



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION III
1650 Arch Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103-2029

Finding of No Significant Impact

Date:

To All Interested Parties:

In accordance with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations for complying with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (P.L. 91-190), an Environmental Review has been performed on the proposed project, as described below and in the attached Environmental Assessment:

Pocono Township
Route 611 Corridor Sewer Line
Monroe County, Pennsylvania

(Official Project Name)

Mr. Patrick Ross, Chairman
Pocono Township

(Project Applicant)

Pocono and Hamilton Townships
Tannersville
Monroe County, Pennsylvania 18372

(Project Location, City, County, State)

\$240,600

(Estimated EPA Financial Share)

\$437,545

(Estimated Eligible Project Cost)

Pocono Township

The review process indicated that no significant environmental impacts would result from the proposed action or significant adverse impacts have been eliminated by making changes in the project. Consequently, a preliminary decision not to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement has been made.

This action is taken on the basis of a careful review of the Environmental Information Document and other supporting data. These documents are on file in the EPA office, located at 1650 Arch Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and are available for public review, on request, at the Pocono Township office. Additional copies of the Environmental Assessment will be made available, at cost, upon request.

Comments supporting or disagreeing with this preliminary decision may be submitted for consideration to EPA. After evaluating the comments received, the Agency will make a final decision no sooner than thirty (30) calendar days from the date of this Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI). No administrative action will be taken with respect to this proposal during this time frame. Comments should be submitted to:

Valerie Breznicky
Water Protection Division (3WP21)
U. S. Environmental Protection Agency
1650 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103

Lorraine H. Reynolds, Associate Director
Office of Infrastructure and Assistance
Water Protection Division

PROJECT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Pocono Township
Monroe County
August 2007

Introduction

Congress allocated funds in the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) fiscal year 2005 Appropriations Act for "Pocono Township for the Route 611 Corridor sewer line construction". EPA has the responsibility to approve Pocono Township's grant consistent with the terms of the Appropriation Act and other applicable Federal requirements. One such Federal requirement involves compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 U. S. C. 4331-4347, which requires an environmental review before Federal agencies take a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Pursuant to NEPA's implementing regulations, agencies may perform an environmental assessment to determine whether there is a need to complete an environmental impact statement. This document constitutes the environmental assessment for the Pocono Township's grant.

Need and Description

Pocono Township, located in Monroe County, authorized an Act 537 Special Study for the State Route (S. R.) 611 corridor and adjacent lands. The goals of the study were to address the long-term wastewater treatment and disposal needs of the corridor and the Sanofi Pasteur Pharmaceutical Company. Much of this area is developed commercially. Properties in the S. R. 611 corridor of Pocono and Hamilton Townships are presently served by on-lot septic disposal systems and seven privately-owned small wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) discharging 163,000 gallons per day (gpd) to Pocono Creek, a high quality, cold-water fishery. Many of the privately-owned WWTPs are at capacity and inadequate to serve existing and future needs.

The soils in the S. R. 611 corridor are not conducive for development of on-lot systems to support additional development. Also, there is a reasonable assumption that the older on-lot systems are or will eventually malfunction, discharging directly to the groundwater table as the soils in this area are alluvial¹ in nature.

Sanofi Pasteur, a vaccine research, manufacturing and distribution facility is served by a wastewater treatment plant that discharges to the Swiftwater Creek, a high quality, cold water fishery. The plant's permitted capacity is 350,000 gpd. A new flu vaccine manufacturing facility is projected to be completed on the site. The additional capacity needs cannot be served by the existing system.

¹ Pertaining to alluvium. A general term for deposits made by streams on river beds; esp. a deposit of silt or silty clay laid down during time of flood.

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For these reasons, the Township proposes to construct a sewage pump station in the City of Swiftwater, a gravity interceptor along the S. R. 611 corridor from the Pocono-Paradise Township line to the proposed pump station, a second sewage pump station in Pocono Township that will also serve portions of Hamilton Township, an interceptor and pump station in Hamilton Township, a 2.0 million gpd Pocono Township wastewater treatment plant, an influent wastewater pump station at the treatment plant site, and an approximately 6 mile long effluent force main to convey treated effluent to the Brodhead Creek. The existing seven privately-owned WWTP will be taken off-line.

The estimated cost for the new system described in the Act 537 Plan Special Study is \$69,460,000. The Township has been appropriated a \$240,600 grant from the EPA and will complete financing of the project with various Federal and State grants, loans and a local bond issue, as well as, initial net tapping fees. User rates, as projected in the Act 537 Plan, are expected to be approximately \$1,250 per equivalent dwelling unit per year. A public comment period and public hearing were held within the community. The Township received many comments regarding the project. The Township responded to the comments. Upon review and consideration of the information provided, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) and the Delaware River Basin Commission approved the Act 537 Special Study and permit requests.

Future Environment without the Project

Without the construction of the collection system and the wastewater treatment plant, the S. R. 611 Corridor and its surrounding area will continue to experience potentially failing on-lot systems and surface water and drinking water well contamination and future development will be limited.

Evaluation of Alternatives

The Act 537 Facilities Plan Special Study was approved by the PA DEP on December 7, 2006. Several alternatives were considered for this project and several treatment processes were evaluated. Based on cost-effectiveness, regulatory requirements and operation and maintenance concerns, the Township chose the Tertiary WWTP with a discharge to a non-high quality cold water fishery source. The no action option would not solve the on-lot system problems or the need for increased treatment capacity for the Sanofi Pasteur Pharmaceutical Facility.

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Environmental Consequences

The following factors were evaluated with respect to potential environmental impacts. The beneficial impacts of this project should greatly outweigh any detrimental effects. A brief discussion of each factor is presented:

1. Air quality: There are no long term adverse impacts to air quality anticipated from the operation of the collection and treatment system. There could be possible short-term adverse impact associated with construction activities. However, such impacts will not be significant. The short term impacts will be mitigated through proper construction techniques.
2. Noise: The project should cause no more than short term intermittent increases in ambient noise levels due to construction equipment operation which will be minimized by requirements to limit hours of construction. There are no long term impacts anticipated.
3. Endangered or threatened species: U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission both had initial concerns regarding the endangered, Federally-listed threatened Bog Turtle. A bog turtle habitat evaluation was conducted at the project site and concluded that suitable habitat for the turtles did not occur in the project area. As such, both agencies determined that the proposed project did not pose any adverse impacts to the bog turtle or any other rare or protected species (See November 28, 2005 and November 15, 2005 letters).
4. Fish and wildlife resources: No impact as determined by U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and The Pennsylvania Game Commission (Letters dated November 28 2005 and November 30, 2006).
5. Wetlands, flood plains, and coastal areas: Small parcels of wetlands were identified in the project area but were avoided in the design of the project. Should small areas of wetlands be encountered, the PA DEP/U. S. Army Corps of Engineers permit process will assure that there will be no long term adverse impacts to wetland resources. There are no flood plain issues and the Township is not in a coastal area.

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6. Surface water and groundwater resources: Possible short term adverse impact associated with construction activities.
An erosion and sedimentation control plan will be developed. No substantial impacts should occur from the transfer of water to the adjacent watershed. The area is currently supplied drinking water by the Brodhead Creek Regional Authority. The Brodhead Creek Regional Authority's water sources consist of two wells located within 100 feet of the Brodhead Creek and a surface water intake located in the Brodhead Creek. The Authority supplies water at the rate of approximately 1,615,000 gallons per day. The water removed from Brodhead Creek to supply area drinking water represents about 81% of the proposed 2 million gallons per day sewer system discharge into the Brodhead Creek. Additionally, 163,000 gallons per day discharged to Pocono Creek, by the existing 7 treatment plants will be eliminated. With the elimination of the older, private package treatment plants and the reduction of untreated wastewater from the on-lot systems, the long term benefit to the project area will be cleaner, safer water.
7. Sludge disposal: Sludge generated by the wastewater treatment plant will be landfilled. Sludge will be removed from the plant by a licensed sludge hauler.
8. Loss of prime agricultural land: No impact. The majority of the construction is taking place within the developed S. R. 611 Corridor and along previously disturbed land. The Monroe County Agricultural Land Preservation Board has determined that the project is in compliance with the agricultural preservation efforts/initiatives of Monroe County (See letter dated March 3, 2005).
9. Excessive energy consumption: No impact. The project as designed will not result in excessive energy consumption.
10. Visual effects and community amenities: Short-term visual and community impacts are anticipated when sewers are constructed along state and local roadways. Required highway permits will assure that proper safety measures are maintained within the work zones. Long-term beneficial impacts will result by providing a central sewer system to the Township, which will reduce the occurrence of malfunctioning on-lot systems and the associated health hazards from improperly treated sewage. Water quality of the surface and ground water within the Township will improve.

11. Socioeconomic considerations: The construction of the sewage collection system and treatment plant will allow additional development along the Route 611 Corridor. The Monroe County 2020 Plan targets this area as the commercial corridor of the county and

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- promotes a return to a village concept. This concept promotes more dense growth in certain areas while discouraging growth out “over the countryside”. Infrastructure is required for this type of growth. The poor soils that exist in the Township prohibit additional development without a central sewage system. The proposed system is limited to the Route 611 and 715 areas and the properties immediately adjoining them. The majority of the properties along these roads are already developed. The construction of the sewer system will allow this area to continue to function as a commercial corridor.
12. Historical or archaeological sites: As indicated in their letter dated January 12, 2005, the Bureau for Historic Preservation concluded that no cultural resources will be affected within the project area and recommended no additional archaeological field work.
 13. Wild and scenic rivers: There will be no impacts to Wild and Scenic Rivers as none have been identified in the project area. However, the Pocono Creek and Swiftwater Creek have been identified as high quality, cold-water fisheries. Reducing inadequately treated sewage discharges to the creeks will greatly improve their water quality.
 14. Other environmentally sensitive areas: There are no other environmentally sensitive areas or resources located within the project area.

Cumulative and Indirect Impacts

The project area is commercially developed with the expectation that the sewer line project will generate additional development. The expansion of the Sanofi Pasteur Pharmaceutical Company is already underway in this area. The planned sewer lines and facilities will be placed in developed areas and along roadways. The service area cannot be expanded without another Act 537 Study and appropriate reviews and approvals. The proposed service area does not provide for extension of sewers into undeveloped residential areas. PA DEP was adamant that the study be limited and narrow in scope to provide for the sewage needs of the Route 611 corridor and adjacent properties. Also, the Township’s land use plan is in agreement with the goals of the Monroe County Planning Commission.

Public Participation

The plan was made available to the public in February 2006 and a Public Hearing on April 18, 2006. All comments received by the public were responded to by the Township.

Conclusion

Based upon this Environmental Assessment, the EPA has concluded that the construction of the S. R. 611 Corridor Sewer Project will not cause any significant environmental impacts.

Attachments

1. Project Location Maps

References

1. Pocono Township Act 537 Plan Special Study (dated October 2006).
2. Additional information supplied by R. K. R. Hess Associates, dated January 16, 2007.
3. Monroe County 2020 Comprehensive Plan, 1998.