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News Release

Oct. 20, 2022

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Van Fleet Ditch Drainage Improvement Project complete

Lucas County Engineer Mike Pniewski welcomed local, state and regional guests Thursday to tour Van Fleet Ditch, the site of the county's latest two-stage ditch restoration project.

Speakers included representatives from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Ohio EPA and U.S. Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur (OH-09).

Completed in September, the project constructed a two-stage channel along a 1.2 mile stretch of Van Fleet Ditch in Monclova Township. Often called a "ditch-within-a-ditch," two-stage projects widen the existing ditch to create a low-flow channel with increased capacity and establish a second channel, or bench, with natural vegetation that is flooded during higher flows. The vegetated bench helps to filter and reduce nutrient runoff by capturing sediment and other algae-feeding nutrients like phosphorous from entering the waterway, which flows into the Maumee River and then into Lake Erie.

"We are very proud to announce the substantial completion of Lucas County's latest two-stage ditch project," Pniewski said. "This project through a largely agricultural watershed will improve water quality while restoring natural features."

It was funded in large part by two grants from the U.S. EPA (\$734,548) and the Ohio EPA's Clean Water Act 319(h) grant (\$295,903), with additional funding from the Lucas County Stormwater Utility funds and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

"Thank you for utilizing the Clean Water Act-Section 319 grant program and choosing to add these important benefits to the drainage system," Ohio EPA Division of Surface Water, Nonpoint Source Program Manager John Mathews said. "It is changing the way we look at ditches, where every lineal foot can incrementally help slow, retain and treat stormwater runoff

and provide numerous co-benefits by reducing the concentration of phosphorus, nitrogen and sediments downstream in Swan Creek, the Maumee River and in the Western Lake Erie Basin.”

Rep. Kaptur, who has represented the ninth district, the largest coastal district in Ohio, for nearly 40 years, says she’s always been a strong advocate of environmental responsibility and progressive policies to clean up Lake Erie, Ohio waterways and the Great Lakes ecosystem.

“The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is delivering real results through smart investments in local infrastructure,” Kaptur said, “that will prevent the nutrients that cause harmful algal blooms from entering the Western Lake Erie Basin.

The Lucas County Engineer’s Office has completed five two-stage ditch restoration projects with a sixth currently in planning. It was awarded a \$636, 345 grant from the H2Ohio Initiative this year for a two-stage project on a large portion of Ford Ditch in Richfield Township, to be completed by late 2023 to early 2024.

“We look forward to the opportunity to implement more of these across Lucas County,” Pniewski added, “which will decrease sedimentation in streams and lower the risk of flooding in our communities.”





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