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GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENT, GREAT LAKES, AND ENERGY
LANSING



LIESL EICHLER CLARK
DIRECTOR

November 30, 2021

TO: All Interested Citizens, Organizations, and Government Agencies

SUBJECT: FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
City of Benton Harbor, Berrien County
City-wide Lead Service Line Replacements
Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Project No. 7595-01

The purpose of this notice is to seek public input and comment on a preliminary decision by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required to implement recommendations discussed in the attached Environmental Assessment of a water supply project plan submitted by the applicant mentioned above.

HOW WERE ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES CONSIDERED?

Part 54, Safe Drinking Water Assistance, of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as amended, being Sections 324.5401 to 324.5418 of the Michigan Compiled Laws Annotated, requires EGLE to evaluate all environmental implications of a proposed water supply project. EGLE has done this by incorporating a detailed analysis of the environmental impact of the proposed alternatives in its review and approval process. A project plan was prepared by the applicant and reviewed by the State. EGLE has prepared the attached Environmental Assessment and found that the proposed project does not require the preparation of an EIS.

WHY IS AN EIS NOT REQUIRED?

Our environmental review concluded that no significant environmental impacts would result from the proposed action. Any adverse impacts have either been eliminated by changes in the project plan or will be reduced by the implementation of the mitigative measures discussed in the attached Environmental Assessment.

HOW DO I GET MORE INFORMATION?

A map depicting the location of the proposed project is attached. This information is also available on our website at Michigan.gov/DWSRF under "Related Links." The Environmental Assessment presents additional information on the project, alternatives that were considered, impacts of the proposed action, and the basis for our decision. Further information can be obtained by calling or writing one of the contact people listed below.

HOW DO I SUBMIT COMMENTS?

Any comments supporting or disagreeing with this preliminary decision should be submitted to me at EGLE, Constitution Hall, P.O. Box 30457, Lansing, Michigan 48909-7957. We will not take any action on this project plan for 30 calendar days from the date of this notice in order to receive and consider any comments.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

In the absence of substantive comments during this period, our preliminary decision will become final. The applicant will then be eligible to receive loan assistance from this Agency to construct the proposed project.

Any information you feel should be considered by EGLE should be brought to our attention. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. David J. Worthington, the senior project manager, at 517-554-1835, by email at Worthingtond@michigan.gov, or you may contact me. Your interest in this process and the environment is appreciated.

Sincerely,



Kelly Green, Administrator
Water Infrastructure Financing Section
Finance Division
517-284-5433

Attachment

**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, GREAT LAKES, AND ENERGY (EGLE)
DRINKING WATER STATE REVOLVING FUND
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
CITY OF BENTON HARBOR, BERRIEN COUNTY
LEAD SERVICE LINE REPLACEMENT PROJECT
November 2021**

I. PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

Applicant: City of Benton Harbor
200 Wall Street
Benton Harbor, Michigan 49022

Authorized Representative: Mr. Ellis Mitchell, City Manager

DWSRF Project Number: 7595-01

The City of Benton Harbor (Benton Harbor) is applying for a Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) loan to finance construction of lead service line replacements (LSLR) at various high priority locations throughout the city. The DWSRF financed project will be coordinated with other LSLR bid contracts funded by other sources of federal and state money. A study area has been delineated that comprises Benton Harbor's water service boundary (See Figure 1).

Benton Harbor is in northwestern Berrien County, bordered to the north and east by Benton Charter Township and to the south and west by the city of St. Joseph and St. Joseph Charter Township. Paw Paw River is at the north boundary, while the St. Joseph River and Lake Michigan are westward.

Benton Harbor proposes the following activity to take place in its water distribution system utilizing DWSRF monies:

- Replace approximately 600 lead service lines throughout the city

In total, the project is estimated to cost \$3,000,000, which will be financed by a DWSRF loan. As a disadvantaged community undertaking LSLR, Benton Harbor is eligible to receive Water Infrastructure Fund Transfer Act (WIFTA) funding through the DWSRF loan, which can provide up to 100 percent principal forgiveness for construction work up to an average of \$5,000 per LSLR. As a result, the construction activities related to the LSLRs financed by the DWSRF will occur with no rate impact to the system customers.

II. PROJECT BACKGROUND

A. Existing Facilities

1. Water Treatment/Supply

Benton Harbor receives its drinking water from the Benton Harbor Water Treatment Plant (WTP) located at 601 Ridgeway Street in St. Joseph in the southwest corner of Jean Klock Park near the Lake Michigan shoreline. Benton Harbor is working with EGLE on a schedule of improvements to the treatment plant.

2. Elevated Storage Tanks

Benton Harbor owns a single 650,000-gallon water tower that has undergone extensive rehabilitation through a DWSRF project funded in 2020 and is nearly complete. Further upgrades are targeted in Benton Harbor's 20-year capital improvements plan.

3. Distribution System

Distribution mains adjacent to the WTP are 20-inches in diameter and main transmission lines are 8-to-20-inches in diameter.

Benton Harbor has over 65 miles of water distribution main ranging from 2-inches to 20-inches in diameter. These water mains were installed at times ranging from the 1800s to recent years, with nearly 1/3 of all pipes being below current standards in size. Significant amounts of the water main consist of unlined cast iron material well beyond its design life, with much smaller percentages of other materials present.

Extensive hydrant and valve replacements throughout the distribution system are planned for 2022-2023 with financing expected (along with water main and WTP improvements) through the DWSRF and a Drinking Water Infrastructure Grant.

4. Service Lines

The city's water service lines consist of copper, galvanized and lead pipe. There are approximately 2,846 services in the city's inventory and roughly 2,390 of those are of unknown material but likely contain a portion of lead or galvanized piping requiring replacement. EGLE awarded Benton Harbor a \$243,024 Drinking Water Asset Management Grant in June 2021 for water asset management planning and to enable Benton Harbor to better identify and catalogue its distribution system material inventory.

B. Project Need

Benton Harbor has recorded action level exceedances for lead in its water system in three consecutive years. In addition, Michigan's revised Lead and Copper Rule places a priority on "getting the lead out" of the distribution system. To comply, Benton Harbor will continue a campaign, first started in 2018, of full-length lead service line replacements to protect public health.

III. PROPOSED ACTION

The following distribution system alternatives were considered:

A. No Action

Under this "do nothing" scenario, the distribution system would not be improved. Public health would be at risk through noncompliance with Michigan's Lead and Copper Rule. No action is rejected as unacceptable.

B. Eliminate Lead Via Service Line Replacements

Benton Harbor has proposed the following:

City-wide Lead Water Services Replacement

Benton Harbor proposes to eliminate lead water service connections in the system. These will vary from customer side only replacements (curb stop to house meter), public side only replacements (water main to curb stop) and full-service replacements (water main to house meter), depending on the existing pipe material, as determined by the drinking water system material inventory and field verification. The outcome of all three replacement scenarios will be a copper service line from the water main to the water meter.

IV. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED PROJECT

Benton Harbor intends to implement the improvements for eliminating lead as described in the previous section. Any lead or galvanized pipe material between the water main and the first shutoff valve inside a home or 18-inches inside a building, whichever is shortest, will be removed. Residents will be notified of upcoming replacements and scheduling via mailings, flyers, and media releases. The homeowner will be asked to sign a consent of property access before work can begin on private property. Replacement will be at no cost to the homeowner. A hired contractor will coordinate the replacement schedule with residents.

Total funding from the DWSRF and WIFTA will equal \$3,000,000 based on roughly 600 services replaced at an average of \$5,000 per line.

User Cost Analysis

Water rates will not increase due to the proposed DWSRF project. Benton Harbor, as a qualifying disadvantaged community, will receive 100 percent loan principal forgiveness up to the \$3,000,000 maximum loan award, not to exceed \$5,000 on average per service line replaced.

Project Schedule and Implementation

Table I lists the key items and proposed dates of implementation scheduled for these projects.

Table I. Project Schedule	
Milestone	Estimated Time of Completion
DWSRF Plan Approval	December 2021
Bidding Advertisement	November-December 2021
Bids Opened	December 2021-January 2022
Tentative Contract Award(s)	January 2022
EGLE Funding Approval	January 2022
DWSRF Loan Closure/Start Construction	February-March 2022
Construction Complete	May 2023

V. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF PROPOSED ACTION

1. Cultural Resources

There are no anticipated impacts to historical or archaeological resources with the selected alternative. The State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) previously determined that it is unlikely historical properties would be affected by Benton Harbor's

utility projects provided that no mature trees are removed, and no significant landscape changes occur. In addition, regional Tribal Historic Preservation Officers were previously contacted for a review of the city's utility work for any possible impact to tribal remains or artifacts, and none expressed any concern with the projects.

If artifacts or archaeological materials are discovered, work will stop immediately and the SHPO staff archaeologist contacted for guidance.

2. Air Quality

The proposed project will necessitate short-term construction impacts of noise, dust, and vehicle emissions. These will cease upon completion of the work, except for occasional maintenance on the facilities.

3. Wetlands/Floodplains/Surface Water

The majority of wetlands and floodplains in the study area are adjacent to the Paw Paw River, Ox Creek, and the St. Joseph River and these provide habitat for plants and animals. There will be a small number of lead service line replacement locations within, or adjacent to, the 100-year floodplain. However, ground elevations will not be changed due to the replacement projects. If necessary, a permit will be obtained for any work that may occur in a 100-year floodplain.

Benton Harbor is bordered in its northwest quadrant by Lake Michigan; the St. Joseph River borders the city to the west; the Paw Paw River runs through the city in its northern sections; Ox Creek runs directly through downtown Benton Harbor. It is anticipated that the selected alternative will have no harmful impact on surface waters or wetlands.

4. Endangered Species

A review of United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the Michigan Natural Features Inventory threatened and endangered species lists was conducted during planning. No threatened or endangered species, critical habitat, or special natural features are likely to be adversely affected as the proposed projects occur within already developed areas.

5. Construction Impacts

Residents will have water shut off for typically 1-2 hours and the new water line to the house should be flushed for a few minutes after the new tap is made in case there is any lingering sediment in the line. The contractor will pull the screen off the faucet which is being flushed (and will replace it afterwards) or use an outside faucet, if applicable. Front yard disturbance will typically be at the curb where the new tap to the watermain is located, as well as the inside side of the sidewalk. At times, the city water main is located in the road, causing curb and asphalt repair being needed in front of the homeowner's residence. Scheduling of the new water line work will be coordinated by the contractor with the homeowner. If a "Customer Side" or "Full-Service Replacement" is completed, the contractor will need to access the basement or crawlspace of the home to bring the new water line into the house and connect it. There is some noise associated with this work as the equipment is penetrating through the wall of the basement. Any cleanup needed is handled on the behalf of the contractor with oversight by the inspector on the project. Typically, the contractor can work around the homeowner's landscaping and not disturb it.

After service line replacement, Benton Harbor residents should flush their plumbing system, using instructions provided by the contractor, and continue to use free bottled

water for drinking, cooking or rinsing until research is completed to show that efforts such as filtering are proving effective in reducing lead exposure. Residents can call 2-1-1 to arrange water delivery. Residents will be notified of their filter efficacy test results and drinking water options at the conclusion of the study in early 2022. Updates on Benton Harbor water efforts can be found here: <https://www.michigan.gov/mileadsafe>.

VI. MITIGATION MEASURES

All necessary permits for the construction activities will be applied for and obtained prior to construction. Mitigation during construction activities will be the contractor's responsibility and may include soil erosion and sedimentation prevention measures, dust control measures, noise control measures, etc. It is not anticipated that mitigation measures would be more stringent than those required for normal water service installation projects. The contractor will be directed to follow all required construction specifications and standards and utilize all necessary measures to minimize environmental impacts during construction.

VII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A public hearing on the DWSRF project plan was held on June 21, 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the hearing was held virtually. The hearing was advertised on the city's web page and in the *Herald Palladium*. A copy of the draft plan was available for a 30-day period at the City Hall and the local library prior to the hearing. Several members of the public spoke at the hearing and their questions were answered. On June 21, 2021, Benton Harbor City Council passed a resolution unanimously adopting the final plan and its selected alternative.

VIII. REASONS FOR CONCLUDING NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

Expected adverse impacts from the proposed project appear to be minor or largely temporary in nature. There is a social cost to paying for improvements and operating and maintaining the system. However, these upgrades would result in increased water system reliability and the safeguarding of the public health from lead exposure. It is believed that these beneficial impacts significantly outweigh the minor negative impacts.

Questions regarding this Environmental Assessment should be directed to:

Mr. David J. Worthington, Senior Project Manager
Water Infrastructure Financing Section
Finance Division
Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy
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Lansing, Michigan 48909-7957
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E-Mail: Worthingtond@michigan.gov

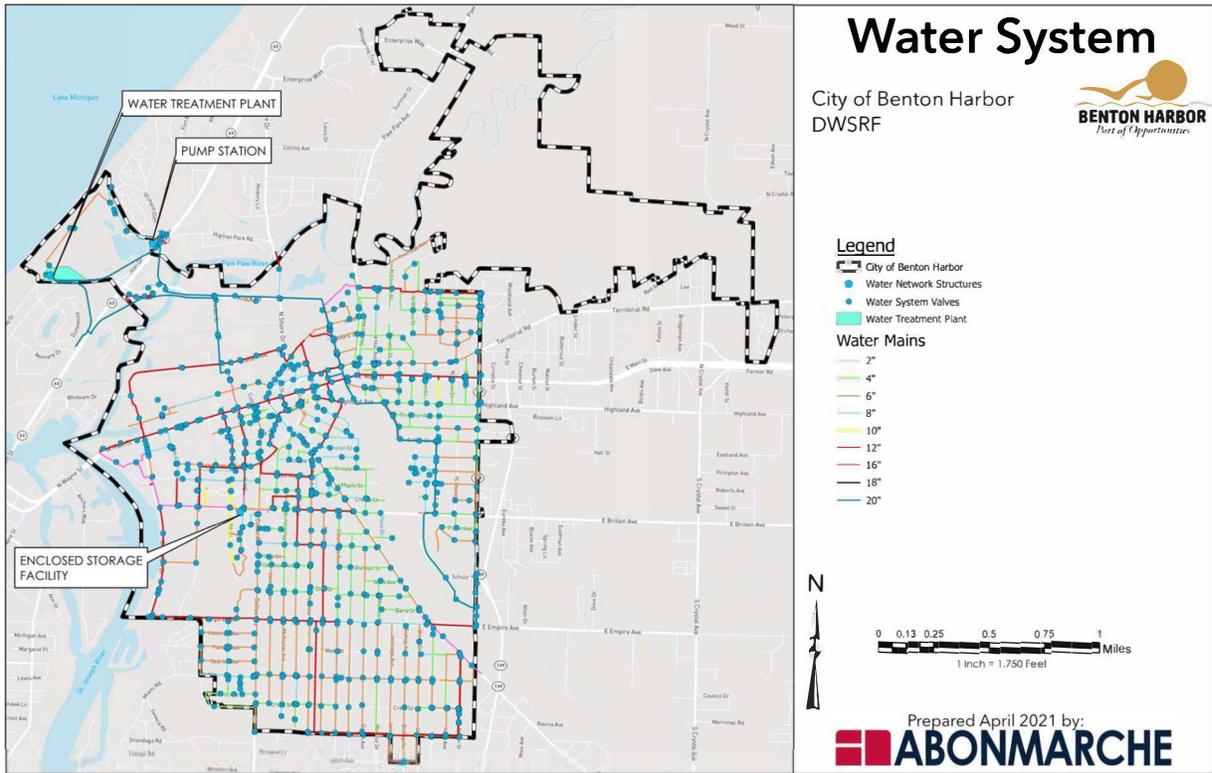


Figure 1 - Benton Harbor Water System