



**August 24, 2023**

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

**Adams County Regional Water District – Adams and Brown Counties  
ARPA Water System Improvements  
Loan Number: FS391651-0010**

The attached Environmental Assessment (EA) is for a water line extension project throughout Adams County and a portion of eastern Brown County 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 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 Adams County Regional Water District can then proceed with its application for the WSRLA loan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathleen Courtright".

Kathleen Courtright, Assistant Chief  
Division of Environmental & Financial Assistance

Attachment

# ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

## **Project Identification**

Project: ARPA Water System Improvements

Applicant: Adams County Regional Water District  
9203 State Route 136  
West Union, Ohio 45693-0427

Loan Number: FS391651-0010



**Figure 1**

## **Project Summary**

Adams County Regional Water District (ACRWD) requested \$2,120,600 from the Ohio Water Supply Revolving Loan Account (WSRLA) for the ARPA Water System Improvements.

This proposed project consists of installing approximately 110,000 linear feet (LF) of new water line and all necessary appurtenances throughout Adams County and a small portion of Brown County to serve nearly 75 customers who do not currently have a reliable source of potable water.

Ohio EPA has reviewed this proposed drinking water project and determined there will be no significant environmental impacts, as discussed in the conclusion.

## **History & Existing Conditions**

Since 1969, ACRWD has provided public drinking water to rural customers and villages throughout the county with its own water treatment plant and distribution system. Today, the district uses eight wells to meet a treatment capacity of 5.8 million gallons per day (MGD) and approximately 590 miles of water mains to serve a population of nearly 22,000 in both Adams and Brown counties (see Figure 1).

While the district has expanded over time to cover the main areas of residential growth, there are still unserved pockets of sparsely populated areas that are also the most difficult to reach with drinking water infrastructure. ACRWD is combining a number of extensions and upgrades into one project to replace failing or undersized infrastructure, loop dead end lines, and provide new potable water services to homes currently utilizing some type of private water system including drilled wells, hand dug wells, cisterns, and hauled water storage tanks. The Adams County Health Department has conducted water sampling in the project areas over the years and many of the private water systems were found to be unsafe for human consumption and non-potable. Additional testing of private wells by ACRWD in February 2022 found positive results for both E. coli and total coliform. Numerous townships covered by this project are some of the lowest income areas in Adams and Brown counties.

## **Population and Flow Projections**

ACRWD produces an average of 1.98 MGD, with a peak daily demand of 2.6 MGD. There are no current or foreseen issues with supply or treatment. The average increase in water demand is expected to be

1-2% each year. The district has the potential to keep expanding within Adams and Brown counties as well as become a bulk water supplier to neighboring water systems and local villages (of which it currently supplies four).

### **Alternatives**

During project planning, three possible alternatives were considered for serving the project area shown in Figure 2. These options are summarized below.

#### **Alternative 1: No action**

The “no action” alternative includes no upgrades or extensions of the system, leaving failing or undersized infrastructure in place and leaving residents without a safe, reliable water source.

#### **Alternative 2: Extend service from other adjacent systems**

Several other rural water systems were considered for servicing parts of the project area, including Brown County Rural Water Association, Highland County Water Company, Pike Water, Inc., the Northwest Regional Water District, and Scioto Water, Inc.. All of these systems would have to make major upgrades to a large portion of their existing distribution systems to serve the planned areas.

#### **Alternative 3: Extend service from Adams County Regional Water District**

ACRWD is the court-approved water purveyor in the majority of the project locations and has existing water lines through and surrounding the planned improvements.

### **Selected Alternative**

The selected alternative is installing an approximate total of 125,000 LF of 3-, 4-, and 6-inch water mains between 21 separate alignments on Ellis Run Road, Brushy Fork Road, Boyd Road, State Route 73, Coleman Grooms Road, Eileen Road and Inlow Avenue, Grange Hall and Crystal Road, Jacksonville Road, McFarland Road, Mendenhall Road, Purcell Road, Satterfield Road, Spencer Hill Road, Cox Road, Coon Hill Road and Cross Road, Old Cincinnati Pike, Himes Road, Island Creek and Bat Roost Road, Agnes Taylor Road, Narrow Gauge Road, Sulphur Creek Road, and Hawkins Road. The work will include replacing undersized water lines and those with excessive line breaks, looping dead-end lines, and extending potable water to people currently on inadequate and/or unsafe private water sources.

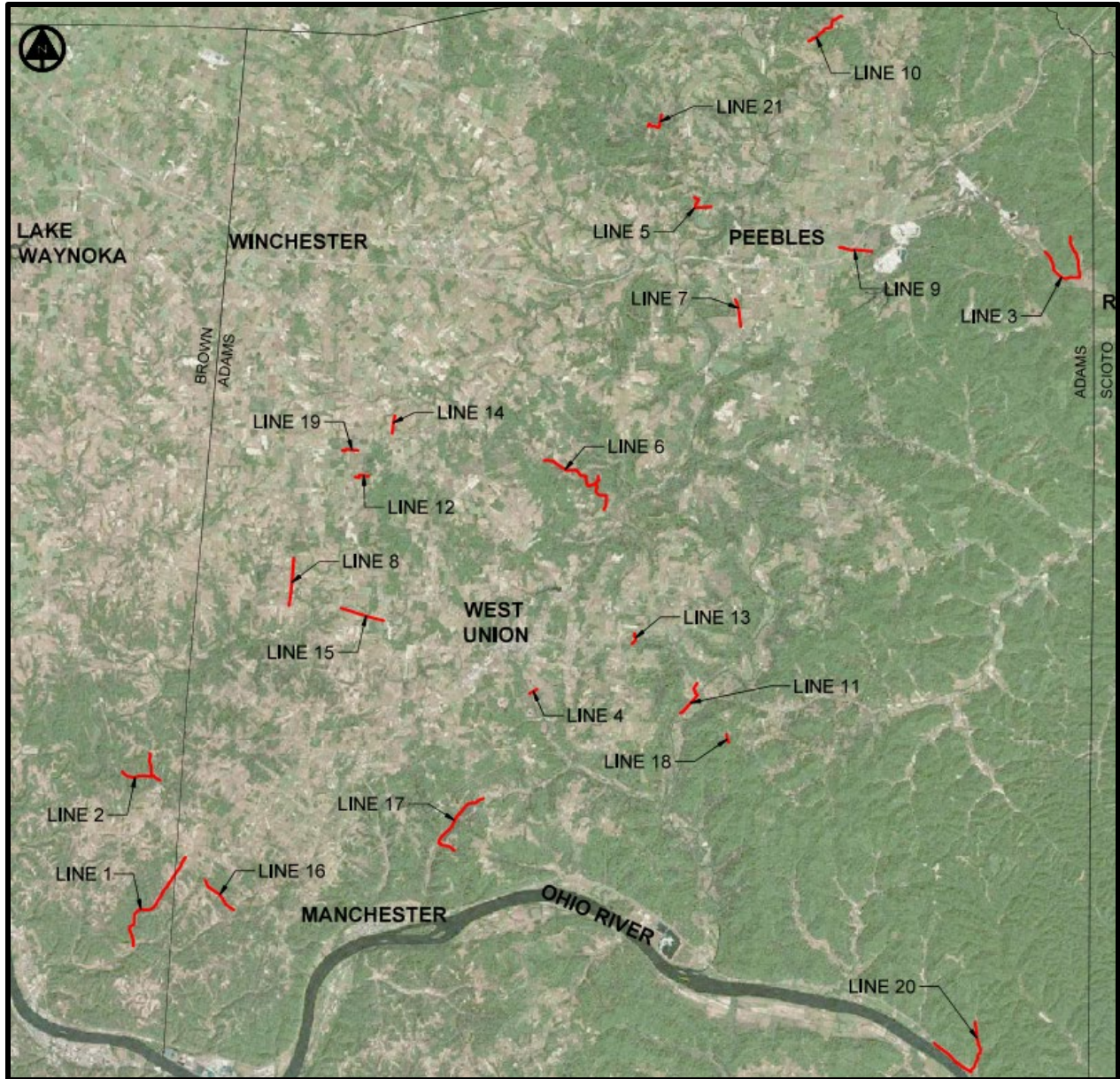


Figure 2. The 20 proposed water line extensions throughout Adams County and eastern Brown County

### **Implementation**

ACRWD requested \$2,120,000 from the WSRLA. Additionally, ACRWD will use \$1,139,000 of committed American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds from townships in Adams and Brown counties. The loan will receive the regionalization rate of 0%. By utilizing below-market rate WSRLA funding, ACRWD will save the district approximately \$945,000 over the 20-year loan term compared to the current market rate of 3.87%.

New customers will pay a tap-in fee of \$1,800. ACRWD recently raised rates in January 2023, but is not planning any rate increases to cover the cost of this project. All ACRWD customers will pay an

average of \$561 annually, which compares favorably to the average annual Ohio water bill of \$697. This project was initiated at the request of residents and has no impact on the local economy.

Under the proposed project schedule, WSRLA funds are expected to be awarded in October 2023 so that construction can commence soon thereafter. The district estimates that construction will take six months.

### **Public Participation**

The plans for this project were developed in response to requests from residents. Township trustees also contacted ACRWD to use ARPA funds to extend service to their areas. Connection to the water lines is voluntary, and ACRWD has signed commitment sheets from individuals wanting a water tap upon completion of water main installation. The district has discussed the project at their regularly scheduled board meetings on the second Thursday of each month. At least one resident has been inquiring when water service will be available.

Ohio EPA is unaware of any controversy about or opposition to this project and will make a copy of this document available at the webpage linked below. Copies can be provided upon request.

<https://epa.ohio.gov/divisions-and-offices/environmental-financial-assistance/announcements>

### **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.

**Archaeological and historical resources** – Ohio EPA has concluded, based on extensive design review and through completion of a Phase I Cultural Resource Management Survey, that no features listed on, or eligible for listing on, the National Register of Historic Places will be adversely impacted by the proposed project. Based on this information, ACRWD and Ohio EPA believe that, due to the prevalence of highly sloped areas and the extent of disturbance in the project areas, unrecorded archaeological sites or properties are not likely to be present. In the event that archaeological properties are found during construction, contractors and subcontractors are required under Ohio Revised Code Section 149.53 to notify the Ohio State Historic Preservation office and Ohio EPA and to cooperate with those entities in archaeological and historic surveys and salvage efforts as appropriate.

**Aquatic habitat, ground water resources, surface water resources** – By utilizing erosion control measures, storm water best management practices, and horizontal directional drilling for any stream crossings, no significant adverse impacts on this resource attribute are expected. Dewatering operations are generally not expected to be necessary due to the relatively shallow depths (between five and eight feet) at which the pipe will be installed. As the construction specifications include the statements needed for minimizing the effects of dewatering activities, Ohio EPA has concluded that no significant adverse impacts to ground water or private drinking water supplies should result from this project.

**Endangered species, fish and wildlife, terrestrial habitat** – The project plans call for removal of trees with suitable bat habitat to occur only outside of maternal roosting season (October 1 – March 31). This seasonal cutting restriction minimizes potential adverse effects to endangered bats. Due to the project type, size, and location, suitable habitat for other threatened or endangered species is

absent. Thus, no significant adverse impacts on federally listed aquatic and terrestrial species are expected.

**Air quality, noise, traffic, aesthetics, safety** – With the traffic, safety, and sedimentation-control measures in place from the detail plans, no significant, adverse, long-term impacts to these attributes are expected. Rather, after completion of the project, traffic, noise, and air quality should return to pre-construction levels. Impacts to aesthetics will be minimal and temporary as the work sites will be properly restored following construction.

**Floodplain** – A few portions of the project fall within the 100-year floodplain of nearby streams. Construction has the potential to affect flood flows; however, these activities will be temporary and mitigated. Once construction is complete, the floodplain will no longer be affected.

**Farmland protection** – The majority of water lines will be constructed immediately adjacent to roads and have no impact on farmland. All water lines will be buried at a minimum depth of four feet and the surface will be restored to its prior condition, meaning any active farmland affected will only experience temporary disturbance.

**Unaffected features** – Based on the project’s scope, location, and prior disturbances, the district’s proposed project is expected to have no effect on coastal zones, sole source aquifers, wetlands, or Wild and Scenic Rivers. These environmental attributes are not in the project area.

### **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. An estimated 150 people who did not previously have access to safe, reliable drinking water will now have it as a result of this project.

### **Contact Information**

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