

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Sheet

BIG COOLIE DITCH WATERSHED IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

1. Am I being assessed now?

No. Please read on for more information.

2. Why did I get a notice in the mail?

You have been identified as a benefitting landowner in the petition filed by Jerusalem Township for proposed improvements to the Big Coolie Creek Watershed. The petition includes the reach of Big Coolie Creek defined as follows:

Commencing at its terminus with the west side of Cousino Road at a location approximately 1600 feet north of the Cousino Road and Jerusalem Road intersection, thence commencing southwest for a distance of approximately 6,135 feet to the terminus of the existing open ditch located approximately 1000 feet east of North Curtice Road and 2600 feet south of Jerusalem Road.

Maps which identify the area benefitting from the proposed improvement as well as the tributaries identified in the petition for maintenance are located on the project website located at <https://www.lucascountyengineer.org/bigcoolieditch.html>.

3. Why petition the project?

Drainage infrastructure (creeks, ditches, ponds, streams, rivers, etc.) within Ohio, located on private property, are the responsibility of adjacent private landowners. The petition ditch process allows Lucas County to expend public funds for continued/long-term maintenance of private creeks and ditches which provide a public benefit. Without a petition, creek and ditch maintenance would remain the responsibility of the adjacent landowners.

Big Coolie Ditch has experienced significant levels of sedimentation and brush impeding flow. In some locations the ditch has lost much of its flow capacity due to sedimentation above the original bottom elevation. This has led to standing water and a lack of drainage in the watershed.

On October 31, 2024, the Lucas County Engineer's Office, at the request of the Jerusalem Township Trustees, applied to the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) for an H2Ohio Conservation Ditch Program Grant to construct a wider self-forming conservation ditch in the reach of Big Coolie Ditch as defined in Number 2 above. A self-forming conservation ditch

channel promotes the formation of vegetated floodplain benches to increase capacity of existing drainage infrastructure and lessen nutrient and sediment contributions to Lake Erie. If awarded, the H2Ohio Grant will pay for the conservation ditch construction in its entirety, and the grant program requires that a ditch petition be in place for the future maintenance of the project reach.

4. What is the purpose of the View?

The View is the opportunity for the Board of the Lucas County Commissioners (Board of Commissioners) to discuss the existing condition of the ditch and to allow the public to voice comments or concerns regarding existing conditions of the ditch.

After the view, the Lucas County Engineer's Offices will prepare a preliminary report which includes a preliminary design and cost estimate, comments on the feasibility of the project, and an opinion as to whether the benefits of the improvement are likely to exceed the preliminary costs.

5. What is the purpose of the First Hearing?

At the First Hearing, the Board of Commissioners hear the preliminary report of the Lucas County Engineer, and review any evidence offered by benefitting landowners. At the First Hearing, the Board of Commissioners may approve the petition if they find that the improvement is necessary, conducive to public welfare, and they are reasonably certain that the costs are less than the benefits.

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

The Ohio Petition Law considers all land owners 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 Big Coolie Creek watershed area and benefits from the stormwater drainage capacity provided by the Big Coolie Ditch. For maps of the Big Coolie Ditch drainage area in Lucas County, please visit the Ditch Petition Information Section on the Lucas County Engineer's website at <https://www.lucascountyengineer.org/bigcooleditch.html> .

7. 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 ditch on a

routine basis and may perform maintenance work on the ditch from time to time to keep it functioning and in good working order.

8. Is there any possibility of being assessed for the future maintenance of Big Coolie Ditch?

Should it be determined by the Lucas County Engineer's Office that maintenance work is required for Big Coolie Ditch after the construction of the grant funded conservation ditch, the Lucas County Engineer will request an assessment from all benefiting landowners, including all state, county, and township property (if any), in order to perform said maintenance work the following year. Property owners will be assessed for maintenance costs to assure the ditch remains in good working condition. However, the nature of the ditch being constructed with the grant typically results in low maintenance requirements.

9. What comes after the First Hearing?

After completion of any required design work, the Lucas County Engineer will present their detailed plans and detailed cost estimate. In addition, the Engineer will calculate the maintenance basis as well as any damages to property owners as a result of the petition. At this point, the Board of Commissioners will hold a Final Hearing to reconsider their decision made at the First Hearing, based on the detailed information presented by the Lucas County Engineer as well as any testimony provided by benefitting land owners. If the Board of Commissioners approve the petition at the First Hearing, the Final Hearing will take place after the plans are prepared at a later date.

10. What work do you anticipate to be performed if the petition is approved?

The ditch maintenance work will likely include, but will not be limited to, the following:

- Removal of log jams and leaning trees
- Repairing bank erosion in selected areas
- Removal of excessive accumulated sediment in the channel that may be impeding the formation of the proposed floodplain benches
- Development of a 10' buffer strip along the top of the ditch bank in agricultural areas
- Maintenance of the self-forming conservation ditch channel (if approved to be constructed using grant funds) that promotes the formation of vegetated floodplain benches to increase capacity of existing drainage infrastructure and lessen nutrient and sediment contributions to Lake Erie.