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The
Metropolitan
Sewer District
of Greater
Cincinnati
(MSD)

Nationally Recognized Lower Mill Creek Solution Approved by Regulators

Cincinnati (June 3, 2013) – The Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati (MSD), which has been managed successfully by the City of Cincinnati since 1968, recently received approval by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and other Federal and State Regulators¹ for its nationally recognized solution for reducing combined sewer overflows (CSOs) into the Mill Creek.

This sustainable integrated watershed solution will remove 1.78 billion gallons of CSOs annually from the Mill Creek, an Ohio River tributary by 2018 during Phase 1 of MSD's Consent Decree program. It will not only improve water quality but will serve as a catalyst to improve local neighborhoods.

Known as the "Revised Original Lower Mill Creek Partial Remedy," this solution is recognized as a national model for the sustainable management of stormwater to reduce CSOs. The approach reduces CSOs by primarily focusing on keeping stormwater out of combined sewers during heavy rains.

"We are very excited to move forward with our innovative wet weather solution that not only provides highly cost-effective compliance with our Consent Decree but simultaneously sets the groundwork to enhance our communities," said James A. "Tony" Parrott, Executive Director.

The plan establishes priorities to address communities' most serious water quality problems and promotes cost-effective, innovative solutions to reduce pollution. Specific components include separating sewers to keep rainwater out of the combined sewer system and use of green infrastructure to manage rainwater diverted from the combined system.

Under a 2010 consent decree and CSO control plan, the MSD was required either to construct a deep tunnel system under Mill Creek to alleviate CSOs in many neighborhoods in the city, or conduct further analyses and propose an alternative plan. MSD proposed the alternative plan to EPA in December 2012. The alternate plan is expected to save approximately \$200 million (in 2006 dollars) from the original deep-tunnel plan.

The plan will also create a green corridor that will convey stormwater runoff to Mill Creek in the Fairmont neighborhood of Cincinnati. The corridor will also include a floodway that will help prevent flooding of local streets, homes and businesses during extreme rain events. The green corridor and constructed channel will be an amenity for the neighborhood and may contribute to neighborhood stabilization and economic revitalization in addition to helping to resolve overflow issues.

Other benefits of the sustainable solution include:

- 1.78 billion gallon reduction in annual CSO volume.
- Improvements in water quality.
- Catalyst for community development in local neighborhoods.

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- Construction jobs available for local workforce and small business enterprises (SBEs). Nearly 1,000 full-time equivalent construction jobs will potentially be created through 2018.
- Brownfield remediation and repurposing of vacant land.
- National model under U.S. EPA's new "Integrated Planning Framework," which integrates federal, state, county, city, community and other partners.

The remedy includes a suite of projects in four sub-watersheds within the Lower Mill Creek: Lick Run, Kings Run, West Fork and Bloody Run. Project highlights include:

- The Lick Run project reduces overflows into the Mill Creek from the largest CSO in MSD's system by an estimated 624 million gallons annually. This project keeps stormwater out of the combined sewer system through new stormwater sewers, stormwater detention basins and the daylighting of natural drainage and stormwater flows. The project will also help reduce localized flooding and improve community conditions.
- The West Fork project reduces overflows into the West Fork Channel, a tributary of the Mill Creek, by an estimated 173 million gallons. It addresses the largest overflow in the West Fork watershed and removes a significant volume of natural drainage from Mt. Airy Forest, the largest park in the City.
- The Kings Run project reduces overflows into the Mill Creek and the Kings Run tributary by an estimated 156 million gallons. This project mainly includes stormwater detention basins and new stormwater sewers to reduce overflows in the Wooden Shoe neighborhood.
- The Bloody Run project reduces overflows into the Mill Creek by an estimated 93 million gallons. This project includes the installation of real time controls near CSO 181, which discharges through a channel to the Mill Creek. Real-time controls include gates, pumps and inflatable dams, etc. that are constructed inside sewer lines to divert excess flows to a different part of the sewer system to prevent overflows.

"This plan is good news for the residents of Cincinnati and for communities along the Ohio River," said Cynthia Giles, assistant administrator for EPA's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance. "Not only will this innovative plan ensure that significant volumes of polluted stormwater and raw sewage are kept out of local waterways, but it will also cost less than more traditional approaches, saving money for ratepayers and the city."

The Lower Mill Creek Partial Remedy was developed by MSD using an integrated watershed-based approach to reduce CSOs into rivers and streams and basement sewage backups, manage urban stormwater runoff and wastewater needs, enhance the community and improve water quality. MSD conducted significant public outreach in the local watershed communities as part of the integrated solution.

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While MSD will not submit its plans for Phase 2 (post 2018) until 2017, the Regulators and MSD have agreed that the final remedy for the Lower Mill Creek Watershed will likely also be based on an integrated watershed plan approach, as integrated watershed planning is a new policy direction for U.S. EPA and has proven to be cost effective in Cincinnati for addressing stormwater on the surface and at the source.

Today's announcement is the latest in a series of Clean Water Act settlements and CSO control plans that will reduce the discharge of raw sewage and contaminated stormwater into U.S. rivers, streams and lakes. It represents another milestone in a growing U.S. EPA trend of incorporating integrated planning concepts and green infrastructure elements into overall CSO solutions.

For more information, please visit <http://www.projectgroundwork.org/projects/lowermillcreek>.

¹The Regulators include the U.S. EPA, Ohio EPA and the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO).

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Every day, the Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati (MSD) protects the public's health and the environment through professional water reclamation and watershed management. As we collect and treat more than 180 million gallons of sewage daily from 43 municipalities, villages, and townships in Greater Cincinnati through 3,000 miles of sanitary or combined sewers, MSD serves you with honesty, integrity, accountability, and respect.