

Miamiville Civic Association
September 4, 2003

Clermont County Commissioners
2379 Clermont Center Drive
Batavia, OH 45103
Attn: Robert Proud; Mary Walker; Scott Crowell; Tom Yeager

Dear Elected Representatives:

Please accept this letter as our response to your letter, dated August 28, 2003, addressed to citizens who voiced concerns over the Sewage Treatment Plant for which you have applied for permit to pollute with Ohio EPA. You stated in your response that you wanted to provide us "with complete and accurate information on the status of the proposed project," and clear up "incorrect assumptions and unfounded concerns and fears as to the true impacts of this process." Unfortunately, your hasty and inaccurate answers left us with more concerns, not only about the deterioration that the Little Miami River and our community and businesses on the bike trail will suffer with the installation of the treatment plant, but also with the reliability and truthfulness of our local and state governing officials. Most of your answers appear to contain inaccurate and misleading information, which we would now like to address point by point.

Concern: *The proposed plant will be located in a residential neighborhood.*

Your Answer: No site has been selected. Clermont County's request for an OEPA NPD permit is a preliminary step in determining whether to proceed. In addition, the County will make every effort to avoid proximity to residential homes.

Citizens' Response: The OEPA Public Hearing Agenda dated August 14, 2003, clearly states "*The purpose of this public hearing is to accept comments on an application from the Clermont County Board of Commissioners for a new wastewater collection and treatment system on Wards Corner Road (Miami Township).*" Therefore, Mr. Yeager, your answer "No site has been selected" (see above) makes the "concerned citizens a little leery of other answers in your letter.

Because, obviously a site had indeed been selected. Many citizens who attended the August 14, OEPA Public Hearing were given the map which clearly pinpoints the proposed location to be at the bottom of Wards- Corner Road, at the intersection of State Route 126. This is confirmed by the longitudinal and latitudinal coordinates (long 39 degrees 12" 54", lat 84 degrees, 17" 36') that Ron Ware of OEPA provided us at that public hearing. As this is admittedly a very long and cumbersome project that has been in planning stage since the 1980's, considerable money and effort has already been expended to choose that site, it is misleading for officials to maintain that they have not chosen a site.

Of course we certainly welcome any plans that show alternate sites, preferably in a non-residential area.

Concern: *The proposed plant will pollute the scenic Little Miami River.*

Your Answer: The intent is to protect and ultimately prevent pollution from entering the river. By properly treating sewage from existing homes in the area, the discharge from a carefully

monitored and controlled WWTP will actually be cleaner than the pollution potential from aging septic systems that currently exist. If approved, the County will also be taking two existing WWTPs that have reached their useful life out of service and directing flow through the proposed facility. By eliminating two discharge points with new technology, pollution potential is greatly reduced.

Citizens' Response: We assert that your intent is not necessarily to ultimately prevent pollution from entering the river, but to bring in more development that will add more pollutants. This will result in additional, more harmful waste in the Little Miami River.

In the OEPA meeting numerous Miamiville citizens stated that they have on many, many occasions for ten or more years, repeatedly contacted Ohio EPA and Clermont County about open sewage that runs down the hill and into their yards and basements from malfunctioning septic systems and package plants. In every case the board of health and Clermont County has refused or delayed by as much as two months to even come out to investigate the problem.

Throughout this same time, not one homeowner reports being forced to upgrade or repair his septic system. On the contrary, one individual who received the run off had to fight Clermont County so that his property would not be condemned. His system was and continues to function properly. Also during this same time the package plants causing the bulk of the sewage run off have been allowed to fail due to a lack of any maintenance. The county has failed to maintain the septic systems, such as those on Branch Hill-Miami Road, and the public and individuals suffer the consequences.

It is Clermont County's responsibility to maintain the public health, and to enforce maintenance. If you cannot be trusted to do this, how could you be trusted to manage a large-scale treatment plant?

In addition, the permit you filed with OEPA states that you will eliminate two plants at Indian Lookout and Bramblewood. Your recent OPWCPY letter states that you intend to eliminate **five package plants**. Which is it? What would be the resultant size of the treatment plant in our neighborhood if the latter were correct?

Concern: *The project was kept secret.*

Your Answer: The County has actually been working on this study area since the late 1980's. Significant effort has been expended to analyze the needs of Northern Miami Township with multiple options being evaluated. These included joint efforts with Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD), renovation of existing facilities, direct replacement of failing on site systems, and construction of a modern facility to eliminate outdated systems. Multiple presentations have been made to OEPA, County and Township Officials. Local environmental groups such as Little Miami, Inc. have been kept apprised of our efforts. Again, public involvement meetings will be scheduled in the future if the proposed project proceeds.

Citizens' Response: Where was the public disclosure? Why do our Township Trustees maintain that they were as surprised to learn about the county's intent as the rest of the residents are? If not for one vigilant citizen noticing the announcement by **OHIO EPA** we would still be left in the dark, just as we were when this same thing occurred in 1996 when the Wards Corner Treatment plant was installed. When that plant was installed, to a public outcry that came too late, there was no effort to tie in existing homes with failing systems; it was just to accommodate the retail and industrial development that has occurred at Wards Corner Road and I-275, a mile away.

We are tired of this type of behind closed door planning, which benefits individual developers, but not the individuals, and not the public at large.

And if this is a joint effort with MSD then why did your application for a permit to pollute occur almost simultaneously with Hamilton County's permit to apply for expansion and additional pollution and water degradation from the Sycamore treatment plant, just one mile down river, and at the same time as Warren County's permit application to install a plant in Mason, on Mason-Morrow Milgrove Road, that will emit 13,000,000 gallons of toxins per day? The EPA hearing for that is on Sept 9th.

Also, why are these local environmental groups (Little Miami, Inc., Sierra Club, Isaac Walton League, Save the Lake Association, and Rivers Unlimited) opposing you at this time? It is because they know the Little Miami River is over the allowable pollutant level and is in violation of the exceptional warm water habitat law (EWH). The current river discharge is more than the allowable 70% assimilative capacity.

Concern: *The plant would discharge into an already polluted Little Miami River.*

Your Answer: The health and viability of the Little Miami River are of great concern to all of us. There has been tremendous effort to study and evaluate the ability of the river to accept the proposed discharge without detracting from its natural quality and beauty as well as its recreational value. In this case the failure of the County to take action to deal with the current problems in the area would certainly result in the exact detrimental effects, which form the basis of your concern. Under the proposed plan, the chemical-specific water quality criteria developed to protect aquatic life and human health, set forth in OAC 3745-1, will not be exceeded by the proposed WWTP.

Citizens' Response: Based on information from Little Miami, Inc, and Rivers Unlimited, it is evident that the county has not performed adequate studies on the current levels of pollution in the Little Miami River, especially in that stretch into which the treated sewage would be discharged. Therefore you cannot accurately make the statement that it would reduce the current levels of pollution. Indeed the commissioners have requested a permit to **add to the** pollution levels of the water. As stated in a previous response, that stretch of the Little Miami River is designated as an Exceptional Warm Water Habitat and is already failing to meet the 1998 EPA water quality standards for that environment. Has the County made a study that can tell both the Environmental groups and the Miamiville residents what the effluent pollutant level of the unnamed tributary will be?

Ohio EPA's own Antidegradation report, prepared on March 25, 2002 states that Ohio's antidegradation policy must provide a systematic and reason decision making process to evaluate the need to lower water quality. And that the purpose of the policy is to ensure that the State's highest quality streams, rivers and lakes are preserved.

The document further states that the Little Miami River is listed as a State Resource Water and as such 70% of it should be set aside to preserve water quality; more stringent pollution controls are required to introduce new sources of pollution, and that social and that economic justification are needed to lower the water quality. Section 6111.12(A)(2) of Ohio Revised code states that Ohio EPA is required to ensure that waters of exceptional recreational and ecological value are maintained as high quality resources for future generations. That applies to this river, and as such the pollution levels should be reduced, not further degraded by introduction of additional sewage runoff.

You state that the county's failure to take action to fix the current problems in the area will result in the detriment of the water quality. We maintain as stated earlier, that the county has failed to address and repair the problem for decades, and believe that the real intent of our government is to bring additional development to the area, and that the package plants were intentionally allowed to fail in order to force the perceived necessity of a larger plant. This failure to maintain is a breach of the most basic fiduciary duty of our local government, which is to protect the public health.

Concern: *You are risking the underground drinking water supply.*

Your Answer: The proposed facility is actually intended to eliminate potential pollution sources from the Miami Goshen Stonelick Water Treatment Plant underground aquifer. Current dry well and leaching from on site systems located in the wellhead protection area pose a tremendous threat to your drinking water. Our wellhead protection plan calls for elimination of these potential pollution sources. Public sewers provide a safe process to accelerate nature's biological breakdown of waste products to safely recycle the pollution we create. Current technology allows us to efficiently and effectively improve on nature's ability to protect itself from human activity. This results in a safer water source for our residents and future generations.

Citizens' Response: The septic systems that are currently in place also work adequately and more naturally; allowing the treated sewage to percolate into the ground and be absorbed with an organic process. This is a better process than the introduction of the toxic chemical treatment process and the large-scale runoff into the river, which occurs with sewage treatment plants. What kinds of chemicals will be released into the Little Miami River? If there is a septic tank/package plant problem that is a "potential pollution source" then FIX IT! This is a County Public Health and Safety Issue and your responsibility. We pay good tax money for this type of service!

Concern: *The Little Miami River cannot accept the additional two million gallons of treated wastewater per day.*

Your Answer: While we are requesting a discharge permit for up to two million gallons per day of treated wastewater, the initial flow will be approximately 200,000 gallons per day or one tenth of that amount. Only 113,000 gallons would be new discharge since we would be removing two existing plants totaling 87,000 gallons per day. Currently, OEPA is considering two other upstream discharge requests, the City of Mason for an expansion to 13 million gallons per day and MSD's Sycamore Plant expansion to nine million gallons per day with the additional ability to discharge up to 30 million gallons per day of partially treated wastewater during high flow periods. Clermont County's request represents less than one percent of the discharge from these facilities initially and only 8 percent at full capacity. OEPA is tasked with evaluating overall impact to the Little Miami River based on all permitted discharges. Keep in mind there are also several other existing facilities discharging upstream from your community.

Citizen's Response: Again, the pollution levels and harmful toxins in the river are already at damaging levels to the natural habitat. You have documentation of this from OEPA and Little Miami, Inc. and Rivers Unlimited, to name a few sources. The very fact that there are not only other facilities discharging upstream, but that there are applications to expand and add more facilities only underscore that this is a widespread problem that will continue to destroy this

waterway and the surrounding habitat, at a ever accelerating pace. The river cannot handle this much contamination. When in summer the water level is greatly reduced, the only flow in the creek bed will be 100% treated sewage and we can only imagine what the stench would be.

And while the original plans may be 113,000 gallons/day, it would be a matter of time for the flow to double, triple and continue to grow with increased population density. Again we ask for the long-range development plans for the area.

Concern: *The stench will create a negative impact on our community.*

Your Answer: Provided the proposed WWTP is properly operated, no noxious odors should be released from the facility. In order to gain perspective, please consider the existing WWTP along Loveland-Miamiville Road. The community should expect the same performance from a new facility. Therefore, judge the merits of our proposal based on Clermont County's current operation of that facility. Do not compare with less effectively maintained or antiquated plants. Therefore, judge the merits of our proposal based on Clermont County's current operation of that facility. Do not compare with less effectively maintained or antiquated plants.

Citizens' Response: It is misleading to compare the small package plant was just installed on Loveland-Miamiville Road in 1996 to the large scale treatment plant that is being proposed for installation approximately one tenth of one mile from the existing facility. It is more accurate to expect the new facility to operate, look and smell much more like the Sycamore plant. It is further our understanding that the existing Ward's Corner Plant is not a full-blown treatment plant as the new one will be, and that the solids are removed and taken away by tanker trucks greatly reducing the smell. The new plant would be the type to which solids are processed on site, thus exacerbating the smell.

The same 2002 EPA Antidegradation document mentioned previously states that Little Miami River has 2,790 acres of protected lands and watershed, and has recreational uses including an adjacent bike trail with estimated annual usage of 420,000 people and seven canoe liveries with a total estimated value of annual business exceeding \$1.7 million. Of course this does not include the dozens of other retail business that border or are in close proximity to the bike trail and river: restaurants, antique shops, bike rentals. Again we assert that the introduction of the plant would be blight and an economic and social detriment to the community and businesses within a far-reaching area.

The goal of the citizens of Miamiville and Miami Twp. is to sustain our community by requesting the services to which we are entitled, and that we have requested on many previous occasions, such as maintenance and repair of current septic and package plants, and the preservation of public health and safety. This would enhance and improve the quality of life for all our residents. Thus far Ohio EPA and Clermont County has turned a blind eye and a deaf ear to our pleas for help. In what forum and in what time frame can we expect a more accurate response to our concerns?

We ask that you maintain the systems that currently exist, and that you keep us informed and look for alternative sites and methods of treating the existing sewage. Please stop the continued development in an already overtaxed, overloaded area. This is for Miamiville, Miami Township and Clermont County, and the waterways and environment of Ohio. Thank you for your consideration of our input and concerns.

Miamiville Civic Association
And Concerned Citizens