

Painesville to add second water intake pipe

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Simon Husted

SHusted@News-Herald.com
@SimonSaysNH

Painesville city officials are pursuing a state loan to finance a \$9 million project that will reduce the risk of frazil ice and harmful algal blooms from compromising their Lake Erie water source.

The project proposes to build a second intake pipe connecting Lake Erie to Painesville's water treatment plant. The plant's existing intake

pipe, built in 1952, sits approximately 8.8 feet below the surface of Lake Erie and runs 1,500-feet off from the plant. It was originally built 4,000 feet long, however, officials decided to sever the intake pipe to its existing length after pipe issues were discovered in its first two decades.

The proposed second intake pipe is triple that of the existing pipe's length and depth, putting it in a less susceptible location for poisonous algae, frazil ice and liquid sand to

collect inside, said George Ginnis, Painesville's executive public service director.

On Jan. 11, officials at the Avon Lake Regional Water Plant asked its customers to conserve water use after frazil ice, which is the collection of loose, sharp ice crystals, was clogging its intake pipe. Ice caused an even more dramatic water shortage the year before at the plant.

Last August, water officials in Toledo and the city of Oregon ordered a half million customers to

shut off their water for a few days as they battled a harmful algal blooms.

Painesville's water treatment plant, which provides water to customers in the city of Painesville, Painesville Township, Concord Township and the village of Grand River, battles or monitors problems like these every year, said Ginnis.

"To take care of our customers, we have to make sure we have a viable water source," he said this

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Pipe

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week. "Lake Erie is a great water source, but we have to make sure we can pull from it at all times."

Only one intake will be collecting Lake Erie water at a time, but having two intakes at different locations is still an advantage, Ginnis said. That's because if one is at risk of harmful algal blooms or frazil ice, the plant may not need to do what officials in Northwest Ohio or Avon Lake did in shutting their water service down or ask customers to conserve usage. A solution may just be as easy as shutting down one intake and opening the second, Ginnis said.

Ultimately, the project is being paid through annual infrastructure improvement fees city council passed in 2011, but they're asking the state to help them finance the approximate \$9 million price tag.

Earlier this year, the city applied for a zero-interest, 20-year loan from the Ohio EPA to finance for this project. It's unclear when news of the loan awardees will be announced, but Ginnis said the city is confident it will be awarded the loan especially following the harmful algal bloom incident this past summer.

"They can't give us a definitive yes or no until everything is reviewed thoroughly," he said.

Meanwhile, the city is

slated to begin opening a bidding process for the project later this month. If everything proceeds accordingly, the new intake pipe can be completed as soon as some time in 2017.

It's a heavy cost the city has been anticipating for years, but Ginnis and other city officials have said this project will result in its own savings as well.

Ginnis said the second pipe's outer and deeper location is expected to collect less liquefied sand, improving the water quality and saving the plant from using as much treatment chemicals as it does now.

The improved water quality will also "easily" double the life span of the plant's equipment, he said.

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