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# Olentangy Valley

## NEWS



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*Perry-Taggart sewer line*

### EPA to hear concerns about 'open-cutting'

By JENNIFER NOBLIT

*Olentangy Valley News Reporter*

The widely debated Perry-Taggart sewer line, which some say could attract more development to the Olentangy River area, recently has drawn even more attention.

On Thursday night, the Environmental Protection Agency and more than 30 concerned residents gathered to discuss Delaware County's application to open-cut around 180 feet of the Olentangy River to install a portion of the Perry-Taggart sewer line.

Open-cutting would require the river to be dammed and the water temporarily rerouted. Once the riverbed is dry, the sewer line would be installed.

Previously, the Delaware County sanitary engineer planned to bore under the river, so nothing would be disturbed. When the engineer's office got a closer look in June, however, officials found geological problems. If plans to bore under the river are continued, there is a possibility the machine will get stuck and workers would have to cut through the riverbed to recover it, officials said.

To avoid that, the engineer's office submitted a permit application to open-cut.

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Some residents are concerned about how this would affect the river and the precedent open-cutting may set. Many are worried this less-expensive method of crossing the river may be used in the three other sections that have not been bored yet. There also were worries that alternative options have not been exhaust-

ed. "There are discrepancies in the plan and in the county's story from one week to another," said Matt Montague, a member of the Friends of Delaware County. "We all want better government. None of us wanted to be here tonight, but we're pushed to."

Chad Antle, Delaware County sanitary engineer, said the county has looked at

alternatives, but open-cutting makes the most sense.

"We've worked extensively with ODNR and the EPA while we were planning these crossings," Antle said. "If we moved up- or downstream, there would be additional impacts on the river ... It goes back to risk. (The application) is based on the high probability of the tunneling machine getting stuck under the river."

Kathy Remias, program coordinator of Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed, or FLOW, said there also would be long-term effects not just from the installation of the sewer line, but also from the development it will bring.

The Olentangy River currently is classified as a scenic river by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, and an exceptional warm-water habitat by the Environmental Protection Agency. Remias said she fears the river will lose these characteristics after development causes run-off and pollution.

According to FLOW member Bob Frey, there are several species of animals that could be hurt by open-cutting and additional development. The most severe impact on the river would be the loss of a major food source, called "benthos," Frey said.

"It's very sensitive to sediment," Frey said. "If all the mud drops to the bottom, it will clog the filtering and feeding devices and they will smother and starve."

If open-cutting is allowed, residents requested that the county give money or land to protect the river.

"We think, if it is approved, this would be a great opportunity for the county to be good stewards of the most important resource in the county," Remias said.

Although there were concerns that the West Chester subdivision was added to the Perry-Taggart plan, Antle said that is not entirely true.

According to Antle, if the Delaware County Health Department finds Carriage Road's current system to be unsanitary, Delaware County can build a sewer in the area for residents to tap into.

"If the health department requires the sewer to be in-

stalled ... if," Antle said.

According to Laura Fay, permit coordinator for the EPA, all of the comments gathered from the meeting will be taken into consideration while making a decision. The EPA will accept written comments through Saturday.

Once the information is gathered and reviewed, Fay said, a list of questions will be composed from residents' comment. The questions will be answered by the EPA or the applicant. Fay said she then will prepare a recommendation for the director of the EPA, who will either grant or deny his approval. The director's decision will be the final say on the application.

Although the EPA has a year from the time the application gave public notice, Fay said the decision may come as soon as December or January.

