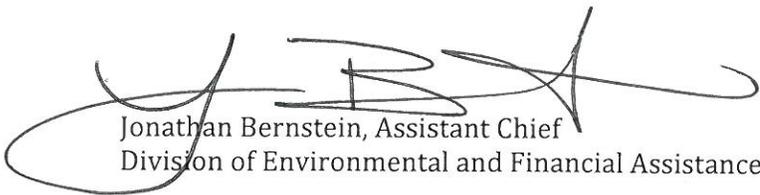
**City of Akron – Summit County
Eckert Ditch Acquisition and Restoration Project
WRRSP Loan number: WR390095-0164**

The attached Limited Environmental Review (LER) is for a nonpoint source project in Summit County, near Akron, 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, as described in Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) 3745-150-05.

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, as described in OAC 3745-150-06. 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, Assistant Chief
Division of Environmental and Financial Assistance

Attachment

LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Project Identification

WRRSP Project: Eckert Ditch Acquisition and Restoration Project

Applicant: City of Akron
166 S. High Street
Room 200
Akron, Ohio 44308

WRRSP Loan No.: WR390095-0164

Project Sponsor: Akron's Duane Green Project (CSO Rack 3)

WPCLF Loan No.: CS390095-0179

Project Summary

The City of Akron (Akron) seeks \$776,500 in funding through Ohio EPA's Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program (WRRSP) to purchase and restore approximately 38 acres of land, including 32 acres of wetland and 1,350 linear feet of stream on a site located south of Dawley Road, west of State Route 14, east of Red Brush Road and north of Lovers Lane, in Ravenna Township, Portage County (Figure 1). Akron will sponsor the Eckert Ditch Acquisition and Restoration project (Eckert Ditch) through a Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF) loan administered by Ohio EPA's Division of Environmental and Financial Assistance (DEFA). Funds for the Eckert Ditch project will be provided by advancing a portion of the interest to be paid by Akron on its \$6,000,000 Duane Green (CSO Rack 3) WPCLF project. Akron is scheduled to be awarded WPCLF funding in July 2019 and qualifies for the Standard interest rate of 1.99% through the WPCLF. By voluntarily agreeing to sponsor their Eckert Ditch project, Akron will receive 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 property is a 38-acre parcel that contains approximately 32-acres of wetland and 1,350 linear feet of Eckert Ditch, a principal tributary to Lake Rockwell, the primary source water supply reservoir for Akron (Figure 2 and Figure 3). Nearly 300,000 people rely on Akron for clean, reliable drinking water. The City owns 15,941 acres that are managed for conservation and natural resource protection purposes, with a focus on water quality. And of that, 389 acres are located

within the Eckert Ditch sub-watershed. Therefore, this project is critical for Akron, in its continuing effort to protect the Upper Cuyahoga River watersheds.

Project Description

The planned restoration activities on the 38-acre property include invasive species management throughout the 32-acre wetland and then a targeted 13.5-acres of the wetland's invasive species will be replanted with native wetland grasses, shrubs and trees. Eckert Ditch will be reintroduced to its floodplain by removing the soil levees that were deposited on each bank during past dredging activities. Further restoration work will improve the morphology, sinuosity, and in-stream habitat, as well as, the riparian habitat along Eckert Ditch - potentially creating up to 300 linear feet of new stream channel.

With separate City of Akron funding, all existing structures will be removed from the property, including four aging trailers, one house, one barn, a wastewater treatment package plant, and one oil and gas well.

Property Management and Maintenance

The property will be managed as a conservation area and access to the site will be limited to Akron employees and guests accompanying them; no public access is allowed. The property will be protected in perpetuity through use restrictions spelled out in an Environmental Covenant, which will be part of the deed on the property. 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-acquired property. These restrictions include:

- There shall be no agricultural, industrial commercial or residential activity undertaken or allowed on the Property.
- The Property may not be divided, partitioned, subdivided or conveyed except in its current configuration.
- No buildings or other structures, including, but not limited to, billboards or advertising of any kind, camping accommodations, and mobile homes shall be erected or placed on the Property.
- There shall be no mining, drilling, exploring for or removal of minerals, oil or gas from the Subject Property.
- Except as may be necessary for reasonable preservation, management and restoration purposes, there shall be no ditching, draining diking, filling, excavating, or removal of topsoil, sand, gravel, rock or other materials.
- 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 within the Subject Property 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 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 order to maintain the ecological balance of the Property or to protect human health and safety, hunting and trapping may be permitted only in accordance with State regulations and as authorized by the Owner.
- 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. No non-native species shall be introduced to the Property.

Implementation

The WRRSP loan award for Akron's Eckert Ditch project will be made possible through Akron's Duane Green construction project WPCLF loan award, which is scheduled for July 2019.

Public Participation

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: <http://epa.ohio.gov/defa/ofa.aspx>.

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 restoration and 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 preserving and restoring high quality wetland and stream habitat.

Will have no effect on high-value environmental resources since it will improve the quality of Eckert Ditch by removing impairments and permanently protecting the wetland and stream.

Is cost-effective since it represents a long-term solution to an identified water quality threat currently facing the surface water. The acquired property will be permanently protected and maintained in an area where such resources in their natural condition are rare.

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

Rose McLean, Environmental Planner
Ohio EPA, Division of Environmental and Financial Assistance
P.O. Box 1049
Columbus, Ohio 43216-1049
Rose.McLean@epa.ohio.gov

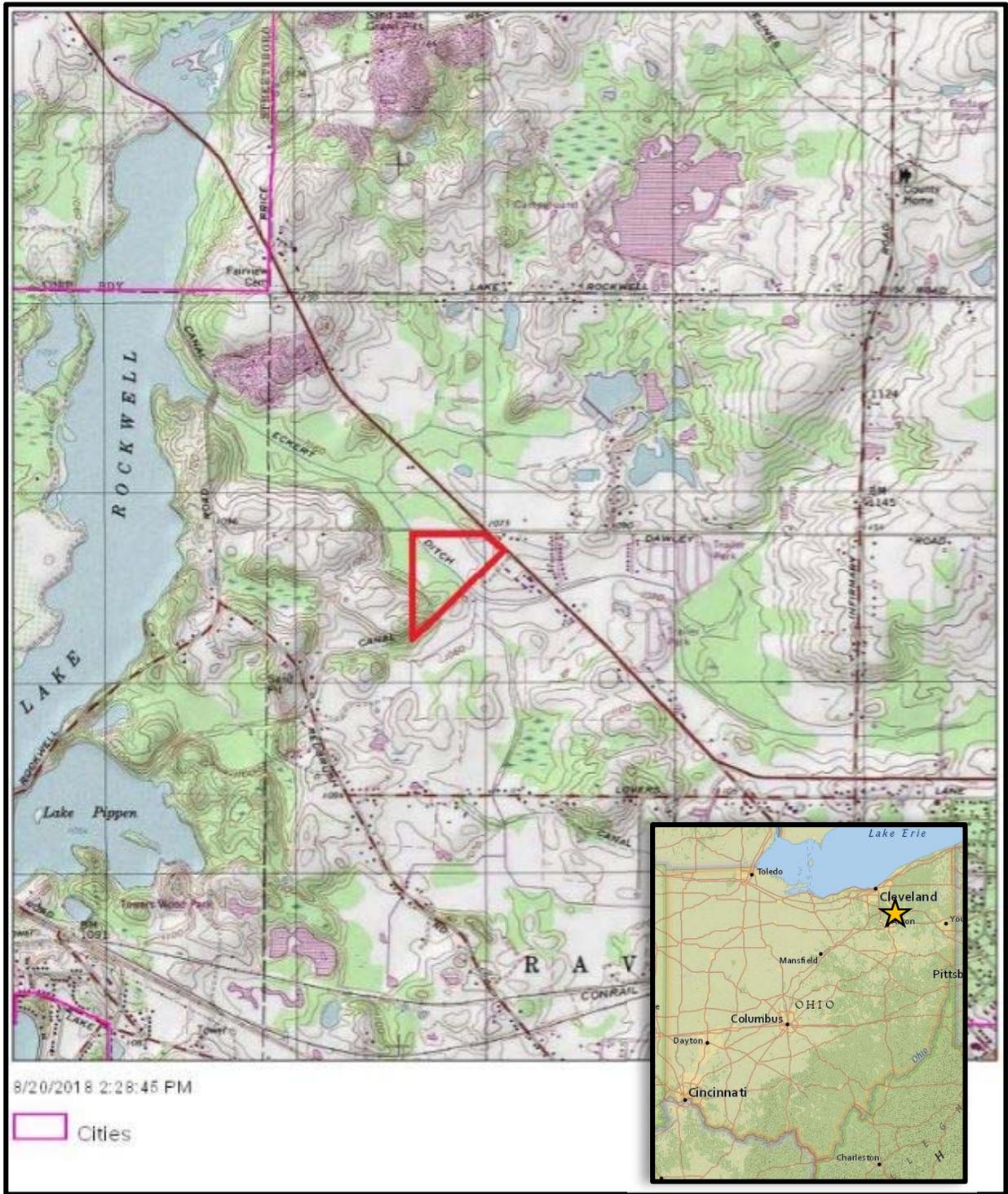


Figure 1. Eckert Ditch parcel location

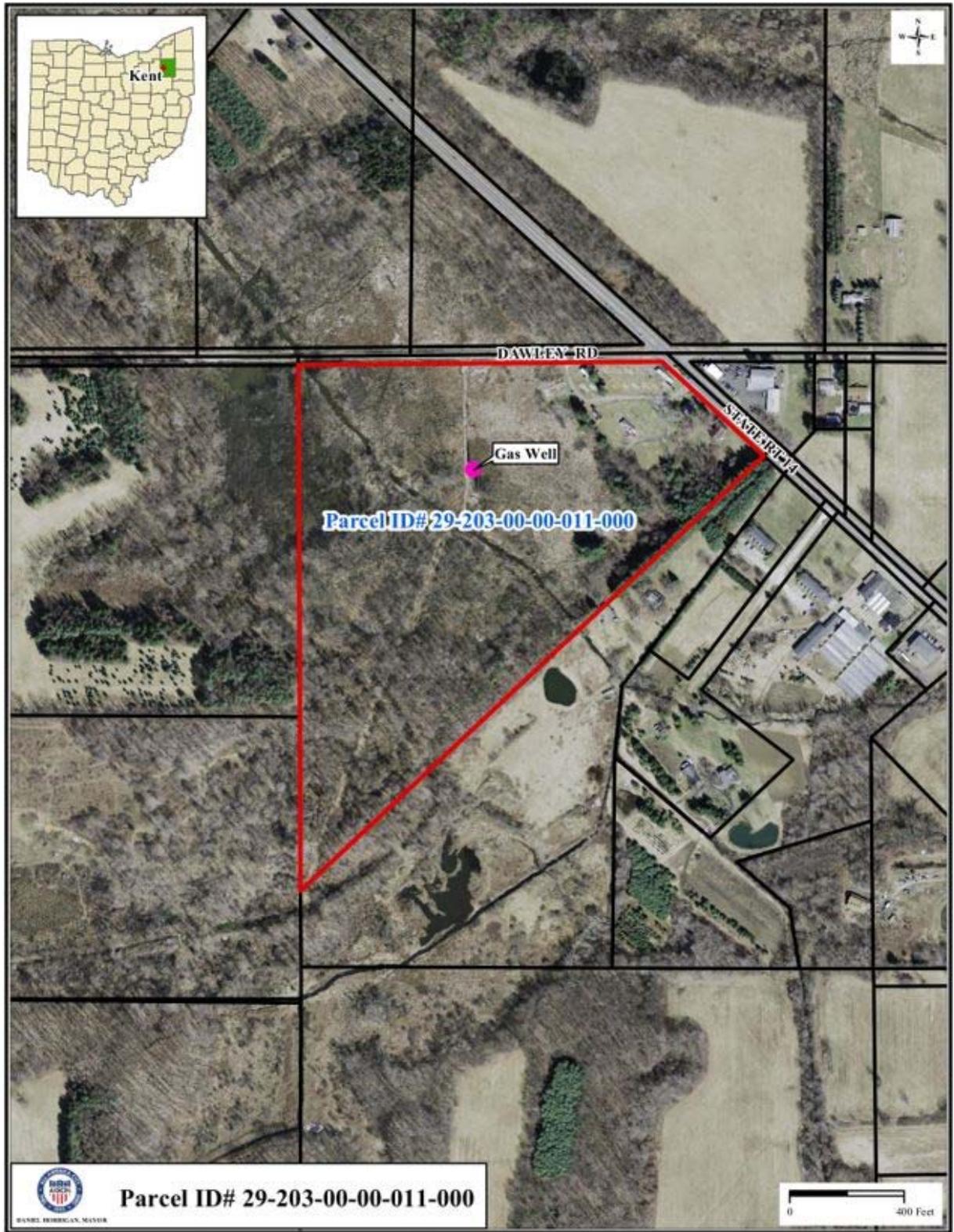


Figure 2. Eckert Ditch property on topo map



Figure 3. Eckert Ditch project property