

THE CORD REPORT

The Official Quarterly Newsletter of CORD

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LAWMAKERS INVEST IN WATER AND SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE DURING BUSY START TO 134TH OHIO GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Written by Andrew Huffman
Director of Legislative Affairs
Governmental Policy Group

134th General Assembly

The start of the first year of Ohio's two-year legislative session was filled with activity, with over 600 pieces of legislation already being introduced by lawmakers. No bill, however, is more

significant than the state's operating budget (HB 110), which funds the state's operations for the next two years. The massive, \$74 billion, spending package was passed in June and signed by Governor DeWine on June 30th. The bill, which was passed with bipartisan support in both the House and Senate, included historic tax cuts, totaling more than \$1.6 billion. In addition to tax cuts, the legislature also included comprehensive reforms to Ohio's system of funding schools. The proposal, which was crafted by Speaker Bob Cupp and former legislator John Patterson, came together during budget discussions after nearly three years of crafting and stakeholder input.



HB 110 also renews the state's investment in the H2Ohio water quality program created by Governor DeWine during his first year in office. . The budget bill invests \$170 million for the program, which will be distributed among the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, Ohio Department of Natural Resources,

and the Ohio Department of Agriculture. Governor DeWine praised the investment, stating that the H2Ohio program will, "continue creating and restoring wetlands, protecting public health by improving water infrastructure and reducing lead exposure, and engaging agricultural producers in best practices to reduce runoff and prevent algal blooms in our Great Lake Erie,"

For years CORD has been advocating for the state to invest in Ohio's water and sewer systems. These advocacy efforts were intensified throughout the COVID-19 pandemic as CORD's members continued providing essential services to their customers, many of whom were off work and unable to remain up-to-date on their bills. CORD believed the federal COVID-19 relief funding funneling its way to Ohio provided a unique, one-time opportunity for the state to make such an investment. After much prodding, the state responded and provided funding to assist our members' customers who were impacted by the pandemic and made critical investments into districts' infrastructure needs.

First, lawmakers passed HB 167, which provided a total of \$465 million in federal funding for rent and utility assistance. The funding was made available through the federal Consolidated Appropriations Action, 2021. The assistance program provides aid to low-income households that have been disconnected, are in threat of disconnection, or are behind on their water, sewer, electric, and other utilities. The funding will be distributed through regional Community Action Agencies. CORD worked with the DeWine Administration to ensure those customers being served by 6119 would be eligible to participate in the program.





When the federal government passed the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) earlier this year, Ohio was entitled to receive over \$11 billion in federal COVID-19 relief aid, which was split between local governments and the state. The state distributed much of its share when lawmakers passed HB 168 this summer, which contained over \$2 billion for various COVID-19 relief efforts. Included in HB 168 was a \$250 million water and wastewater grant program, which is aimed at improving Ohio's water and wastewater infrastructure. The grant program will be administered by the Department of Development and will allow eligible applicant to receive up to \$250,000 for design projects and up to \$5 million for construction projects. The legislation charged the county engineer in each county to develop a list prioritizing projects in each county. The Department of

Development and will allow the eligible applicants to receive up to \$250,000 for design projects and up to \$5 million for construction projects. The legislation charged the county engineer in each county to develop a list prioritizing projects in each county. The Department of Development created a scoring rubric, which awards points to projects address key priorities, such as serving economically disadvantaged communities, encouraging regionalization, project readiness, and the availability of local matching funds. HB 168 was passed on June 29th and county engineers had just 60 days to establish their priority lists. CORD was fortunate to have had the ability to work with, and provide feedback to, the Department of Development and the County Engineers Association of Ohio as they established the grant program and developed the scoring rubric. We will continue to promote the program to our members and will work with the Department of Development to address any questions that arise during the application process. While this one-time funding source is a start, CORD will continue to advocate for a long-term source of funding to address Ohio's water and wastewater infrastructure needs.

After passing the main operating budget bill, lawmakers broke for summer recess. However, when they return this fall, they face a full slate of legislation and potential policy proposals. Some of the more high-profile issues include, legalizing recreational marijuana, establishing guidelines to regulate sports gambling in Ohio, and continuing to address issues arising from the COVID-19 pandemic like mask mandates and mandatory vaccines. Nothing, however, is more time-sensitive than the redistricting process facing lawmakers. Every ten years, Ohio must redraw its congressional and General Assembly districts based on the updated population data. The process is getting a late start as the COVID-19 pandemic delayed the ability of the U.S. Census Bureau to compile and deliver the data needed to produce the maps. That data is usually released in April, yet this year it was not provided to the state until mid-August. The seven-member Redistricting Commission is charged with drawing the Ohio House and Senate Districts. This panel consists of five Republicans and two Democrats: Gov. Mike DeWine, State Auditor Keith Faber, Secretary of State Frank LaRose, Senate President Matt Huffman (R-Lima), Senator Vernon Sykes (D-Akron), House Speaker Bob Cupp (R-Lima), and House Minority Leader Emilia Sykes (D-Akron). The Redistricting Commission has until September 1st to draft its first Map. If a bipartisan agreement is not reached, the panel will draft a new map by September 15th. If a bipartisan plan still cannot be reached, the revised maps will be in effect for only four years. Congressional mapmaking is handled within the General Assembly, which needs to have 3/5 of the members of each chamber agree to the maps, including at least 1/2 of the members of each political party. The first deadline facing that process is September 30th. Should the legislature reach an impasse on the proposal, the Redistricting Commission takes over and must adopt a plan by October 31st. If the Redistricting Commission fails to adopt a bi-partisan plan, the job falls back on the legislature, which would have until November 30th to adopt a plan.

Looking even further ahead, the 2022 election cycle will be here before we know it and could very well shift the makeup of Ohio's political landscape. Governor DeWine will be forced to fend off a handful of challengers, including some in his own party. All other statewide offices are also on the ballot. Additionally, there is an open U.S. Senate seat that will appear before voters, as well as all of Ohio's congressional seats. Lastly, all 99 Ohio House seats and half of the Ohio Senate seats will appear before voters. CORD will be there to cover it all and will continue to represent its members before Ohio's elected officials to ensure 6119 regional districts continue to have a voice in this often tumultuous political climate.



REGIONAL WATER DISTRICT MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN SHARON TOWNSHIP

Written by Laura Kunze, Sharon Township Trustee, President, Mt. Air Water District Board of Trustees, Member, CORD Board of Directors



I bought a house in a unique urban neighborhood called Mount Air in Sharon Township, Franklin County in late 2011. I was immediately impressed by the ever-present police presence and attention to our roads, and accessibility of our township elected officials. From my experience with larger municipalities, this was unique. I now understand this to be part of the “township way of life”.

Our homes were on well and septic even though we were close to centralized water and sewer. Fifty properties were connected to a community well system, one that had been progressively expanded since the 1960’s as individual wells failed in the area. The other 25 homes were all on individual wells. We had clean water, reasonable rates, and few breaks my first couple of years in Mount Air. I joined the board of the neighborhood water operations organization as treasurer to get to know my neighbors better. The next year I was elected Chair of the board.

In 2014 we started experiencing more frequent and severe breaks. Costs to maintain our system, system downtime and other concerns led our board to look for a long-term water strategy. Our water lines were crumbling. Neighbors initially rejected the idea of hiring a consultant to help us understand our options and financing so I started making phone calls to see what I could find to present to the board and shareholders.

I reached out to our township, county, and neighboring municipality, and two private water systems close to our residences. Through my exploration, I was also in touch with Ohio EPA, our state representative at the time (Mike Duffey), county commissioner (Kevin Boyce), and our state senator (Stephanie Kunze).



I found out quickly that this was not simply going to be a matter of budget. The local municipality included our service area in its 208 plan. The cost to connect to their nearest water main (over a mile away) added over \$1 dollars to the total project cost.



And annexation was a requirement to connect. A legal settlement between the City of Columbus and the closest private system (DelCo Water) prevented them from even quoting the project for consideration. The cost to rebuild our system was not feasible for 75 homes to share, nor would the EPA support such an effort as they favored more centralized systems. Any major reconstruction on our system would have required the entire system to be brought up to the current code. Our aging water system continued to crumble as we explored our options and tried to find a way around multiple obstacles.

I ran for township trustee in 2017 and was elected for the 2018 term. State Rep Mike Duffey introduced legislation limiting municipal authority from requiring annexation as a condition for water or sewer connection and from charging higher rates to unincorporated residents without cause. Municipalities use the “water and sewer club” to annex choice developments and leave “orphan” residential areas to fend for themselves. Township properties in urban areas are increasingly picked apart as townships have no means to provide water and sewer to their residents. In the case of Mount Air, even if we wanted to annex the cost to connect to the municipal water system would have been over \$45,000 per home, not to mention the environmental impact to run water lines on a scenic byway.

After years of challenging discussions, Columbus decided to allow DelCo to provide water to our neighborhood. Our task now became one of funding and cost allocation. Because Sharon Township is not a home rule township the ORC does not provide a means for the township to assist in funding such a project. We determined our best route was in the formation of an ORC 6119 Water District so we could contract with DelCo for water and qualify for public funding options (loans and/or grants) that were being explored.

I had met John Albers, with the law firm Albers & Albers, at an Ohio Township Association conference and he helped us form a district. The Mount Air Water District was formed in 2019. We then contracted with DelCo to begin planning the project and exploring funding options. Challenges at this phase included capital for design planning, legal fees, and engineering. Our initial application for funds via OPWC failed due to competing projects. We were, however, able to get no interest loans from the EPA for the cost of construction. Principal forgiveness on the loans was despite our high cost-per-home because resident income levels were higher than other competing projects. Funding for Water District operations came from loans from DelCo to be paid back via water bill surcharges.

As a regional water district, we were able to levy special assessments on benefitted properties. We had to show that the amount of the assessment did not exceed the financial benefit to the property, which we did by engaging a professional property appraiser. The before and after valuation showed an average \$30,000 increase to homes just by having the new water lines available. A few homes within the district that had previously annexed voluntarily opted in to help share costs and future-built homes will contribute the same cost as the early adopting homes when they eventually connect. These funds will ultimately lower the cost-per-home for the project over time.

The DelCo Water Co. has been a tremendous partner as we worked through the various challenges throughout this project. I also became a member of the Board of CORD, the Coalition of Ohio Regional Districts, which gives me the opportunity to learn from other districts.

I am looking forward to replacing water appliances, faucets and fixtures, and a nice warm shower with great water pressure. As a township trustee and resident, I am very happy we have found a pathway to retain this area in the township. We don’t want the township to get smaller and as a resident, I did not want to give up the township way of life. The Regional Water District was a key that allowed us to achieve our objectives.



THE NORTHEAST OHIO REGIONAL SEWER DISTRICT REACHES THREE MAJOR MILESTONES & RECEIVES AWARD FOR EASTERLY TUNNEL SYSTEM

Written by Jean Smith, Senior Manager Communications and Community Relations, NEORS

Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) is an issue being addressed by many public sewerage systems, including the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (Sewer District). As part of its continued effort to protect the environment and public health, the Sewer District, located in Cuyahoga County, recently completed the [Doan Valley Storage Tunnel \(DVT\)](#), a large-scale combined sewer tunnel designed to reduce pollution entering local waterways. DVT, which went fully online at the end of July 2021, will reduce combined sewer overflows by 230 million gallons annually along Doan Brook, from Shaker Heights to Lake Erie. DVT highlights include:



- Located approximately 100 feet underground;
- 10,000 ft long (nearly 2 miles);
- 18 feet in diameter, large enough to fit a subway train

The Doan Valley Storage Tunnel, a \$142.3 million project, is the third in a series of seven storage tunnels constructed as a part of Project Clean Lake, the Sewer District's 25-year, \$3 billion programs to drastically reduce the amount of combined sewage entering local waterways during heavy rain events. Additionally, it is the fourth tunnel overall; prior to Project Clean Lake, the Sewer District constructed the Mill Creek Tunnel, located in the [Southerly Service Area](#).

"Since the start of Project Clean Lake in 2011, the Sewer District's goal is to reduce combined sewer overflows from 4.5 billion gallons to 500 million gallons annually by 2036, and the completion of the Doan Valley Storage Tunnel will help our community reach that goal," said Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells, Sewer District CEO. "To date, the Sewer District has eliminated about 1.5 billion gallons of combined sewer overflow and anticipates the elimination of an additional 665million gallons by 2023. Further, because of Project Clean Lake and other capital investments, the Sewer District will have reduced combined sewer overflow discharge points from 126 to 112 by the end of this year."

“Since the start of Project Clean Lake in 2011, the Sewer District’s goal is to reduce combined sewer overflows from 4.5 billion gallons to 500 million gallons annually by 2036, and the completion of the Doan Valley Storage Tunnel will help our community reach that goal,” said Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells, Sewer District CEO. “To date, the Sewer District has eliminated about 1.5 billion gallons of combined sewer overflow and anticipates the elimination of an additional 665million gallons by 2023. Further, because of Project Clean Lake and other capital investments, the Sewer District will have reduced combined sewer overflow discharge points from 126 to 112 by the end of this year.”

Prior to Doan Valley Storage Tunnel, Euclid Creek Tunnel, the first tunnel built under Project Clean Lake, Dugway Storage Tunnel, and Easterly Tunnel Dewatering Pump Station were constructed and are currently in operation. These three projects represent a \$416 million investment in clean water. Recently, the Sewer District and its consultant, Mott MacDonald & Stantec, won the American Council of Engineering Companies’ Ohio Engineering Excellence Grand Award for this tunnel system. The award celebrates engineering projects demonstrating significant uniqueness, ingenuity, and value.

“It takes significant expertise and skill to execute projects of this magnitude and complexity, and it requires excellent project management skills to complete these projects on time and under budget,” said Dreyfuss-Wells. “The Sewer District is fortunate to have such a knowledgeable and experienced team to lead and manage these large-scale projects that will benefit the community and environment for years to come as well as will protect ratepayers’ investment in clean water.”

The Westerly Storage Tunnel (WST) (\$135 million) is currently under construction and expected to be completed by 2022. The associated pump station will be completed by early 2023. The Westerly Storage Tunnel system will help control overflows at two locations along the Cuyahoga River and reduce combined sewer overflows to the environment by approximately 285 million gallons per year.

The three remaining tunnels yet to be constructed include Southerly (\$325M), Big Creek (\$220M), and Shoreline (\$201M). Construction of the Shoreline Storage Tunnel (SST), which begins this summer, was recently awarded to McNally/Kiewit SST Joint Venture. This three-mile tunnel will be 75 feet to 140 feet underground, and 23ft in diameter.

It will control overflows at 11 locations along Lake Erie and reduce combined sewer overflows by 370 million gallons every year. It will be complete and in operation by the end of 2025.

About Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) in Cleveland

Greater Cleveland’s earliest sewers (primarily within the City and its inner-ring suburbs) are combined sewers. Built around the turn of the 19th century, these sewers carry sewage, industrial waste, and stormwater in a single pipe. During heavy rains, there is a dramatic increase in water flowing through the combined sewers. When this happens, control devices may allow some of the combined wastewater and stormwater to overflow into area waterways—such as Lake Erie and other tributaries—to prevent urban flooding. This event is called a combined sewer overflow, or CSO, and harms our clean water environment. In 1972, an estimated 9 billion gallons of raw sewage was discharged into the local water bodies through CSOs. Through decades of investment, the Sewer District reduced the volume to an estimated 4.5 billion gallons by 2011. At the conclusion of Project Clean Lake, the Sewer District will have reduced discharges to less than 500 million gallons.



Look for additional members of the Board of Directors to be featured in future issues.



MEET ALBERT J. IOSUE, P.E.

Director, Jefferson Water & Sewer District

When Albert Iosue became Director of the Jefferson Water & Sewer District in Franklin County in September 2020 he came with a wealth of experience in engineering, management, and public service. Iosue, a registered professional civil engineer, has nearly three decades of public service experience. Albert succeeded Robert Stewart, who served as a member of the District Board for 13 years until he was appointed Director in 2002 and held the position until he retired last year. Stewart also was a member of the CORD Board.



Prior to joining the District, Albert was Director of Public Service for the City of Hilliard, where he was responsible for over 45 employees, a \$22 million operating and capital improvement budget, and management of public utility services and capital improvement projects. From 1995 to 2019 Albert held several engineering and executive positions at the Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio (SWACO) including Chief Engineer and Director of Planning and Programs. His responsibilities during these years included such varied activities as developing, managing, and supervising construction projects; managing public relations and communications; developing and managing waste reduction, material diversion, recycling, and educational initiatives; and regulatory compliance. He is a member of the American Water Works Association (AWWA), the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), the American Public Works Association (APWA), and the Engineers Club of Columbus.

Since joining the Jefferson Water & Sewer District Albert has focused on making improvements to the organization that increase operational efficiencies while providing safe, quality drinking water to District customers. The District has seen exponential residential growth over the past 10 years and has recently embarked on a water plant expansion project to increase the water treatment capacity from 1.73 MGD to 2.20 MGD. The water plant expansion project will be his major focus over the next 24 months. Albert reports to a five-member Board of Trustees and manages all aspects of human resources, communications, budgeting, and community outreach & education for the District.

Originally from Euclid, Ohio, an eastern suburb of Cleveland, Albert is a 1991 graduate of The Ohio State University with a BS in Civil Engineering. A resident of the City of Hilliard, where he resides with his wife Maureen, Albert is also a former elected city councilman where he served the community from 2008-2019, including serving as Council President his last two years. Albert & Maureen have four children, Lauren attending the Georgetown University Law Center, Gabriella a senior at the University of Akron, Dominic a junior at The Ohio State University, and their youngest Sophia is a freshman at Ohio University.

In his spare time, Albert enjoys playing ice hockey, spending time outdoors hiking and biking, and traveling with his wife. Growing up in a close-knit Italian family, Albert's favorite movie is a close tie between *The Godfather* & *Rocky*.

MEET KIM STILES

District Manager, Allen Water District

Allen Water District Manager Kim Stiles has been serving the residents of Allen County since 2006 in one capacity or another. In 2006, while still working to complete her BS degree in Business Administration from the Ohio State University, Kim worked at the Allen County Department of Job and Family Services. Working her way up from administrative support for the Investigations Unit, Kim then became an Income Maintenance Caseworker, administering Medicaid and food/cash assistance. Later transitioning to a Quality Control Reviewer, she decided to look for a new challenge. She found that challenge as Clerk to the Allen Water District Board in May of 2017 and became District Manager in 2019.



The Allen Water District's Board is composed of 9 members. The Board consists of four members appointed by each township: American, Bath, Perry, and Shawnee, four members appointed by the Allen County Commissioners, and one Member-at-Large appointed by the Board itself.

The district was originally formed in 1989 with the purpose of bringing quality water to the residents and businesses in American, Bath, Perry, and Shawnee Townships. The district, however, now represents unincorporated areas in all 12 townships in Allen County and has recently executed a contract with the Allen County Commissioners to assume responsibility for Allen County's water lines, initially for a five-year trial period.

The Allen Water District has a contract with the City of Lima for water supply and does not provide sewerage services as this is provided by the Allen County Sanitary Engineer. The district is an excellent example of regional cooperation. In addition to collaboration with the City of Lima and Allen County, the district is currently working on water line projects for the Villages of Harrod and Lafayette, both with populations of under 1000, and is helping the Allen East Local School District respond to an Ohio EPA issue. Through these projects, Kim is learning firsthand the opportunities and challenges of making projects a reality with funding sources including USDA, CDBG, OPWC, and local government contributions.

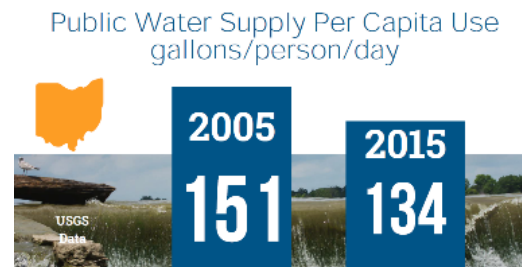
Kim's spare time is largely spent on family activities. Her three kids, ages, 8, 11, and 14 keep her busy as they are active in sports, dance, and church activities. Vacations are important activities with family and friends, and Kim was recently able to visit Saint John in the U.S. Virgin Islands.



CHECK OUT THE NEXT EDITION FOR MORE DIRECTOR FEATURES!

THE CASE FOR REGIONALIZATION OF PUBLIC WATER PLANTS

Written by Rex Huffman, Spitler Huffman, LLP



Over the past few decades, there has been a shift in thinking about the benefits of regionalizing public water systems in Northwest Ohio. According to the Ohio EPA, there are around 4,800 public water systems in the state of Ohio. While 95% of them meet all health-based standards for drinking water, there are several challenges in maintaining these standards. In this article, we look at two cases in which regionalizing public water systems became a major benefit to communities in Northwest Ohio.

Modern Challenges Facing Public Water Systems

Public water systems face several challenges in addition to increasing regulatory standards. The trend in water use over the past decade has been decreasing. This could be due to multiple factors including efficiency and conservation. Another trend that public water entities face, especially in rural areas, is a loss of population. No matter the cause of these trends, they impact the bottom line. Use is down, the number of customers is down, and so is a loss of revenue for systems where these trends occur.

Regional Solutions Don't Always Mean Giving Up Your System

If another nearby water system came knocking on your door asking to purchase water, would you turn them away? In our first case, examine what a small rural village learned when they decided not to provide another community seeking water, then explore what can happen when they became a provider to multiple communities.

In 2008, the Village of Hoytville was facing water quality issues and orders from the EPA. They approached the nearby Village of North Baltimore, 6 miles to their east, about purchasing water. An agreement between them could not be worked out. Hoytville contacted The Northwestern Water and Sewer District (The District) and reached an agreement to install a water line with water supplied by The District from the City of Bowling Green. In 2011, CSX built a new Intermodal Transportation Yard, the largest of its kind in the country. Because The District had a waterline and service territory in nearby Hoytville, water service for the new facility was provided by The District.

Fast forward to 2020, now The District is seeking to purchase water to supply the Village of McComb with water. At the same time, major distribution facilities are being planned near the CSX facility. North Baltimore recently signed an agreement with The District to supply water to McClure and any other entity that uses the new proposed line, including development from the intermodal yard. Now by tapping into their system using water measured from one master meter, North Baltimore will soon gain revenue from 600 residential customers and potential for future industrial customers.

Improving on What Works

In 2019, the cities of Toledo, Sylvania, Maumee, Perrysburg, the counties of Lucas and Fulton, the Village of Whitehouse, the South County Water System in Monroe County, Michigan, and The Northwestern Water and Sewer District renegotiated their water aged water agreement. While this regional system was already in place, the contracts with each entity were nearing expiration and there were areas for improvement. The suburban communities had an issue with the rate structure for outside customers and explored options in building a new plant or finding a new source. Rather than facing the large expense of a new plant and Toledo losing a major portion of its customer base, the communities came together to form an agreement and develop The Toledo Regional Water Commission, giving the water experts (engineers and managing operators) in all of the involved communities input on rates and infrastructure decisions.

There are many other examples of how regionalization can work in small and large water systems. Regionalization if not one entity owning it all. It is communities collaborating to gain a mutual benefit for water quality and economic growth.

BITS AND PIECES FROM CORD

Things you may have missed... and may want to know...

Written by Larry Long, CORD Director of Membership Development

Poll Shows Support for Federal Infrastructure Bill

In a recent Quinnipiac University Poll respondents support a proposed spending bill to improve the nation's roads, bridges, broadband, and other infrastructure projects by a margin of 65 to 28 percent. Democrats support the measure 93 to 4 percent, Independent voters support it 64 to 29 percent, and Republicans oppose it 54 to 41 percent.



Great Lakes Funding Comes to Ohio

The U.S. EPA has awarded \$7 million to the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District from its Great Lakes Program. The funding will be used to restore fish passage, enhance ecologically beneficial habitat, and stabilize streambanks along West Creek. The money will be used to stabilize 3,500 linear feet of West Creek within the Cuyahoga River Area of Concern, restoring four acres of aquatic and terrestrial habitat.

OWDA Approves Low-Interest Loans

The Ohio Water Development Authority (OWDA) has awarded \$4.9 million in low-interest loans to Ohio communities to improve water infrastructure and water quality. During July, OWDA funded 10 projects that will improve and replace aging infrastructure. The 10 awarded projects received an interest rate ranging from .5 to 1.79%.



U.S. House Passes PFAS Bill Regulating 'forever chemicals'

The U.S. House in July passed bipartisan legislation that would regulate toxic chemicals found in drinking water, as well as designate two types of those toxic chemicals as hazardous substances that would spark federal cleanup standards. The bill, H.R. 2467, also known as the PFAS Action Act of 2021, passed 241-183, with 23 Republicans joining Democrats in voting for it.

The legislation would direct EPA to start the regulatory process for regulating per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, in drinking water and making the decision on whether to set drinking water standards for certain types of PFAS or to regulate the entire class, which ranges from 5,000 to 7,000 substances.

Republicans who voted against the bill argued that Congress should not force EPA to craft regulations, and lawmakers should let the agency develop standards on its own. They also said that the bill would burden water utility systems and could leave those businesses open for possible liability.

650,000 Lead Pipes Still Carry Water in Ohio

As many as 650,000 lead pipes deliver water to Ohioans, according to a report released by the Natural Resources Defense Council. This makes Ohio the second-worst state in the nation, behind only Illinois with 730,000.

Nationwide, somewhere between 9.7 million to 12.8 million lead pipes are believed to run water to Americans' homes, according to the report. That's 6.2 million known lead water pipes, plus 3.5 million to 6.6 million service lines that are of "unknown" material but maybe lead. One estimate is that each pipe costs somewhere between \$2,400 and \$7,100 to replace





H2Ohio Program Updates

H2Ohio focuses on encouraging agricultural best management practices, restoring, and enhancing wetlands, and replacing home septic systems to reduce nutrients that contribute to harmful algal blooms. For more information on the H2Ohio initiative, visit h2.ohio.gov.

- The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) is planning to use \$120 million over the next two years to help farmers reduce the agricultural pollution that leads to harmful algal blooms in Lake Erie. The two-year state budget is sending \$49 million per fiscal year to fund the initiatives. ODA is also investing an additional \$20 million from their General Revenue Fund into the H2Ohio program.
- ODA is using the funding to expand the program from 10 to 24 counties. The new counties include Seneca, Huron, Erie, Wyandot, Richland, Shelby, Sandusky, Marion, Ottawa, and Crawford. During the first phase of the program, 2,000 farmers holding 1.1 million acres of cropland participated in the program. The expansion will occur in two phases, initially focusing on the adoption of a voluntary nutrient management plan, "the centerpiece of the program," and the use of cover crops and conservation crop rotation as methods to reduce unneeded phosphorus. The second phase will focus on the remaining seven targeted practices, which include soil testing, subsurface nutrient application, and edge-of-field buffer strips.
- The Ohio Department of Agriculture has also been awarded a \$2 million grant from the U.S. EPA to help administer the H2Ohio initiative across the Maumee River Watershed. The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) program project will run through October 2024.
- A new H2Ohio project will work to remove aging lead pipes at Cleveland daycare facilities. Ohio EPA is awarding the city of Cleveland a \$500,000 grant for the removal and replacement of city-owned lead service lines supplying water to the daycare centers. It is estimated that more than 440 centers in the area are connected to lead pipes.
- Approximately 2,000 farmers have signed up for the Ohio Agriculture Conservation Initiative's (OACI) new mobile application. The Ohio Farm Bureau says that farmers who enter their information into the app can become certified, receive a conservation score, and connect with H2Ohio and other funding programs to help them improve conservation practices.
- Beginning this year \$5 Million in grants for Ohio River Basin Wetland Projects will be available from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The Ohio River Basin H2Ohio Wetland Grant Program is a competitive, reimbursement grant program that provides up to \$500,000 per project for wetland projects. Most of the previous years' funding has gone to areas in the western basin of Lake Erie. DNR received \$25 million each fiscal year in the state budget for the next two years.
- DNR has officially dedicated the St. Joseph River Floodplain Restoration and St. Joseph Confluence Reconnection projects in Williams County and a new wetland in Paulding County. Also dedicated was the Fruth Wetland Nature Preserve restoration project in Seneca County and the Redhorse Bend Wetland Restoration in Sandusky County. All projects were completed to reduce sediment and nutrients going into the Western Basin of Lake Erie. These projects are some of the nearly 60 H2Ohio wetland projects that are underway or completed, and over 80,000 acres of wetlands have been created.