



July 16, 2026

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

**Noble County Water Authority
Water Line Extension and Interconnect Final Phase B
Loan Number: FS391674-0004**

The attached Environmental Assessment (EA) is for a drinking water distribution project in Noble 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 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 Noble County Water Authority can then proceed with its application for the WSRLA loan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kathleen Courtright".

Kathleen Courtright, Assistant Chief
Division of Environmental & Financial Assistance

Attachment

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Identification

Project: Water Line Extension and Interconnect Final Phase B

Applicant: Noble County Water Authority
46049 Marietta Road
Caldwell, Ohio 43724

Loan Number: FS391674-0004

Project Summary

Noble County Water Authority has applied for financing from the Ohio Water Supply Revolving Loan Account (WSRLA) to fund the Water Line Extension and Interconnect Final Phase B project. This project is necessary to supply public water to areas with limited and, in some cases, unsafe sources of water. The estimated loan amount for this project is \$1,415,827, with construction scheduled to begin in summer of 2026 and last approximately nine months.

History and Existing Conditions

The Noble County Water Authority (NCWA) owns and operates a water distribution system that is supplied finished drinking water by the Village of Caldwell. The Village of Caldwell Water Treatment Plant (WTP) draws its water from Caldwell Lake and Wolf Run State Park Lake. NCWA serves approximately 650 customers, with a current peak water demand of 98,000 gallons per day (GPD).

The proposed project (see figures 1 and 2) will provide safe drinking water to approximately 95 customers in the areas of Buffalo, Seneca and Center townships, along Zep Road, Fry Road, Old Infirmary Road, Buzzard's Roost Road, Enlow Road, Stottsberry Road, and County Road 285. Residents in the project area currently draw water from private wells and cisterns. Problems with the private water supplies in this area include acid mine waste contamination, iron staining, wells contaminated with coliform bacteria, and low-producing wells. As a result, the residents sometimes rely on unsafe sources such as springs and ponds, or they must pay for hauled water. Many of these residents have petitioned NCWA to resolve these problems by providing them with public water.

NWCA received a WSRLA loan in 2024 to fund the Water Line Extension and Interconnect Final Phase project, which provided water to 90 customers in Noble County through the construction of approximately 74,410 linear feet (LF) of water distribution lines.

Population and Flow Projections

The Village of Caldwell WTP has a design capacity of 1.44 million gallons per day (MGD) of finished water, average demand of 0.88 MGD, and 500,000 gallons of water storage. Three NCWA water

distribution projects are planned in the near future, including the project discussed in this environmental assessment, which will expand the system by 95 customers to approximately 84 customers, with a peak system demand of 142,000 gallons per day GPD. Noble County population has effectively remained unchanged over the past 20 years, and little to no population growth is anticipated in the 20-year planning period. At the projected level of growth, the Village of Caldwell WTP can adequately meet the present and future needs of the Village of Caldwell and the proposed NCWA projects through the 20-year planning period.

Alternatives

Alternative 1. No-Action

Due to the above-described existing conditions for drinking water services within the project area, the No-Action alternative of continuing with the current situation would leave citizens with unsafe, limited, or expensive water sources, which is not a viable, long-term option.

Alternative 2. Connection to the Noble County Water Authority Distribution System

NCWA has water transmission lines near the project areas, and the Village of Caldwell WTP has more than enough capacity to serve the project area. Construction of the project will result in minimal environmental impact and will be a cost-effective solution compared to new private well installation and commercial water hauling.

Alternative 3. Connection to Other Water Supply and Distribution Systems

Connection to the water distribution systems of the Noble Water Company, Pure Water, and Clear Water were considered. However, these systems are limited by distance from the project area or inadequate water capacity for the project. Therefore, connection to any of these water systems is not a viable alternative for this project.

Selected Alternative

Alternative 2 was selected and will extend approximately 56,390 linear feet of 3-, 4-, and 8-inch-diameter water lines to connect residences and businesses to NCWA's existing water mains. Customers will be responsible for paying a connection fee and constructing their own service lateral. The majority of the water lines will be open trenched, with various sections being directionally bored. The vast majority of the project will take place in previously disturbed road rights-of-way. The project includes directional bores of streams, roads, and culverts, and open-cut excavation and directional bores within easements on private properties. The project will serve up to 95 customers, and include individual water service connections, gate valves, flush-outs, air releases, and hydrants. The new water lines will be owned and maintained by NCWA. Those connecting to the system will receive a metered water bill from NCWA.

The project area will be supplied water via the Village of Caldwell WTP and its interconnection between the Village of Caldwell and NCWA transmission lines.

Implementation

The total estimated cost for the proposed project is \$2,796,968, and NCWA will utilize \$1,400,000 in America Rescue Plan Act of 2021 funds for the project. NCWA proposes to borrow the \$1,415,827 balance from the WSRLA, and qualifies for a 30-year, 0% interest rate for regionalization projects. Borrowing \$1,415,827 at 0% will save NCWA approximately \$1.3 million over the 30-year loan period compared to borrowing the same amount at the current market rate of 4.87%.

Public Participation

NCWA has been petitioned to provide public water by many of the residents of the project area that are currently served by private water systems. Additionally, the project has been discussed in monthly NCWA meetings, YouTube video announcements, website media posts, and newspaper articles. Affected residences will be notified of work in advance.

Ohio EPA is unaware of any controversy about or opposition to this project. This Environmental Assessment (EA) and preliminary Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) will be posted on the Ohio EPA Division of Environmental and Financial Assistance website. Additionally, the EA and FNSI have been provided to NCWA to be made available according to their public notification procedures. Thus, there have been adequate opportunities for information dissemination and public participation.

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.

Air Quality: Noble County air quality meets standards for the six regulated air pollutants (carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, lead, particulate matter, and ozone). During construction, dust and vehicle exhaust will be insignificant sources of local air pollution. Dust due to excavation in dry weather will be controlled by good housekeeping measures (minimizing the area of disturbed soil, road sweeping, dust suppression with water or other benign dust suppressant). Because of its temporary nature and the use of emissions controls on motorized equipment, construction vehicle exhaust will be an insignificant pollution source compared to background sources of motorized vehicle exhaust in the greater project area.

Based on this information, the project should have no significant adverse short-term or long-term impacts on local air quality.

Archaeological and Historical Resources: Extensive pre-design review and historic structure avoidance went into the routing of the water line project, and proposed water line installation will occur primarily in previously disturbed areas. A limited Phase I Cultural Resource Management survey, “*Phase I Archaeological Investigations for the Approximately 13.7 (8.5 mi) I-77 East Water Main Extensions - Phase V Project in Noble County, Ohio*” found nothing of note.

Based on this information, Ohio EPA believes that due to the extent of disturbance in the project area, unrecorded archaeological sites, or properties eligible for or listed on the National Register of Historic Places 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 State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and Ohio EPA and to cooperate with those entities in archaeological and historic surveys and salvage efforts when appropriate.

Safety and Traffic: Construction in road rights-of-way will cause temporary traffic disruption and potential threats to public safety. Contract documents require contractors to implement Ohio Department of Transportation standard traffic controls to minimize traffic disruption and public safety risks. With these precautions, the project is unlikely to create significant traffic disturbance or threats to public safety.

Once construction is complete, the project areas will be restored and returned to pre-construction conditions. The project will not permanently alter traffic patterns. Therefore, the project will have no long-term change or adverse impacts on safety and traffic.

Noise and Odors: Motorized equipment will be used for the majority of project work, generating noise and odors that will be unavoidable but temporary. Noise will be controlled by using equipment that does not generate excessive noise or vibration. Work will be restricted to non-holiday weekdays from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM. Emissions controls on motorized construction equipment will reduce diesel odors. Once the project is complete, the water line extensions will operate with no noise, dust, or odors.

Based on this, the project will have no short-term or long-term significant adverse effects from noise, dust, and odors.

Groundwater: The proposed project will not have significant long-term adverse impacts on groundwater resources, as the majority of work will be performed within road rights-of-way and limited easements on private properties, in which the predominant cover is pavement, gravel, and lawn grass.

Dewatering of groundwater to enable work below grade may be necessary, but the project is not located in close proximity to private wells, construction depth is minimal, and engineering controls are part of the specifications.

Based on the above, the proposed project will not result in significant adverse impacts to groundwaters.

Aquatic Habitat, Wetlands, and Surface Water Resources: The proposed project will not have significant adverse long-term impacts on surface water resources as most work will be performed within road rights-of-way and limited easements on private properties, in which the predominant

cover is pavement, gravel, and lawn grass. Minor, short-term impacts from the open-cut construction and directional boring could occur. Excavation of the trenches and pits could be prone to erosion and deposition if construction mitigation is not followed.

A Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), which describes the measures that will be taken to prevent pollution caused by runoff into surface waters, is required, as is a frac-out contingency plan for horizontal drilling, which describes how inadvertent escapes of drilling slurry to the surface (known as “frac-outs”) will be managed.

A portion of the project, proposed to be located between Zep Road West and Old Infirmary Road, has the potential to impact wetlands in the area. NCWA hired a consultant to perform a surface water delineation of wetlands and waterbodies within the general project area. The purpose was to determine the extent and quality of surface waters that may require regulatory permitting. The results of this delineation have yet to be shared with Ohio EPA. Ideally, the location of this portion of the project and/or technology utilized for construction would eliminate impacts to wetlands or other water resources.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is responsible for administering the Section 404 program under the Clean Water Act to protect these waterbodies. This includes processing permit applications and issuing final authorizations under its regulations for activities involving construction within the Nation’s waters, including wetlands that meet requirements to be considered part of the Nation’s waters. Section 401 Water Quality Certification or an Isolated Wetland Permit may be required from Ohio EPA as well.

NCWA is responsible for coordinating with these agencies to determine what, if any, permitting is required for project actions proposed to affect identified water resources and to acquire necessary approvals before work begins. Once acquired, all requirements and restrictions included in the permits must be abided by to ensure that no significant, unanticipated impacts on the resources are experienced and that wetlands or other water resources are restored to preconstruction conditions. NCWA must also demonstrate to Ohio EPA that the permitting process has been completed and that all protection measures required will be enforced during construction as a condition of this FNSI and EA.

The contractor will be responsible for implementing all necessary construction best management practices (e.g., erosion and sediment control, noise and dust minimization, proper storage and handling of materials, worker and public safety, site security, traffic maintenance, property owner notification, legal disposal of waste and excess materials) throughout the duration of the project to avoid or minimize all short-term impacts to the area.

Based on this information, construction restrictions in place and conditions based on the results of the wetland delineation, the project is not expected to have significant short-term or long-term adverse effects on aquatic habitat, wetlands, and surface water resources.

Floodplains: A portion of the project site falls within the 100-year floodplain of Buffalo Creek. Work in this area will be temporary, will be installed via directional bore, and final structures will be below grade. All other project work will be above the 100-year floodplain. Noble County will coordinate

reviews of this project with the local floodplain administrator to ensure compliance with all local floodplain regulations.

Based on the above, the proposed project is not expected to result in significant adverse long-term impacts to floodplains.

Local Economy: Debt for this project will be repaid from monthly user charges without rate increases based on this project. The median household income (MHI) of the project area is \$46,144. Under the water rates that are effective in 2026, the average residential water bill is expected to be \$66.50 per month, or \$798 per year, based on 4,000 gallons per month usage, as compared to the state average rate of \$477 per year.

Residents will be responsible for paying for the connection fees, per household, of \$750 if paid prior to the start of project construction, and \$2,500-\$3,500 (depending on the home's side of the road compared to water line) if paid after project construction is completed. Residents are also responsible for constructing their own service laterals, which has an estimated cost of \$2,000. Residents will also be responsible for paying \$50 for Noble County Engineering Department water inspections of their connections. Residents of this project area are neither required to connect to this public drinking water supply nor to abandon private wells if they connect to public water.

Terrestrial Habitat and Endangered Species: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Ohio Department of Natural Resources indicate that the project is within the range of the state and federally endangered Indiana bat and northern long-eared bat, and the state endangered little brown bat and tricolored bat. Trees within the project area are primarily small- to large-sized street trees and scrubby roadside brush. Other mature trees are located outside of the work area and would provide alternative habitat. Tree removal will only be permitted to occur October 1 to March 31 or in coordination with USFWS, and tree removal is limited to only those trees necessary for completion of the project (e.g., trees within the excavation location or within the path of heavy equipment, etc.). These tree clearing restrictions will further ensure that any potential impacts to these bat species are avoided.

Multiple stream crossings are present within the project area. However, all crossings will utilize directional drilling methods to install the water lines, adhering to the SWPPP and frac-out contingency plan to minimize potential impacts to these aquatic species.

The project is within the range of the northern harrier, a state endangered bird, cerulean warbler, a state bird species of concern, and the monarch butterfly, a proposed federally threatened insect. However, due to the location of the project and the lack of appropriate habitat present, these species are not likely to be impacted.

Based on this information, the project will have no significant short-term or long-term adverse effect on terrestrial habitat or endangered species.

Unaffected Environmental Features: The installation and operation of the project will have few indirect, development-related impacts. This is because the current and expected levels of population growth are low in the region as a whole, and because of geographic limitations to development within the

project area (e.g., a significant portion of the available land in the project area lies on steep grades). No state-designated scenic rivers or state-designated or federally designated wildlife areas are present in or near the work sites. The project is not located in the Lake Erie coastal zone. No sole source aquifers are present under the project.

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.

The project will have long-term benefits associated with the provision of a safe and adequate supply of potable water that is maintained according to the standards of the Safe Drinking Water Act. The project will ensure adequate and reliable water pressure to support the needs of residential customers and businesses throughout the project area.

Contact information

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Figure 1. General project area

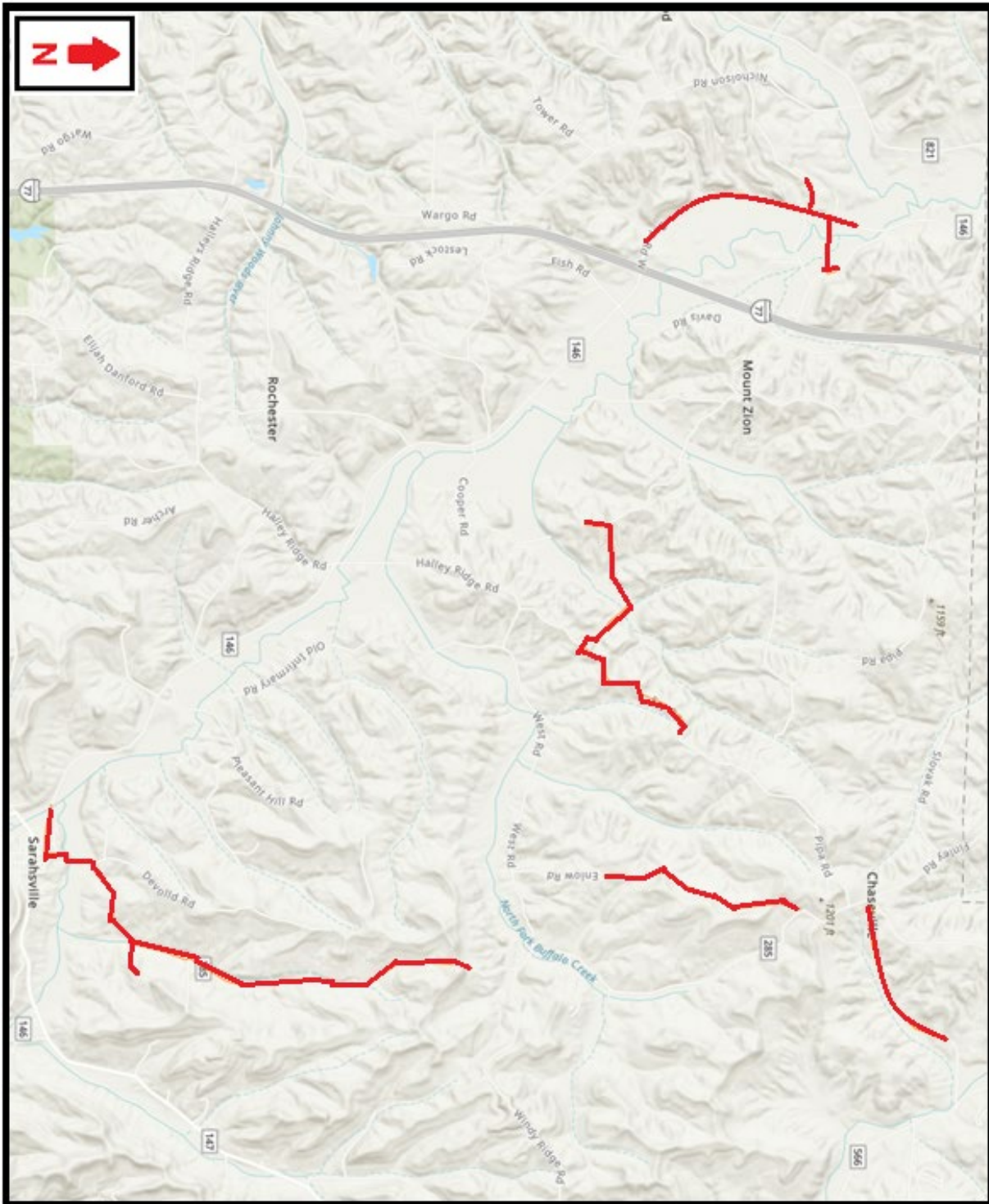


Figure 2. Project areas