



## Summit County critics of sewer district should wrap up their cynical rebellion

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Opponents of new storm water fees need to come in out of the rain. The entire region stands to benefit from the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District's comprehensive plan to cut down on fast-moving storm runoff that causes flooding and sluices pollution into Lake Erie.

Most local officials wisely accept the necessity of this plan, which is designed to meet new federal environmental mandates as well.

But a scuffling, backward-looking coalition of Summit County politicians hopes to gut it by persuading a Summit County judge to reject the sewer district's authority to create a plan. Their fight is wrong and wasteful.

A judge established the district in 1972 precisely to manage wastewater and storm drainage that cut across community and county lines. The district covers most communities in southwest and southeast Cuyahoga County, northern Summit County and Columbia Township in Lorain County.

If anything, it has taken the district far too long to create a storm water plan.

Shamefully, some elected leaders in northern Summit County also are telling people not to pay the fee, which could start in October. That's poor advice, and irresponsible.

The only thing these officials are achieving is to drive up costs for everybody. The sewer district has spent almost \$219,000 since 2009 defending itself in the Summit County case and to get a declaratory judgment in Cuyahoga courts supporting its authority to manage storm water; that's money that could help curb our region's pollution and flooding problems.

Summit County is not being "invaded" or "bullied," as Macedonia Mayor Don Kuchta recently charged on local radio.

The simple truth is that Kuchta could not muster enough votes among other suburban mayors to get on the

sewer district board earlier this year.

Even so, Summit County still has representation through three Cuyahoga County suburban members responsible for looking out for Summit's interests.

Cleveland and the 61 suburban communities in the district will share the pain of paying the new charges -- approximately \$57 a year for the average homeowner; more for businesses. Customers can earn discounts by installing rain barrels and other improvements to aid storm water retention. All will gain from this plan to raise \$38 million in year one to halt costly flooding, erosion and water pollution.

Kuchta and his fellow Summit County elected officials ought to deliver that message instead of fueling a revolt.

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