

TOUSSAINT CREEK JOINT COUNTY DITCH PETITION

Ottawa, Sandusky and Wood Counties

PRELIMINARY REPORT

The proposed project begins on the Toussaint Creek at the west side of Benton-Carroll Road in Carroll Township, Ottawa County, Ohio. The project will continue through Ottawa and Sandusky Counties to Sugar Ridge Road in Wood County.

The portion petitioned under Ohio Revised Code section 1515 is approximately 34 miles long and drains just less than 48,000 acres in three counties. Over 4,000 parcels are in the watershed including cities, municipalities, townships, counties, railroads, rights of ways, agricultural, and residential parcels.

The petition, as filed, requests assistance in the planning and construction of the works of improvement needed to attain the removal of logjams, woody vegetation detrimental to flow and in channel obstructions that are causing restrictions to drainage of the Toussaint Creek in Ottawa, Sandusky and Wood Counties. SWCD technicians walked the channel in the winter of 2014-2015 and observed elevated water levels due to log jams and numerous dead and leaning trees in danger of causing more logjams.

The proposed project will remove over 200 logjams and in excess of 6,000 dead and leaning trees. Many of the dead trees standing in the channel and composing the logjams are Ash trees, killed by the Emerald Ash Borer. Only trees within the channel that are dead or leaning across the channel at a 45 degree angle will be removed. All work will be done with equipment outside of the channel, wherever possible. Much of the work will need to be accomplished by hand cutting (flush cutting) the trees. Removed logjams and cut trees will be placed in a manner so as not to refloat and enter the channel. The project plans will be sent to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources for review. Care will be taken to make minimal impacts upon the environment and properties throughout construction. The construction easement will be the minimum necessary to complete the work. Upon completion of the project there will be a permanent maintenance easement placed on the properties along the channel and subject to the Ohio Revised Code section 6137 on drainage ditch maintenance. A filter strip may be required on the project as called for per section 1515.191. The permanent easement so used shall not be more than twenty-five feet from the top of the bank, measured at right angles thereto, and wherever practical the areas so used shall be on one side of the channel only.

It should be noted that logjam removal will not necessarily stop flooding of the Toussaint Creek for various properties, nor will it change the 100 and 500 year floodplains that exist throughout the channel. Lake level effects exist well past the starting point of the project at Benton Carrol Road and are influenced by wind direction and precipitation, amongst other factors.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the United State Fish and Wildlife Service were both contacted concerning the Ohio Mussel Survey. Both agencies granted the potential project an exemption from the survey as the expectance of endangered mussels is low and the projects disturbance of the creek will be kept to a minimum.

The Luckey Site (a Formerly Utilized Remedial Action Program site of the Army Corp of Engineers) was also investigated. A website <http://www.lrb.usace.army.mil/Missions/HTRW/FUSRAP/LuckeySite.aspx> was consulted for reports on studies done in the vicinity of the creek. The Army Corp of Engineers was contacted on January 20, 2015 and a response was received on March 20, 2015; "Based on the results of the remedial investigation, the Corps of Engineers will not be addressing the creek as part of our remediation of the Luckey Site. We do not have information to provide you regarding potential impacts to your planned creek clearing activities." Reports from the website do not show any reason to avoid that portion of the creek.

The estimated construction cost for the project is \$664,135 and the estimated additional cost is \$182,058 for a grand total of \$846,193. Logjam removal, dead and leaning tree removal and repairs to accessed areas are included in the construction costs. Additional expenses include items related to advertising, mailing, engineering, legal notices, project manager, administrative and contingent expenses. First years maintenance assessment would be approximately \$84,619. No other damages should be paid.

A cost benefit analysis was conducted utilizing methods from previous petition projects and studies by The Ohio State University. Utilizing only a small percentage of the anticipated gains of increased drainage still allow for a positive benefit versus the cost of construction.

It should be pointed out that all costs are only an estimate. Final assessments would be based on actual costs.

It is the opinion of the Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Ottawa, Sandusky and Wood Counties that the proposed project is feasible, that the benefits will exceed the costs, the improvement is necessary, it will be conducive to public welfare, it will improve water management, and it will aid lands in the area by promoting the environmental development of the area.