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GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENT, GREAT LAKES, AND ENERGY
LANSING



DANIEL EICHINGER
ACTING DIRECTOR

April 13, 2023

TO: All Interested Citizens, Organizations, and Government Agencies

SUBJECT: FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
**Section 32 Sewer Authority, Gogebic County
Wastewater System Improvements
Clean Water State Revolving Fund Project Number 5795-01**

The purpose of this notice is to seek public input and comment on a preliminary decision by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required to implement recommendations discussed in the attached Environmental Assessment of a wastewater project plan submitted by the applicant mentioned above.

HOW WERE ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES CONSIDERED?

Part 53, Clean Water Assistance, of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as amended, being Sections 324.5301 to 324.5316 of the Michigan Compiled Laws Annotated, requires EGLE to evaluate all environmental implications of a proposed wastewater project. EGLE has done this by incorporating a detailed analysis of the environmental effects of the proposed alternatives in its review and approval process. A project plan containing information on environmental impacts was prepared by the municipality and reviewed by the State. EGLE has prepared the attached Environmental Assessment and found that the proposed project does not require the preparation of an EIS.

WHY IS AN EIS NOT REQUIRED?

Our environmental review concluded that no significant environmental impacts would result from the proposed action. Any adverse impacts have either been eliminated by changes in the project plan or will be reduced by the implementation of the mitigative measures discussed in the attached Environmental Assessment.

HOW DO I GET MORE INFORMATION?

A map depicting the location of the proposed project is attached. This information is also available on our website at Michigan.gov/CWSRF under "Related Links." The Environmental Assessment presents additional information on the project, alternatives that were considered, impacts of the proposed action, and the basis for our decision. Further information can be obtained by calling or writing one of the contact people listed below.

HOW DO I SUBMIT COMMENTS?

Any comments supporting or disagreeing with this preliminary decision should be submitted to me at EGLE, Constitution Hall, P.O. Box 30457, Lansing, Michigan 48909-7957. We will not take any action on this project plan for 30 calendar days from the date of this notice in order to receive and consider any comments.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

In the absence of substantive comments during this period, our preliminary decision will become final. The applicant will then be eligible to receive loan assistance from this Agency to construct the proposed project.

Any information you feel should be considered by EGLE should be brought to our attention. If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Angela Yu, the project manager, at 517-599-5487, by email at YuA@michigan.gov, or you may contact me. Your interest in this process and the environment is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Dan Beauchamp

Dan Beauchamp, Section Manager
Water Infrastructure Funding and Financing Section
Finance Division
517-284-5433

Attachment

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, GREAT LAKES, AND ENERGY
Clean Water State Revolving Fund
Section 32 Sewer Authority, Gogebic County
Environmental Assessment
April 2023

PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

Applicant: Section 32 Sewer Authority

Address: 414 North County Road 519
Wakefield, Michigan 49968

Authorized Representative: Dan Siirila, Chairman

Project Number: 5795-01

PROJECT SUMMARY

Section 32 Sewer Authority (Section 32) is in western Gogebic County. Section 32 provides wastewater collection and treatment for Jackson Creek Summit (formerly Indianhead Mountain Resort) and the Jackson Creek Village, located at the top of the ski hill. Section 32 and the ski resort is in Wakefield Township, which had a population of 301 persons in 2020. The population in the nearby area is not expected to change over the next 20 years. The Section 32 service area population heavily fluctuates between seasons due to seasonal recreational traffic.

Section 32 is applying for a low interest Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) loan administered by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) for repair and replacement of the existing wastewater collection system. Construction is anticipated to begin in fall 2023 and conclude spring 2024. The total estimated project cost is \$950,000. As a disadvantaged community, Section 32 is anticipated to receive an estimated \$475,000 of loan principal forgiveness.

A typical Section 32 user may see an average rate increase of \$16.83 per month due to the CWSRF financed portion of the collection system improvement project. However, final user cost impact will be adjusted based on the final CWSRF loan received by Section 32.

EXISTING SYSTEM AND PROJECT NEED

Section 32 serves 35 users, which includes 30 single housing units, three double units, one apartment, and one major user (ski resort). The wastewater collection system utilizes small diameter collector sewers conveying septic tank effluent flows. Each user has its own individual, private septic tank used for primary treatment. There are 25 private septic tanks that are part of the existing system. Owners are encouraged to check their tanks and get them pumped every three to five years, depending on flow volume.

The system also has a submersible-type pump station, which serves three customers. This shared pump station currently uses a pair of Septic Tank Effluent Pumps, which pump the waste out of the tank and into the sewers. The equipment utilized at the pump station, including the two effluent pumps, has not been upgraded since installation and are expected to be past end of useful life.

The collection system uses small diameter (6-inch) gravity sewers to collect wastewater from 4-inch diameter laterals fed by individual septic tanks. Wastewater flows through these series of gravity sewers into two lagoons located at the base of the ski hill. The sewers are monitored for blockages and cleaned as needed. In 2012, areas were dug up for a water main installation project, which exposed portions of the gravity sewer. The gravity sewer was of questionable integrity and in poor condition.

The two aerated facultative lagoons hold and treat wastewater and are discharged seasonally to Jackson Creek. One lagoon has two mechanical aerators while the other has one aerator with a small control building. Aerators typically run only during periods of high flow, usually during the winter ski season and immediately after. The National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit (permit number MIG580331) sets lagoon discharge and testing criteria. Discharge is typically allowed during March through May and October through December and only when Jackson Creek is ice free.

Recently, there have been reported issues with failing and collapsed private septic tanks on individual properties in the Section 32 service area. The Western Upper Peninsula Health Department (WUPHD) has received permit requests to replace collapsed metal septic tanks and recommended connection to Section 32. There have also been reported problems with deficient drain fields. These deficiencies and failures may cause groundwater contamination in a nearby aquifer due to insufficient vertical isolation between groundwater and wastewater from septic tanks. The WUPHD reported that there are individual on-site water wells still in service utilizing the groundwater aquifer near where septic tank failures are occurring. This can contaminate the drinking water aquifer and may lead to a local public health issue if not addressed.

PROPOSED PROJECT

A. Alternatives Considered

No-action Alternative

This alternative would not address issues related to the failing septic systems. Due to the continued risk of system failure and to water quality, this alternative was not considered further.

Optimum Performance of Existing Facilities

Optimization without capital improvements would fail to address collection system deficiencies and possible groundwater contamination issues. Therefore, this alternative was not considered.

Regional Alternative

The Bessemer Area Sewer Authority (BASA) Wastewater Treatment Plant is approximately three miles away from Section 32. For regionalization to be economically feasible, additional customers in the Jackson Creek Village and a nearby ski hill would need to join the regional system. It is potentially feasible to route the system to BASA in the future, but this does not address immediate needs at Section 32. Therefore, this alternative was not currently considered.

Collection System Repair and Replacement

This alternative includes taking seven users off individual failing septic tanks and directly connecting these residences to the Section 32 collection system. This would not increase effluent flow; it would eliminate septic tank pretreatment. This alternative would also include replacement of gravity sewers and associated structures, submersible pump stations, and force mains. If septic tank pretreatment is removed, the collection system and aging pumping station equipment needs upgrading to handle raw sewage. Additionally, influent and effluent flow metering improvements would be completed to both lagoons. Flow metering improvements

would increase reliability of the system and monitor the effluent quality prior to discharge into Jackson Creek. Since this alternative would address septic tank failure and prevent potential water quality issues, this alternative was considered further.

B. Proposed Project and Estimated Cost

To address deficiencies and aging equipment in the Section 32 collection system, collection system repair and replacement was the selected alternative (Figure 1). The proposed project includes replacement of approximately 2,300-linear feet (LF) gravity sewers, 1,300-LF of force main, and two submersible pump stations. Gravity sewers would increase in size from 6-inch to 8-inch in diameter, the minimum standard for public sewers. The force main would also increase in diameter, from 2-inch to 3-inch in diameter. Additionally, seven users will be connected to the system, switching them from a septic system to a direct system connection. Lastly, both lagoons will have updated flow metering installed. The proposed project is estimated at \$950,000. Section 32 is anticipated to receive an estimated \$475,000 in the form of loan principal forgiveness.

POTENTIAL PROJECT IMPACTS

A. Water Quality Impacts

The proposed collection system improvements do not have any anticipated impacts to state-regulated water resources of surface waters, such as inland lakes, streams, or wetlands. No impacts to surface or groundwater are expected to occur as a result of the improvements. The proposed project would protect surface water and groundwater by removing failing septic systems and deficient gravity sewers. Proposed improvements will occur in previously disturbed areas or in developed rights-of-way.

B. Construction Impacts

The proposed project is not expected to have any historical, cultural, archaeological, or environmental impacts. The collection system improvement work will be completed on previously disturbed rights-of-way and existing treatment facility areas (lagoons). These areas will be impacted by the construction activity and mitigation measures will be taken, as described below. However, impacts of construction activities associated with the project are considered short-term disruptions that, for the most part, will not extend beyond the period of construction. Short-term adverse impacts associated with construction include noise, dust, exhaust fumes, removal of groundcover, and increased erosion potential. Construction contract provisions will outline requirements to comply with the Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control Act. Mitigation measures will be taken to prevent damage to surrounding areas from soil erosion, dust, and sedimentation.

C. Secondary Impacts

No significant secondary impacts are anticipated as a result of this project. The project was designed to address deficiencies in the collection system, increase reliability, and improve public health.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

An in-person public hearing on the proposed project plan was held on May 10, 2022, at the Wakefield Township Hall. The public hearing was advertised in the *Daily Globe* newspaper on April 8 and April 15, 2022. No comments were submitted prior to the public hearing and all

questions from the public and Section 32 Board was answered during the public hearing. The Section 32 Board passed a resolution in support of the project plan following the hearing.

REASONS FOR CONCLUDING NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

The proposed project will address aging wastewater infrastructure and will have no significant adverse direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on socioeconomic, cultural, or environmental factors. The water quality benefits anticipated from the project are expected to outweigh the short-term adverse impacts. Therefore, a finding of no significant has been made.

Questions regarding this Environmental Assessment should be directed to:

Ms. Angela Yu, Project Manager
Water Infrastructure Funding and Financing Section
Finance Division
Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy
P.O. Box 30457
Lansing, Michigan 48909-4957
Telephone: 517-599-5487
E-Mail: YuA@michigan.gov

Figure 1: Section 32 Sewer Authority Location

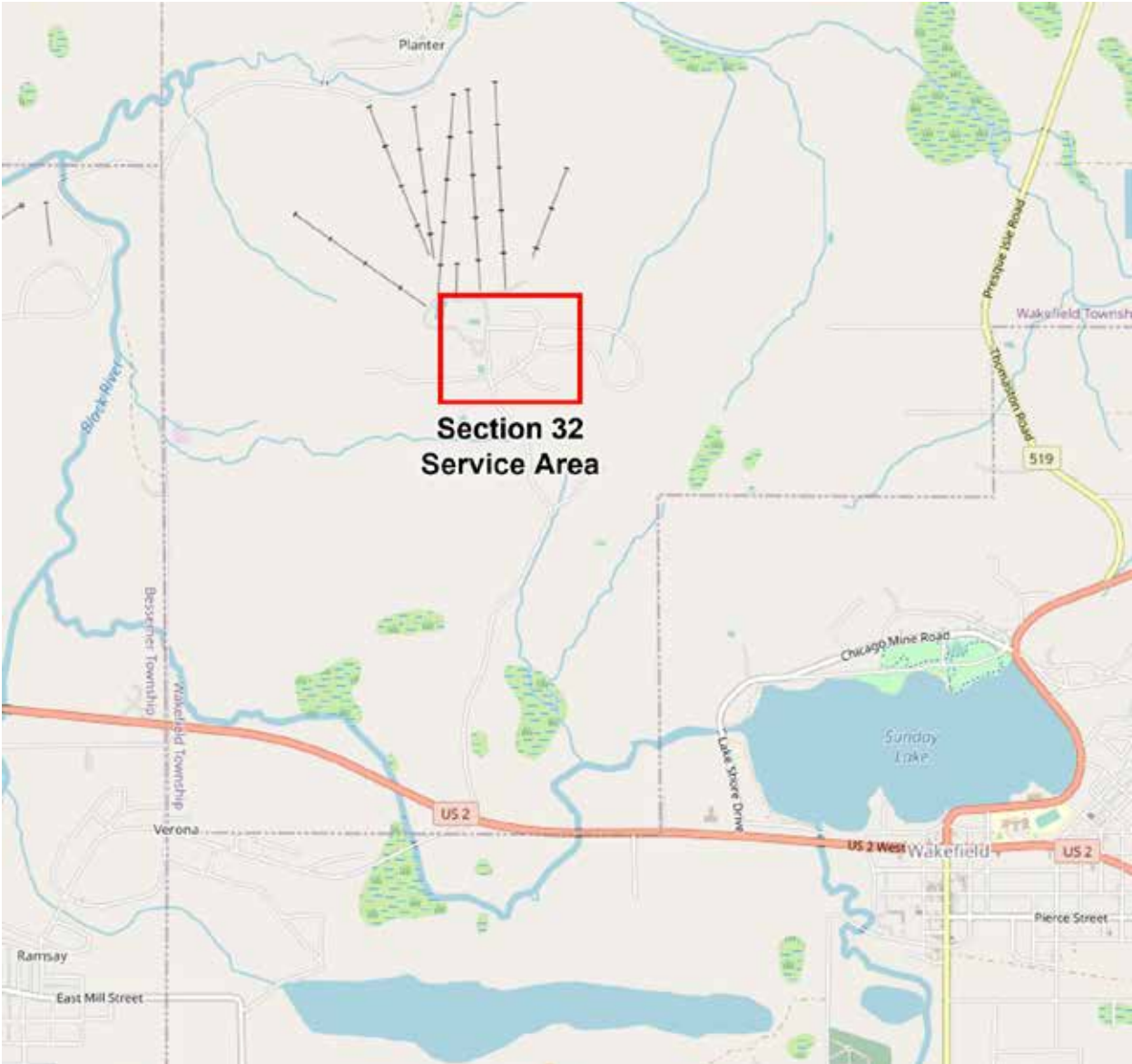


Figure 2: Section 32 Proposed Collection System Improvements

