

‘Why are my sewer rates going up?’

Public meetings will explain plan to reduce raw sewage discharges, potential significant rate increases

Cleveland – In an effort to fully inform customers about the **Project Clean Lake** program, a series of capital improvement projects designed to stop raw sewage from entering local waterways during heavy rain events, and the potential **impact on future rate increases**, the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORS) will hold six public meetings beginning November 4, 2010 through November 17, 2010. The meetings will be held at 7pm at the following locations:

- **Thursday, November 4 - South Euclid @ the South Euclid Community Center**
1370 Victory Road, South Euclid 44121
- **Monday, November 8 - Hudson @ Barlow Community Center**
41 S. Oviatt, Hudson 44236
- **Tuesday, November 9 - Cleveland @ Mt. Sinai Church**
7510 Woodland Avenue, Cleveland 44104
- **Wednesday, November 10 - Maple Heights @ Maple Heights Library**
5225 Library Lane, Maple Heights 44137
- **Tuesday, November 16 - Cleveland (West) @ Gunning Recreation Center**
16700 Puritas Ave, Cleveland 44135
- **Wednesday, November 17 - Parma @ Memorial Hall**
6617 Ridge Rd, Parma 44129

Currently, NEORS is at the end of its negotiations with the Federal and State governments and, as a result, both parties will enter into a Consent Decree, which details Project Clean Lake, its timeframe and cost. The Consent Decree, which will assist NEORS in meeting Clean Water Act regulations, is a legally binding document entered into by NEORS, the Department of Justice, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, and the Ohio Attorney General's Office. The Consent Decree is anticipated to be signed by all parties in by the end of 2010.

Components of Project Clean Lake, a proposed \$3 billion, 25-year capital program, will reduce the total volume of raw discharges from 4.5 billion gallons to 494 million gallons annually. It will include the construction of large-scale tunnels and the use of green infrastructure to minimize the amount of stormwater making its way to the sewer system. Additionally, the plan is expected to increase rates significantly.

‘Since 1972, the Sewer District has reduced the amount of raw sewage discharging into the environment by half – from 9 billion gallons in early 1970s to 4.5 billion gallons today,’ stated Julius Ciaccia, Executive Director of the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District. ‘This plan will compliment the District’s past work while helping us to comply with the Clean Water Act.’

In 1972, the Clean Water Act was created to address water quality issues, like raw sewage discharges. It employs a variety of regulatory and non-regulatory tools to sharply reduce direct pollutant discharges into waterways and manage polluted runoff. Although NEORS D has reduced raw sewage discharges significantly over the years and holds permits for discharge points, the EPA alleges NEORS D is in violation of the Clean Water Act because not all discharges have been controlled to required levels.

Similar to other mid-west cities, sewers in Greater Cleveland were designed and built to transport both sanitary sewage and rain water in one pipe. During a heavy rain event, the pipe can become too full, discharging raw sewage into the environment. Like NEORS D, other mid-west cities, including Cincinnati, Columbus and Kansas City, just to name a few, negotiated or continue to negotiate a long-term plan to address the discharges. In total, there are nearly 800 communities across the country facing similar sewer problems, including 86 in the State of Ohio. Most of those cities are under or are negotiating similar consent decrees and are raising rates accordingly.

The NEORS D Board of Trustees is expected to vote on the adoption of the Consent Decree by the end of the year and during a NEORS D public meeting. The board will vote on the 2012 to 2016 rate increases in late 2011. Another series of public meetings will be scheduled in late 2011.

For additional information, please contact Jeannie Chapman, NEORS D Public Information Specialist, at 216-881-6600 or 216-214-2215.