



PROJECT GROUNDWORK
your pipeline to clean water

West Fork FEMA Grant Fact Sheet

The Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati (MSD) has been awarded a \$3 million grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Ohio Emergency Management Agency (OEMA) to mitigate flood hazards along West Fork Creek in the Northside neighborhood of Cincinnati. This project may be part of a potential future solution to decrease combined sewer overflows (CSOs) into West Fork Creek, reduce sewer backups and improve stormwater management in the West Fork watershed.

West Fork Creek

West Fork Creek is the primary waterway that flows through the West Fork watershed. This watershed encompasses about 6,117 acres within the City of Cincinnati, City of Cheviot and Green Township on the west side of Interstate 75 to the north and south of Interstate 74.

The creek and its tributaries transport natural drainage and stormwater runoff to the Mill Creek. The creek flows naturally on the hillsides but is channelized (with concrete sides and bottom) in the valley where it parallels West Fork Road.

The concrete channel was constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1920s. A combined sewer runs beneath this section with various entry points that allow natural drainage and stormwater to enter the sewer.

Due to the interconnection between the creek and the sewer, properties adjacent to the creek are subject to flooding and sewer backups during heavy rains. In addition, raw sewage - mixed with and stormwater - overflows from the combined sewers into the creek. This is called a combined sewer overflow (CSO).

A number of properties are located within the 100-year floodplain of the creek. A floodplain is the flat or nearly flat land located adjacent to a stream or river. The 100-year floodplain is the level of flood water expected to be equaled or exceeded every 100 years on average, with a 1% chance of being equaled or exceeded in any single year.

West Fork FEMA Grant Project

In 2009, MSD decided to apply for FEMA flood hazard mitigation assistance to proactively address flooding along West Fork Creek in an area also known for a high volume of CSOs. Prior to applying, MSD contacted property owners within the creek's 100-year floodplain to determine their interest in participating should the grant be awarded.

The \$3 million grant was awarded in late 2010. The grant monies, along with a \$1.3 million local cost share from MSD, will be used to purchase and demolish 22 properties located on West Fork Road, Ammon Avenue and Hayes Avenue adjacent to the creek, creating a more natural floodplain.

There may be future grant opportunities that could include additional properties, but the scope of the current grant is limited to the initial 22 properties.

Flood risks are based on a number of factors, including rainfall, stream flow, topography, flood control measures and land use changes. Even if a flood has not occurred in the past, flooding is always a risk for properties located along waterways.



Legend

- Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO)
- Existing Combined Sewer
- West Fork Creek
- - - West Fork Creek (piped segment)
- Floodway Boundary
- 100-year Floodplain Boundary

Hazard Mitigation Grant Process for Property Owners

The grant provides MSD with funds to purchase properties at fair market value, demolish the structures and convert the site to floodway/floodplain open space.

The process is comprised of three main steps for property owners:

- Appraisal of property and all improvements
- Acquisition of the property and all improvements
- Relocation for qualified tenants and gap assistance for qualified owner-occupants

Appraisal Process

Scheduling the Appraisal

Property owners need to schedule an inspection of their properties with Ms. Beth Riggs, an independent, state-certified appraiser.

Ms. Riggs is available to inspect properties in late March and early April 2011 and can be reached at:

*Ms. Beth A. Riggs, Appraiser
O. R. Colan Associates
8170 Corporate Park Drive, Suite 210
Cincinnati, OH 45242
Phone: (513) 247-0243
Mobile: (513) 504-8320*

Appraisal Visit

The appraisal inspection and interview with the property owner usually lasts about an hour. During the inspection, the property owner is encouraged to accompany the appraiser and present any information regarding improvements to or physical characteristics of the property that may impact the estimated value.

During the inspection, the entire premises - from the basement to the upper floors - will be evaluated. Ms. Riggs will note the condition of the property, including, but not limited to, structural integrity, mechanics, appliances, fixtures, and other amenities that impact value. The cleanliness of the property or any other superficial condition is not taken into account for the appraisal but does enhance the overall appearance of the dwelling.

Appraisal Report

Once Ms. Riggs has visited the property and gathered necessary information, she will prepare a thorough appraisal report that includes a fair market estimate of the property's value.

State Appraiser Review

A state appraiser will review the appraisal report submitted by Ms. Riggs to ensure accuracy, consistency and equity. After the state appraiser approves the appraisal report, it is forwarded to MSD to begin the acquisition process.

Acquisition Process

Offer Letter and Copy of Appraisal Report

MSD will provide the property owner with an offer based on the fair market value estimate, along with a copy of the appraisal report, *within 90 days of the appraisal inspection.*

Should a property owner disagree with the amount of the offer, the owner may obtain a second appraisal, at their sole cost. The owner must retain a general state-certified appraiser. The appraisal must depict relevant comparables and be on the standard form for residential appraisals. Once MSD receives the second appraisal from the owner, the first appraisal will be submitted with the second appraisal to the state appraiser for verification.

Offer Letter Acceptance Agreement

If the terms of the offer letter are accepted, the property owner signs an Offer Letter Acceptance Agreement and returns it to MSD *within 10 days of receipt of the letter.*

The acceptance agreement identifies a number of key conditions:

- The owner provides a list of all liens on the property and understands that proceeds from the sale are first applied to liens.
- The owner provides all documents necessary to transfer and clear title to the property in order to complete the transaction.
- The owner agrees to permanently move from the property at the time of closing.
- The owner understands that fixtures, materials or improvements to the property may not be removed or salvaged at any time.
- The owner understands that funds received from the sale cannot be used to relocate to an identified special flood hazard area or a 100-year floodplain.

Property Possession

At the closing of the transaction, title to the property will be transferred to MSD. At that time, MSD will take immediate possession of the property. However, MSD will accommodate property owners who require additional time (up to 60 days) to relocate.

Offer Denial Forms

Property owners who choose to reject the city's offer must sign an Offer Denial Form. This form is a statement indicating the owner wishes to terminate negotiations. Any property owner who elects not to participate in this hazard mitigation grant program will not be eligible for any federal, state or local assistance for damages resulting from a flood event.

Relocation Assistance

Tenants displaced as the result of a FEMA project may receive Uniform Relocation Assistance (URA) up to \$5,250, plus a move payment up to \$1,550. To be eligible, the tenant must be a legal U.S. resident or lawfully in the U.S. and have occupied the premises since September 17, 2010.

Property owners are not eligible for URA because the sale of property is voluntary. However, Non-Uniform Relocation Assistance (Non-URA) may be available for eligible owner-occupied properties.

Need More Information?

For more information contact:

Ms. Beth Sutherland, MSD, at (513) 244-1340

or email **Beth.Sutherland@cincinnati-oh.gov.**

