



DANIEL HARRIGAN, MAYOR

PRESS RELEASE

FROM THE OFFICE OF AKRON MAYOR DANIEL HARRIGAN

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City Of Akron Completes Last Storage Basin Under Federal Consent Decree—Under Budget And Ahead Of Schedule

Akron, Ohio, August 6, 2020— The City of Akron placed its final combined sewer overflow (CSO) storage basin into service on July 23, 2020, 161 days ahead of schedule. Akron has now constructed and put into service five CSO storage basins throughout the City. These basins were required under the Consent Decree with the US EPA.

The Akron CSO storage basins can store up to 17 million gallons of combined sewer overflow per rain event. In a typical year of annual rainfall, Akron can now store and treat 154 million gallons of combined sewer overflow that would have previously entered the local rivers and streams. To put that into perspective, 154 million gallons would fill up the field at Canal Park to a depth of 10 ft, 9 times.

“Completing all of the required CSO storage basins is a significant accomplishment which not only fulfills the basin requirements of the Consent Decree but, more importantly, improves the water quality of our rivers and streams,” according to Patrick Gsellman, Akron Waterways Renewed Program Manager.

The Hazel Storage Basin is located in Goodyear Heights adjacent to Wellington Avenue, and will hold 4.5 million gallons of CSO, allowing for the treatment of 28.8 million gallons of CSO in a typical year. The construction of the basin included constructing the storage basin itself, construction of new diversion structures, a control building, and also lining and rehabilitating 4,000 ft of existing sewer, among other elements.

The construction contract was \$28 million, 20% under the engineer’s estimate of \$35 million. Also, the City received a low interest loan, with a portion of the financing at 0% interest, from Ohio EPA resulting in a financial saving of \$16 million over the length of the 45-year loan.

The project team included the Akron Engineering Bureau, MS Consultants (designer), The Great Lakes Construction Company (contractor) and H.R. Gray an Anser Advisory Company (construction management services).

“During these extraordinary times, it is a significant accomplishment that this project was still completed 23 weeks ahead of schedule, and under budget,” said Akron Mayor Dan Horrigan. “This basin will provide for significant improvements to the water quality of the Little Cuyahoga River as it flows through the heart of Akron.”

With the basins now in service, Akron has completed 81% of all the major Consent Decree projects. Three projects are currently under construction including the Kelly-Green project, Memorial Conveyance project and the Water Reclamation Facility BioCEPT project. The two remaining projects, the Northside Tunnel Project and a treatment facility (known as the EHRT) at the end of the Ohio Canal Interceptor Tunnel (OCIT), are in the design/planning stage. Per the Consent Decree, the Northside Project currently requires building a 20-foot diameter, 10,000-foot-long tunnel, which, based on current modeling is larger than needed to achieve zero overflows in a typical year. This project will cost approximately \$253 million.

The EHRT facility is required to treat a possible 7 OCIT overflows to achieve zero untreated overflows in a typical year. The City of Akron's updated modeling, based on real time data and better than expected performance of completed projects, now projects just 3 OCIT overflows per year (and only 1 in the recreational season). This means that the \$66 million EHRT project would have minimal environmental impact. The City of Akron identified a better approach through an integrated planning process and will seek a Third Consent Decree modification. This modification will seek to eliminate the Northside tunnel requirement, and instead complete a more environmentally friendly sewer separation project still achieving zero overflows in a typical year, and to eliminate the costly EHRT requirement. Importantly, while not part of the Consent Decree, granting the Third Modification request would mean there could be City resources to help fund the removal of the Gorge Dam.

The United States EPA recently gave the City of Akron a \$1 million grant to plan for the removal of the Gorge Dam. "Removing the Dam would improve water quality, including improved oxygen, flow, and temperature in the Cuyahoga River, while supporting the return of natural habitats," Mayor Horrigan said. "Returning the river to its free-flowing state has a greater environmental and community benefit than treating a very small number of overflows and will lead to benefits that can be enjoyed 365 days a year. If the City is required to build the EHRT, it is unlikely there will be City funds available for the Gorge Dam removal."

All projects are scheduled to be completed by 2027 and all projects except the OCIT have been placed into service ahead of schedule.

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