

CONTACT:

Dale Kemery (News media only)
kemery.dale@epa.gov
202-564-7839
202-564-4355

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EPA Approves Plan to Control Sewer Overflows in Cincinnati Area

Will Reduce Releases of Sewage and Polluted Stormwater by More Than 1.5 Billion Gallons Each Year

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced the approval of an innovative plan for the control of combined sewer overflows (CSOs) in the city of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, Ohio.

“This plan is good news for the residents of Cincinnati and for communities along the Ohio River,” said Cynthia Giles, assistant administrator for EPA’s Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance. “Not only will this innovative plan ensure that significant volumes of polluted stormwater and raw sewage are kept out of local waterways, but it will also cost less than more traditional approaches, saving money for ratepayers and the city.”

The plan establishes priorities to address communities’ most serious water quality problems and promotes cost-effective, innovative solutions to reduce pollution. Specific components include separating sewers to keep rainwater out of the combined sewer system and use of green infrastructure to manage rainwater diverted from the combined system.

Under a 2010 consent decree and CSO control plan, the Metropolitan Sewerage District of Greater Cincinnati (MSDGC) was required either to construct a deep tunnel system under Mill Creek to alleviate CSOs in many neighborhoods in the city, or conduct further analyses and propose an alternative plan. MSDGC proposed the alternative plan to EPA in December 2012. The alternate plan is expected to save more than \$150 million (in 2006 dollars) from the original deep-tunnel plan.

The plan will also create a green corridor that will convey stormwater runoff to Mill Creek in the Fairmont neighborhood of Cincinnati. The corridor will also include a floodway that will help prevent flooding of local streets, homes and businesses during extreme rain events. The green corridor and constructed channel will be an amenity for the neighborhood and may contribute to neighborhood stabilization and economic revitalization in addition to helping to resolve overflow issues.

Combined sewer systems, which collect both sewage and rainwater, become overwhelmed during rain events, allowing untreated sewage mixed with rainwater to be discharged into local water bodies and the Ohio River. Keeping the rainwater out of the combined system helps open up capacity in the combined sewer systems and helps to reduce overflows.

Raw sewage contains pathogens that threaten public health, leading to beach closures and public advisories against fishing and swimming. This problem particularly affects older urban areas, where minority and low-income communities are often concentrated. This settlement also highlights the benefit

of using integrated planning approaches and green infrastructure to facilitate sustainable, innovative, and cost-effective solutions to protect human health and improve water quality.

Today's announcement is the latest in a series of Clean Water Act settlements and CSO control plans that will reduce the discharge of raw sewage and contaminated stormwater into U.S. rivers, streams and lakes. It is part of EPA's national enforcement initiative to keep raw sewage and contaminated stormwater out of the nation's waterways.

The state of Ohio and the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission were also parties to the 2010 consent decree.

More information about the plan: <http://www.epa.gov/compliance/resources/cases/civil/cwa/hamilton.html>

More information about the integrated planning framework:
<http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/integratedplans.cfm>

More information about green infrastructure:
<http://water.epa.gov/infrastructure/greeninfrastructure/index.cfm>