

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Sheet

BIG COOLIE DITCH IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

1. Why petition the project?

The Ohio Revised Code (i.e., State law) requires privately owned ditches to be placed under public maintenance (following the petition process) before public funds may be used to maintain them. As such, the petition process provides Lucas County with a permanent easement on such ditches to allow for continued maintenance and to allow the County to maintain public investment. It also allows those who benefit from the ditch, but do not live along it, to share the cost of maintaining the ditch.

2. What is the purpose of the Final Hearing?

At the final hearing, the County Engineer gives the Board of the Lucas County Commissioners his report regarding the estimated cost of the project, the proposed maintenance base for the project, the amount of damages and compensation for real estate, the feasibility of the project, and his opinion as to whether the benefits of the project are likely to exceed the costs.

In addition, the Board hears any additional evidence offered by benefitting landowners on the amount of the maintenance base, the amount of damages and compensation, as well as any additional evidence and testimony regarding the petition. At the Final Hearing, the Board will also revisit their prior decision made in the First Hearing to approve the petition for the project that the improvement is necessary, conducive to the public welfare, and is reasonably certain that the costs are less than the benefits.

3. I do not live directly on a ditch in the proposed maintenance area, why am I considered a benefitting landowner?

The Ohio Petition Law considers all landowners in the watershed (i.e., drainage area) of a ditch improvement as *benefitting* from the improvement or future improvement.

If you are receiving this letter, a property identified as yours is located within the defined project drainage area and benefits from the stormwater drainage capacity provided by Big Coolie Ditch. For a map of the drainage area, please visit the Ditch Petition Information Section on the Lucas County Engineer's website at <https://www.lucascountyengineer.org/bigcoolieditch.html>.

4. What is proposed to be improved as a result of this petition?

Big Coolie Ditch is proposed to be placed under permanent maintenance. This means that Lucas County will review the condition of the ditches on a routine basis and may perform maintenance work on the ditches from time to time to keep them functioning and in good working order.

Additionally, a grant-funded restoration project is currently proposed for the petition-length of Big Coolie Ditch east of Cousino Road, with the intent to increase stormwater capacity and stabilization of the Ditch, as well as improve downstream water quality.

5. What is the Maintenance Base Assessment?

The Maintenance Base Assessment is based on the **value of the whole project** (i.e., the cost of all associated drainage infrastructure) using methods according to Ohio Petition Law. It serves as the basis on which the costs for maintenance would be **proportioned** amongst all affected parcel owners in future assessment(s).

6. Is there any possibility of being assessed for maintenance of ditches within the drainage area?

The proposed project along Big Coolie Ditch is currently budgeted to be paid by outside grants and the Lucas County Stormwater Utility. Therefore, no property owner shall be required to pay an initial assessment for design and construction along Big Coolie Ditch.

Should it be determined by the Lucas County Engineer's Office, that future maintenance work is required for Big Coolie Ditch, the Lucas County Engineer will request an assessment from all benefiting landowners, including all state, county, and township property, to perform said maintenance work the following year. Property owners will be assessed for maintenance costs to ensure ditches remain in good working condition.

7. What comes after the Final Hearing?

After the Final Hearing, the restoration project east of Cousino Road will be issued for bid. Construction for the restoration project will be scheduled to commence in late fall of 2026 or early spring of 2027.

Per the Ohio Revised Code Section 6137, a permanent easement for maintenance will be established 25' from the top of bank of the ditch. In addition, a 10' permanent grass buffer strip will be established in agricultural areas from the top of each bank.