

Rates, new affordability programs will be focus of public meetings

PRESS RELEASE Thursday, March 17, 2011

To keep the public informed about anticipated sewer rate increases for 2012 through 2016 and new affordability programs, the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District has scheduled a series of public meetings that will begin next month.

In June 2011, the Sewer District staff will ask the Board of Trustees to consider the adoption of a rate increase. Beginning in 2012 through 2016, the anticipated rate increase is expected to be an additional \$14 a quarter per year for the average user, which is equivalent to an average increase of 13% per year.

"We are very sensitive to these tough economic times," said Jennifer Demmerle, Director of Finance for the Sewer District. "We worked extremely hard to minimize the total increase while enhancing affordability programs, so that those most in need will have some relief."

Rate increases are necessary to maintain and update the current infrastructure, including 300 miles of sewer pipe, three wastewater treatment plants and other sewer facilities within the 62-community service area. Additionally, of the average 13% increase, approximately 4% of the rate increase will cover the costs of Project Clean Lake, an initiative to reduce the amount of raw sewage entering local water bodies, including Lake Erie and the Cuyahoga River, during heavy rain events.

Rate Information Meetings will begin April 6, at which Sewer District representatives will discuss changes to the minimum-charge fee and additions to the rate-savings programs, including a crisis voucher and income-based rate reduction. Customers will have the option to sign up for current rate savings programs—Homestead Program (must meet eligibility requirements) and the Summer Sprinkling Program. Applications will not be available for the new savings programs until mid-summer.

The Board is expected to vote on the measure during its regularly scheduled public meeting on either June 2 or June 16 at 12:30 p.m. at the George McMonagle Administrative Building.