

State Agency Programs and Collaboration for Funding Ohio Water Resource Projects

ECOS 2021 Fall Meeting

September 9, 2021



Two Innovative State Programs

- Ohio EPA's Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program (2000)
- Ohio DNR's H2Ohio Wetlands Restoration Program (2020)

We'll start with Ohio EPA.....



State Revolving Funds

Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF)

WPCLF provides funding primarily to public wastewater systems for planning, design and construction of wastewater projects.



Water Supply Revolving Loan Account (WSRLA)

WSRLA provides funding primarily to public water systems for planning, design, and construction of drinking water projects.



Ohio EPA's Division of Environmental and Financial Assistance

- DEFA's Office of Financial Assistance manages the two largest public water and wastewater funding programs in the state of Ohio.
- Our CW SRF program made its first loan in 1989 (*over \$10.6 billion awarded to date*).
- Our DW SRF program made its first loan in 1999 (*over \$2.0 billion awarded to date*).

CW SRF Program

Ohio's Water Pollution Control Loan Fund is a very robust, flexible funding program - over the years, we've funded:

- POTWs (WWTPs, sewers, CSO projects, etc.)
- Stormwater projects
- HSTS upgrades/replacements
- Agricultural BMPs
- Landfill and brownfield projects

How Can an SRF Loan Program Provide Funding for Stream and Wetland Restoration and Protection Projects?



Pond Brook Wetlands Protection Project



...and why would we need to create a unique program to do this?

- Because of the ongoing threat to Ohio's remaining wetlands and the nature of the (nonpoint source) water quality impairments in Ohio's streams, and
- Because of the lack of an effective funding mechanism to address the problem.

Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program (WRRSP)

- In Ohio, the Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program was developed and implemented in 2000, with the goal of helping to restore and protect high-quality water resources throughout the state using the CW SRF.
- To date, the WRRSP has provided \$222 million for sponsorship of 170 projects, including preservation of more than 5,200 acres of wetlands and 90 miles of streams.
- Among the many restoration activities funded by the WRRSP are seventeen (17) dam removal projects, with seven (7) more anticipated to receive funding approval in the next year.

WRRSP Sponsors



Bear Swamp Wetlands Preserve, Medina Co.

- Borrower (WPCLF loan recipient) voluntarily “sponsors” a project as part of its typical SRF loan request
- Borrower enters into a formal Sponsorship Agreement with the Implementer to provide funding for the WRRSP project
- Borrower receives an additional interest rate discount on their WPCLF loan of up to 0.1%

WRRSP Implementers

Implementers can be:

- public entities, such as municipalities or park districts
- other qualifying not-for-profit organizations under the Internal Revenue Code, such as land trusts
- state and federal agencies

Implementers are responsible for the planning, design, construction and monitoring of the WRRSP project.



WRRSP Annual Funding

In a typical year, \$15 million is made available for stream and wetland projects:

- ~ \$7.5 million for restoration projects
- ~ \$7.5 million for protection projects



Burton Swamp, Geauga Co.

WRRSP Project Types

- Restoration Projects: involve restoring wetlands or streams and buffers necessary to address identified sources of impairment
- Protection Projects: involve the fee simple purchase of an area containing existing high-quality wetlands and/or streams and buffers

Steps in the WRRSP Process

- Pre-nomination Consultation (required)
- Nomination Submission/ Scoring and Ranking
- Year 1 – Project Review and Approval
- Year 2 – Project Funding and Implementation
- Post Implementation Monitoring and Reporting



WRRSP Partners

- While we've worked with many outstanding partners over the past 20+ years, some of our most significant projects have involved close collaboration with the Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources, including the Scenic Rivers Program, Natural Areas and Preserves, and the Division of Wildlife.
- Notable projects have included stream corridor protection, wetland restoration and protection, and dam removals.
- Ohio DNR has also helped support the WRRSP through technical input for the scoring/ranking of potential projects and the environmental reviews that Ohio EPA conducts.





Conneaut Creek Corridor Protection – ODNR (2004)





Conneaut Creek (WRRSP-funded acquisition)

Darby Creek



Six-Mile Dam





...and now more about another state agency program to restore and protect wetlands, streams, and Lake Erie.....**H2O**hio.

