



June 5, 2026

Limited Environmental Review and Finding of No Significant Impact

**City of Wadsworth – Medina County
Replacement of Primary Digester Cover
Loan number: CS390948-0012**

The attached Limited Environmental Review (LER) is for a wastewater treatment plant project in Wadsworth which the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA) intends to finance through its Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF) below-market interest rate revolving loan program. The LER describes the project, costs, and expected environmental benefits. Making available this LER fulfills the 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. In accordance with Ohio Administrative Code 3745-150-05, this project meets the criteria for an LER rather than the more comprehensive Environmental Assessment. More information can be obtained by contacting the person named at the end of the attached LER.

Upon issuance of this Final 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,

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

Kathleen Courtright, Assistant Chief
Division of Environmental and Financial Assistance

LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Project Identification

Project: Replacement of Primary Digester Cover

Applicant: City of Wadsworth
120 Maple Street
Wadsworth, Ohio 44281

Loan Number: CS390948-0012



Figure 1. Medina County

Project Summary

The City of Wadsworth, located in Medina County (see Figure 1), requested \$2,309,991 from the Ohio Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF) for the Replacement of Primary Digester Cover project. The project is intended to replace aged and failing wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) components. As the project will take place entirely within the WWTP property, environmental impacts are not expected.

History and Existing Conditions

The City of Wadsworth owns and operates a WWTP that was originally constructed in 1953. The plant has an average daily design capacity of 5 million gallons daily (MGD) with a peak hydraulic capacity of 10 MGD, and an average daily flow of 3.8 MGD. The treatment process includes mechanical screening, vortex grit removal, primary clarification, aeration, secondary clarification, tertiary filtration, and UV disinfection. The last major renovation to the plant was in 2015 when the city added biological nutrient removal (BNR) treatment to its conventional activated sludge aeration process. The WWTP discharges treated wastewater to the River Styx.

Current solid stream processing includes gravity belt thickening, a belt filter press, and four anaerobic digesters (two primary and two secondary). The main primary digester is 60 feet in diameter while the other three are 45 feet in diameter. The main primary digesters was constructed in 1977 and underwent rehabilitation in 2004 and 2008-2009. The digester gas is recovered and used to heat the sludge via a boiler and heat exchanger. This digester provides most, if not all of the biogas utilized at the WWTP.

The existing cover is experiencing various degrees of steel deterioration causing deformation which has led to the cover becoming wedged within the inner diameter of the tank. The roller wheel guides at the edge of the cover are no longer in contact with the inner face of the concrete tank wall, preventing proper function. Recent foaming issues have also caused the cover to tilt as it rises above the corbels, restricting movement of the floating cover. Plant personnel are currently unable to operate the 50-year-old floating cover properly.

Additionally, the existing biogas flare does not meet standards.

Project Description

The City of Wadsworth evaluated the condition of the primary digester cover and considered the following replacement alternatives for the digester cover:

Alternative 1 – Rehabilitation of Existing Cover

Reproducing the precise circular geometry of the outer rim of the lid could be difficult. Demolition of select truss members slated for replacement would be expensive and time-consuming. After evaluation, rehabilitation of the existing cover is not the most feasible option.

Alternative 2 – Floating Covers

Floating covers allow the volume of sludge to change without allowing air into the digester. Biogas from the digester cannot be mixed with air or an explosive mixture may result; therefore, gas piping must be fitted with pressure relief valves and flame arrestors. Wadsworth visited neighboring Kent Water Reclamation Facility to view their ballast-type floating cover and discuss the benefits. Wadsworth found that the ballast type floating cover has more gas storage. Kent personnel also indicated that there are very little operations and maintenance requirements for the new cover.

Alternative 3 – Membrane Cover

Dual-membrane digester covers are fixed to the top of the digester and have two layers of PVC-coated polyester fabric that make up the cover. The inner membrane holds the biogas while the outer membrane is inflated with the use of fans to pump fresh air between the membranes. Membrane covers tend to weigh much less than floating covers and can be installed within weeks instead of months when compared to a floating cover. However, membrane covers require more maintenance. Wadsworth visited neighboring Lakewood to view their membrane cover and found that the community was satisfied with the cover, but operation of the new cover was more involved than the current operation in Wadsworth. At Lakewood, the gas storage level sensor would be an issue at Wadsworth because the digester is located on a slab at ground elevation and changing the sensor would require either using a crane or draining the entire digester and taking it out of service.

Selected Alternative

Wadsworth has elected to replace their steel truss floating digester cover with a floating ballast-type digester cover. There is marginal cost difference between this and rehabilitation of the existing cover, but the risks associated with rehabilitation are too significant. The dual membrane cover is slightly cheaper than the floating cover and would be faster to install, but the sensor replacement issues are too challenging.

The floating ballast-type digester cover is similar to the existing steel truss floating cover so the structural components and operation will be similar. See figures 2 and 3 for project details.



Figure 2. Location of Wadsworth WWTP

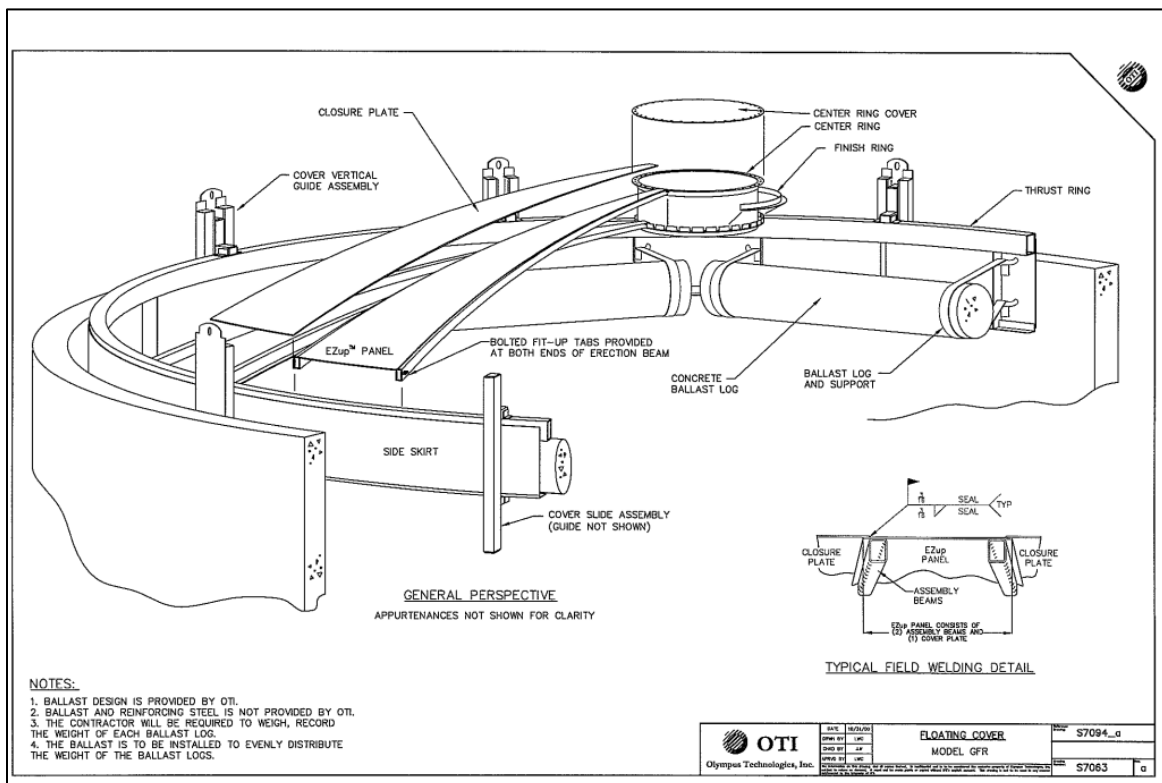


Figure 3. Ballast-type digester cover

The project also includes work on the biogas system to bring it into compliance with standards. As part of this, the flare will be relocated to a minimum of 50 feet away from any digester or source of gas.

Implementation

The City of Wadsworth intends to borrow \$2,309,991 from the WPCLF at the standard rate of 3.24% to finance the project. Interest rates are set monthly and may change for a later loan award. Over a 20-year loan term, borrowing this amount in WPCLF monies could save Wadsworth \$367,819 compared to the current market rate of 4.49%.

The debt associated with this project will be recovered from monthly user charges. A general rate increase of 8.5% was implemented in 2026 bringing the current average annual sewer bill for residents served by Wadsworth to \$401. This represents 0.52% of the median household income for Wadsworth (MHI: \$77,581) and is lower than the Ohio average annual sewer bill of \$528.

Construction is expected to begin in summer 2026 and be completed by the end of September 2027.

Public Participation

The project was presented at Public Service Committee meetings and at city council on several occasions as well from 2024 to 2026. These meetings are open to the public and meeting minutes are posted on Wadsworth's website.

Ohio EPA is unaware of any controversy about or opposition to this project. The Limited Environmental Review (LER) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) will be posted on the Ohio EPA Division of Environmental and Financial Assistance website. Additionally, the LER and FNSI have been provided to the City of Wadsworth to be made available according to their public notification procedures.

Conclusion

The proposed project meets the criteria for an LER; namely, it is an action within an existing public wastewater treatment system, which involves the functional replacement of and improvements to existing infrastructure. Furthermore, the project meets the other qualifying criteria for an LER; specifically, the proposed project:

Will have no effect on high-value environmental resources, will have no significant environmental effect, and will require no specific impact mitigation. The project will take place at existing WWTP property that has been previously disturbed. There are no high value environmental resources located within the project area.

Is cost effective. Wadsworth selected the best feasible alternative.

Is not a controversial action. The project will not impact residents or environmental resources. By using WPCLF funding, the community has reduced the cost for ratepayers.

Does not create a new or relocate an existing discharge to surface or groundwaters, and will not result in substantial increases in the volume of discharge or the loading of pollutants from an existing source or from new facilities to receiving waters. The project does not impact WWTP discharges.

Will not provide capacity to serve a population substantially greater than the existing population. The project does not impact the capacity of the WWTP.

Based upon Ohio EPA's review of the planning information and the materials presented in this LER, we have concluded that there will be no significant adverse impacts from the proposed project as it relates to environmental features. 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.

Completion of the project will result in continuing efficient wastewater treatment at the Wadsworth WWTP.

Contact Information

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