



More specious arguments against storm water fee: editorial

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The 12 Cuyahoga County suburbs that recently outlined their opposition to the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District's proposal to charge a fee to control the effects of storm water are just as wrong -- and just as backwards in their thinking -- as the Summit County suburban officials trashing the idea.

They do, however, earn points for being a smidgen more responsible. At least they haven't told residents not to pay the fee, as some Summit County leaders have done.

Each city, it seems, has a different reason for bucking the sewer district's plan, which will require homeowners and businesses to pay a fee to repair storm water problems in 62 communities in Greater Cleveland.

Lyndhurst Mayor Joseph Cicero says he opposes it because his city already has spent millions of dollars on special assessments used to make storm water repairs.

Lyndhurst's wisdom is commendable, but that's not the point.

No city is an island, as Julius Ciacca, executive director of the sewer district, points out. One city's repair job upstream can affect other cities downstream.

The reasonable -- and affordable -- solution for all is to fix storm water flooding, erosion and pollution at their sources and spread the costs among the district's cities, villages and townships.

Unfortunately, the district's long-delayed plan is mired in lawsuits. What's needed is a declaratory judgment from Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court, affirming the district's right to impose the fee -- which, by the way, can be offset by a variety of credits.

No one likes new fees, especially when the economy is sputtering, but if this one will make the Lake Erie basin a healthier place and prevent devastating and costly flooding, it is well worth the \$57-a-year fee that could be imposed on homeowners. After all, all of Greater Cleveland is in the same boat.

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