



NE Ohio sewer improvements are worth the expense: editorial

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By **The Plain Dealer Editorial Board**

It's time to cut the . . . sewage.

The state Environmental Protection Agency estimates that Northeast Ohio flushes 7.5 billion gallons of untreated waste into Lake Erie and its waterways each year.

Untreated wastewater Cranwood Park Blvd.

A heavy rain in the summer of 2010 causes untreated wastewater - rainwater, sewage, industrial waste - to be discharged directly into Mill Creek, which flows to Lake Erie. The video shows untreated wastewater rushing from outfalls near Cranwood Park Blvd. and E. 313 Street in Garfield Heights.

That has led to costly federal mandates to fix sewers too outdated to handle overflows during heavy rains and snow melts. The repair costs will be high, but the price of doing nothing would be higher.

According to a story last week by Plain Dealer reporter Dave Davis, a bacterial stew **already infects** our beaches -- with more than 100 advisories this summer for beaches in Cuyahoga, Lorain and Lake counties. Sampling has found E. coli bacteria concentrations up to 26 times higher than what federal officials consider safe. 'Parasites and viruses add another level of threat.

Regionally, Davis reports that Avon Lake's sewer repairs are the furthest along. The Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District has signed a federal consent decree for what could be \$3 billion in fixes to divert waste through tunnels, although district officials hope to reduce those costs significantly through "green" alternatives. Akron is under court order to come up with a better plan. Elyria, Euclid and Lakewood also face intense federal pressure to fix their old combined storm and sanitary sewer systems.

'The upgrades will be extremely costly. That's why green is good -- and why Cleveland and the Regional Sewer District must work together to demonstrate the practicality of green solutions such as restored wetlands.

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