



Lick Run Watershed FAQs

1. What is the “Lick Run Alternative?”

The Lick Run Alternative is a series of sewer separation projects that are intended to remove stormwater and natural drainage from the combined sewer system in the Lick Run watershed.

This concept, currently under evaluation by MSD, is a potential alternative to a default deep tunnel and enhanced high-rate treatment facility required by MSD’s Consent Decree with the U.S. EPA, Ohio EPA and ORSANCO (the Regulators).

Totalling approximately 70,000 linear feet of stormwater pipes and natural conveyance systems, the Lick Run Alternative would capture natural drainage and stormwater from the watershed and convey it to the Mill Creek. The projects would start in the hillsides of the watershed and end in the valley in South Fairmount.

A major component of the Lick Run Alternative is a stormwater conveyance system, possibly an urban waterway or “daylighted stream,” in South Fairmount between Queen City and Westwood Avenues east of White Street.

If implemented, the projects are estimated to reduce the annual volume of sewer overflows into Mill Creek through CSO 5 (an outfall at the end of Queen City Avenue) by about 800 million gallons annually.

2. What’s a sewer separation project?

A combined sewer carries both sewage and stormwater in the same pipe. Most of the older neighborhoods in Cincinnati (and some of the suburbs) have combined sewer systems. There are about 772 communities across the U.S. with an aging combined sewer system, mainly located in the Northeast, Great Lakes area and the Pacific Northwest.

A sewer separation project removes stormwater and natural drainage from the combined sewer and conveys stormwater through dedicated infrastructure without sanitary sewage flow. New storm sewers can be built or the existing combined sewers can be rehabilitated to convey stormwater only. In that case, new sanitary sewers would be constructed.

The Lick Run Alternative mainly involves the construction of new stormwater infrastructure.

The stormwater and natural drainage would be carried directly to the Mill Creek, instead of contributing to combined sewer overflows at CSO 5 or being treated at the Mill Creek wastewater treatment plant.

3. Why is MSD interested in an urban waterway or “daylighted stream” as the stormwater conveyance system in South Fairmount?

The Lick Run watershed was named after “Lick Run,” a historic, natural stream that once ran between Queen City and Westwood Avenues and emptied into Mill Creek.

In the early 1900s, the stream was enclosed within a 19.5-foot-diameter combined sewer called the Lick Run combined sewer, which runs under 3,700 feet of streets and buildings in South Fairmount.

MSD is evaluating the construction of a stormwater conveyance system adjacent to the combined sewer to carry natural drainage and stormwater to Mill Creek. This project is one of the 14 projects within the 2,700-acre watershed that is being evaluated as part of the Lick Run Alternative.

Daylighting is turning a stream that has been enclosed by a combined sewer back into a naturally flowing above ground waterway.

This conveyance system could be built as an open stream, which would provide water quality benefits and a community amenity that could lead to parks and green-space improvements, among others.

4. What is the status of the Lick Run Alternative?

MSD is still in the early planning and technical evaluation stages for a comprehensive, watershed-based solution in the Lick Run watershed and construction of any stormwater conveyance systems would not be anticipated until 2015.

Over the next year, MSD will hold three separate public design workshops (August 11, 2011, -October 2011 and -February 2012) to explore and define the stormwater conveyance project in South Fairmount.

The outcome of the public workshops will be a Master Plan for Lick Run, which will be presented for consideration by elected officials and local authorities.

5. Will the Lick Run Master Plan be publicly presented prior to submission to the Regulators?

Yes, MSD will be working with residents, businesses and property owners in the Lick Run watershed to develop a Lick Run Master Plan. MSD will publicly present the Lick Run Master Plan to the Lick Run watershed community. The plan will reflect the desired solution of the community, including public, City and County input.

The plan will be developed and publicly unveiled prior to MSD seeking legislative and regulatory approval for the project.

6. What is the approval process and timeline for the Lick Run Alternative?

Following the development of a Lick Run Master Plan (see Questions #4 and 5), MSD will likely seek the legislative approval of the City Planning Commission Cincinnati City Council, and the Hamilton County Commissioners to advance the project.

Design of the Lick Run project must begin prior to regulatory approval in order to meet the compliance schedule. Concurrently, MSD is also pursuing design of a default tunnel as is outlined by the Consent Decree.

In December 2012, MSD must submit its preferred Lower Mill Creek Partial Remedy (LMCPR) – the default tunnel or the “alternative solution” – to the Regulators.

The Lick Run project would be one part of the “alternative solution;” additional source control/sustainable infrastructure projects also are being considered, including in West Fork, Denham, Kings Run and Bloody Run watersheds.

The Regulators are anticipated to make a determination regarding an alternative remedy by the second quarter of 2013.

If the Lick Run solution is approved as part of the LMCPR, construction on a conveyance system would likely need to begin by 2015 to be complete by 2018.

7. How many alternative solutions are there?

Under the Consent Decree, MSD must eliminate 1.6 billion gallons¹ of combined sewer overflows (CSOs) in the Lower Mill Creek area by 2018. The Lick Run Alternative would eliminate about 800 million gallons. MSD is evaluating additional source control projects in the Bloody Run, Denham, Kings Run, Ross Run and West Fork subwatersheds to achieve the remaining reductions.

¹A reduction of 400 million gallons has already been achieved through other controls at CSO outfalls.

8. Why doesn't MSD just proceed with the construction of the default underground storage tunnel?

MSD and local elected leaders are seeking the best and most cost-effective strategy to resolve overflows in the Lower Mill Creek watershed (which includes Lick Run) and the rest of MSD's service area.

Every project under Project Groundwork is evaluated against one of three strategies MSD is using to reduce and eliminate combined sewer overflows in its service area:

- Storage and conveyance: constructing larger sewers to transport wastewater to treatment plant or building underground storage tunnels to capture excess wastewater
- Treatment/Product control: upgrading existing treatment plants to handle more wastewater or constructing enhanced high-rate treatment (EHRT) facilities to treat flows at the CSO outfall
- Source control: as a foundation of the wet weather strategy, source control is a more sustainable solution to control the source of the overflow problem – stormwater and natural drainage.

These solutions include sewer separations to remove stormwater from combined sewers, detention and retention basins to control runoff from hillsides and other controls such as rain gardens, pervious pavement and rainwater harvesting systems.

The Regulators are requiring MSD to design a “storage and conveyance” solution coupled with a “treatment/product control” solution. The underground storage tunnel – about 30 feet in diameter and 1.2 miles long – would store excess flows during heavy rains and eventually discharge to an EHRT.

The Consent Decree also provides that MSD may explore alternatives, which can include a “source control solution,” as one of the alternatives to the tunnel. Source control solutions can be just as effective as the other solutions, but potentially cost less per gallon to operate and maintain and provide potential community benefits. By removing stormwater from the combined sewer, MSD can reserve capacity in the combined sewer for flows that cannot be separated. Source control can also allow MSD to “right size” pipes and treatment facilities for the remaining reduced flow volumes.

9. If U.S. EPA approves the tunnel and not the alternatives, will MSD still make source control improvements in Lick Run?

Yes, but only over a much longer horizon and only as resources allow. MSD is committed to source control solutions to reduce or eliminate sewer overflows throughout its service area and operate and maintain the sewer system.

10. How much will the Lick Run Alternative cost?

It is too early to provide specific dollar figures at this point in time. MSD will be able to provide additional details once the project is in the design phase.

11. How much will sewer bills go up as a result of the Lick Run Alternative?

Sewer bills will not go up specifically as a result of the Lick Run project.

The Lick Run Alternative is part of Project Groundwork, a multi-year program to rebuild and improve MSD's sewer system. Project Groundwork includes hundreds of sewer improvements and stormwater management projects across MSD's service area.

Project Groundwork is primarily funded by MSD customers (ratepayers) through monthly or quarterly sewer bills. MSD is also seeking grants wherever possible to defray these costs. There is no government funding source that is available to pay for sewer improvements that are mandated by the U.S. EPA, Ohio EPA and ORSANCO. Therefore, MSD ratepayers are supporting the cost of the entire program and not any one project in particular.

Rate increases are expected to continue to fund the anticipated \$3.5 billion+ cost of Project Groundwork, whether the Lick Run alternative goes forward or not. The Hamilton County Commissioners approve all MSD rate increases and MSD is conducting a rate study to determine future rate and debt service coverage needs.

12. Will all stormwater be removed from the combined sewer system in Lick Run?

No. It is too costly and not feasible to fully separate all stormwater from the combined sewer system in Lick Run.

If implemented, the proposed projects of the Lick Run Alternative would reduce the annual volume of sewer overflows into Mill Creek through CSO 5 (an outfall at the end of Queen City Avenue) by about 800 million gallons annually.

13. Are engineering plans available for the various stormwater separation projects that make up the Lick Run Alternative?

Concept drawings are available at <http://www.projectgroundwork.org/lickrun/watershed/concepts.htm> for the stormwater conveyance system between Queen City and Westwood avenues east of White Street. These concepts will be further explored and evaluated at the community design workshops (see Question #4), with the intent of developing a Lick Run Master Plan by early 2012.

90% design drawings have been completed for the Harrison Avenue sewer separation since it is part of a Cincinnati Department of Transportation & Engineering roadway improvement project that is anticipated to start around January 2012.

30% design drawings have been completed for the other proposed strategic sewer separation projects in the hillsides.

14. If an urban waterway (“daylighted” stream) is implemented, how will MSD maintain water in the stream and other water features (e.g., detention pond) on a year-round basis?

MSD will take this into consideration when designing the project. Potential solutions include reconnecting natural drainage-ways and springs into the stormwater conveyance system.

15. Can MSD promise urban renewal/economic development if Lick Run is “daylighted?”

No, MSD cannot make any such promises of economic revitalization. However, by doing the sewer project differently and making investments such as daylighting and installing infrastructure that addresses community flooding and stormwater problems, there is opportunity for greater benefits.

There are also national examples of community renewal resulting from daylighting streams and employing innovative concepts in stormwater management strategies.

You can download Case Studies from www.projectgroundwork.org/lickrun/watershed/lickrun.htm. Where it can, MSD would work with all development partners, such as the City of Cincinnati, Hamilton County, State of Ohio and others to promote economic development.

16. How will traffic be affected by this project?

The Lick Run Alternative is still in the early planning and technical evaluation stages, so potential effects on traffic are many years away.

However, if the project proceeds, traffic could be affected in several ways, including:

- Normal traffic delays caused by construction work. The specific impacts on traffic will be managed like any other construction project and communicated to the public.
- Potential changes to the flow of traffic, to be determined through design.

17. Why is MSD constructing rain gardens at St. Francis Court Apartments?

In partnership with the Cincinnati Parks Board, MSD is conducting a number of smaller-scale pilot projects (also called “Early Success Projects”) in the Lick Run watershed to demonstrate to the community how stormwater can be managed through sustainable stormwater controls.

The St. Francis Court Apartments project at 1860 Queen City Avenue is the largest pilot project within the Lick Run watershed to date. It involved converting two unused parking lots into upper and lower bioinfiltration basins (also known as rain gardens). A walking path was also added as a community amenity to help bring people closer to this innovative stormwater solution and potentially leverage other investments to enhance the natural stormwater solution.

MSD has also completed a reforestation project in the 2100 block of Queen City Avenue and at Rapid Run Park and a rain garden at Immanuel United Church, 1520 Queen City Avenue. A project is also planned for San Antonio Church, corner of Queen City Avenue and White Street.

For more details on the pilot projects, visit <http://www.projectgroundwork.org/lickrun/community/> for more details.

18. Why are rain barrels not encouraged in Cincinnati?

The City of Cincinnati does not currently allow downspouts to be disconnected from the combined sewer system. Therefore, connecting downspouts to a rain barrel without reconnecting the overflow to the combined sewer is prohibited by city ordinance at this point in time. The City is working to modify the ordinance language to allow residents to divert rainwater into storage vessels.

19. Why doesn’t MSD provide incentives for things that people can do in their backyards, like installing a rain garden or rain barrel?

MSD encourages properties owners to take action to control stormwater on their own property (<http://www.projectgroundwork.org/howtohelp/index.htm>).

However, as a public agency, MSD must focus its resources on projects that remove large volumes of stormwater from combined sewers in order to meet existing regulatory requirements.

MSD is currently planning and designing sustainable infrastructure solutions throughout its service area.

MSD is also partnering with local organizations and agencies through its “green demonstration program” to install and monitor the effectiveness of infrastructure such as rain gardens, green roofs, pervious paving and rain barrels.

20. Where is MSD purchasing property?

MSD is currently purchasing some property from interested, voluntary sellers who own property in South Fairmount between Queen City and Westwood avenues east of White Street.

This is the area where a stormwater conveyance system, possibly an urban waterway or “daylighted stream,” could potentially be constructed and is where the historic Lick Run stream used to flow.

MSD is also evaluating new storm water systems in the hillsides of the watershed; however, much of this work can be conducted in the public right-of-way (e.g., streets) and therefore, would not require the purchase of private properties.

21. Would MSD purchase property outside this specific area in South Fairmount?

MSD would consider purchasing additional property if the property could benefit the project in some manner (e.g., construction staging, detention, water quality improvements, additional stormwater controls could be implemented).

22. If the Lick Run Alternative is still under evaluation (and not final), why is MSD purchasing properties?

Although the projects are still in the conceptual stages, property is being purchased now to facilitate compliance with MSD’s obligations to U.S. EPA and Ohio EPA to eliminate 1.6 billion gallons of overflows under the current milestones.

MSD must implement a solution by 2018 and property acquisition can take many years. Property acquisition will be part of the Regulators’ evaluation of the project feasibility.

23. Does MSD have eminent domain authority? Will MSD exercise it with this project and force property owners out?

MSD’s preference is always to work cooperatively with property owners and negotiate acquisition at a fair market value or come to other mutually acceptable agreements. MSD does have eminent domain authority for sewer infrastructure projects but would exhaust other options before exercising it.

24. Will MSD allow businesses and property owners to remain in their same location within the proposed project area in South Fairmount or move to another site within the project area?

MSD will work with businesses and property owners who desire to stay in their same location or to move to another site within the proposed project area in South Fairmount. MSD will also assist any property owner who wishes to relocate to another property elsewhere in the Lick Run watershed or outside the watershed.

The City of Cincinnati is also interested in assisting businesses thrive in their current location or a new location. The City of Cincinnati Community Development Department has two development officers assisting with business retention and relations.

Please see questions 27 and 28 for additional information.

25. Who should a property owner contact regarding selling property or staying in the same location?

For questions about selling your property or staying in the same location, please contact the MSD acquisition representative, Ms. Beth Sutherland at: (513) 244-1340 or beth.sutherland@cincinnati-oh.gov.

26. If a business relies heavily on the cheap rent and high traffic volume that can be found in South Fairmount, how will MSD compensate property owners for this loss?

Properties being considered for purchase will be appraised by a third-party, independent appraiser using fair market value. The value of commercial properties will include the impact of its location and traffic volumes.

27. Who is responsible for the relocation of businesses, property owners and tenants?

MSD is handling the relocation of qualified businesses, property owners and tenants through the federal Uniform Relocation Act (URA) in terms of providing comparable replacement locations or housing, housing/rental assistance payments and move payments.

For additional information, please contact the MSD relocation representative, Ms. Brenda Brown, at (513) (513) 557-7184 or brenda.brown@cincinnati-oh.gov.

28. What is the role is the City of Cincinnati’s Community Development department?

The City’s Community Development Department is interested in seeing local businesses thrive in their current location or a new location within the City of Cincinnati.

The department can offer incentives, grants and financing tools.

For more information, please contact development officers Markiea Gore at (513) 352-6146 or Markiea.Gore@cincinnati-oh.gov or Sam Stephens at (513) 352-6251 or Samuel.stephens@cincinnati-oh.gov.

29. What will MSD do with the property it has purchased if the project is not approved?

As mentioned in the answer to Question #9, MSD is committed to a source control solution in Lick Run. If the U.S. EPA does not approve the Lick Run Alternative as part of Project Groundwork, MSD would still look to undertake source control, but could only accomplish it over much longer timelines and only as limited resources would allow.

Purchased property would be used for either short/long term solutions, as well as for construction staging and implementation.

Any excess property not needed for a project could also be publicly resold.

30. How many properties does MSD currently own (title transferred to MSD)?

As of August 9, 2011, MSD currently owns 23 properties (comprised of 31 tax parcels) between Queen City and Westwood avenues in South Fairmount east of White Street.

31. How will the properties be maintained after MSD acquires them?

Each property and its needs will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Once property is acquired, it will be secured by boarding all windows and doors to prevent unauthorized access. MSD will be responsible for property maintenance, including lawn mowing, trash and debris removal.

MSD will be posting signs on all buildings it has acquired notifying the public to keep out of the building. The Cincinnati Police Department has been working with MSD and is committed to providing surveillance on these properties.

Please contact the Cincinnati Police Department, District 3, at 513-263-8300 to report any crime in the area or suspected illegal activity.

Please contact Ms. Brenda Brown, the MSD Property Management Specialist, at (513) 557-7184 to report any issues regarding property maintenance.

32. Is MSD going to demolish structures on purchased properties?

Each property and its needs will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Prior to any demolition, MSD will conduct all applicable environmental, archeological and historical reviews. In the interest of public safety, buildings will be secured and may be torn down soon after acquisition pending the outcome of applicable reviews. MSD will grade and reseed all properties where buildings have been razed.

A notification letter will be sent out to adjacent property owners and community leaders about two to three weeks prior to any demolitions.

33. Is there any requirement for residents to keep a basic structural appearance for their property after the project is complete?

Currently, there is no requirement for structural appearances of any existing buildings. Any properties that remain after the project is completed will be required to adhere to existing zoning or other property codes required by the City of Cincinnati.

34. Is there any cost for a property owner who elects to stay put in spite of the Lick Run Alternative moving forward?

Any properties that are not impacted by the project can continue to be used as they are today. There are no additional costs anticipated for such property owners as a result of the Lick Run Alternative.

35. Is the City of Cincinnati fire station in South Fairmount being considered for closure due to the Lick Run Alternative project?

Please contact the City of Cincinnati Fire Department for this information at (513) 352-6220.

36. What are opportunities for public involvement?

Over the next year, MSD anticipates holding three separate public design workshops (August 11, 2011, ~October 2011 and ~February 2012) to explore and define the proposed stormwater conveyance project in South Fairmount. The exact dates and times will be well publicized in the community and on the Lick Run website (www.projectgroundwork.org/lickrun).

In addition, an MSD representative would be happy to meet with you or present to your organization to answer questions and address concerns. To schedule a presentation or meeting, please contact Ms. MaryLynn Lodor at (513) 244-5535 or marylynn.lodor@cincinnati-oh.gov.

37. Does MSD plan to put information about the Lick Run Alternative on a web site?

Information regarding this project is located at www.projectgroundwork.org/lickrun. This website will be periodically updated with new information as the project progresses.

Need More Information?

If you would like to ask additional questions, please submit them to MSD.Communications@cincinnati-oh.gov or contact **Ms. MaryLynn Lodor** at **(513) 244-5535** or MaryLynn.Lodor@cincinnati-oh.gov.