

# Hunter's Run

## CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Protecting west Lancaster and surrounding areas from catastrophic flooding since the fierce flood of 1948

### WHAT IS THE HUNTER'S RUN CONSERVANCY DISTRICT?

The Hunter's Run Conservancy District (The District) is a political subdivision in Fairfield County with its own governing board created and governed under Ohio Revised Code 6101. The District oversees a system of 28 dams that control 50 percent of the runoff that flows through Lancaster within the Upper Hocking Watershed. This system protects more than 40,000 residents, farms, homes, and businesses, along with bridges and roadways, from catastrophic flooding. Many of these bridges and roadways are within Greenfield, Hocking and Bloom Townships. This system also regulates the Base Flood Elevation on the current FEMA maps, which provides for more developable land.

### HOW IS IT FUNDED?

In 1955, through an act of Congress, the Soil Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, now Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), allocated over \$1.3 million (\$13.6 million in current dollars) in the construction of the Upper Hocking Watershed Pilot Project. Over the years, the local sponsors (Hunter's Run Conservancy District and the Fairfield Soil and Water Conservation District) and landowners have supplemented that original investment with additional conservation practices and maintaining the project structures. The District currently raises approximately \$195,000 per year for maintaining and improving the structures. Those dollars come from a special assessment of the residences and businesses in the affected area. Fairfield County and the City of Lancaster also receive the benefit of flood reduction and contribute to those costs.

### HUNTER'S RUN CONSERVANCY DISTRICT AT-A-GLANCE



Number of dams:  
**28**



Project Start:  
**1955**



Construction completed:  
**1961**

**Primary Purpose:** Control gully erosion, flooding and sediment damage.

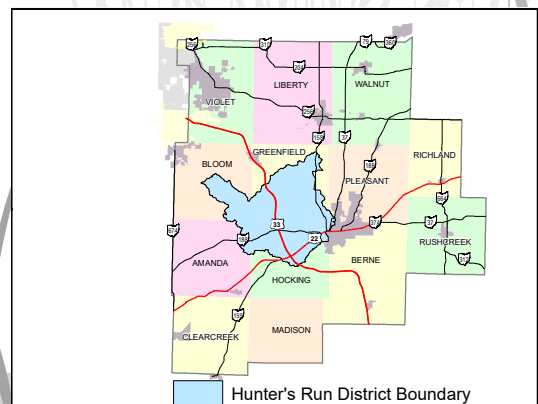
**Population Served:** More than 40,000 people in the local area plus tourists and others for recreation.



In accordance with ORC 6101.54, the Board of Directors may file a petition with the court asking for the Readjustment of Appraisal of Benefits due to a material change in the values of property or benefits received. This readjustment of appraisal of benefits cannot occur more than once in six years.

This appraisal of benefits has not been conducted since the original one in 1958. Of course, changes have occurred in property values as well as new developments since 1958. As a result, there are many residences and businesses in the watershed that are not being assessed. Those properties will be added into the population in the new assessment. In addition, adjustments will be made to some of those currently assessed properties based on the results of the readjustment of appraisal of benefits.

The District has estimated that it will require \$700,000 a year to maintain the structures and prepare for the District's cost share of major improvements that are required to meet current Ohio dam safety regulations. The District's cost share is 35 percent for all sponsored work through the NRCS. Current estimates indicate expenditures on the order of \$2 million for several of the eight major dams in the District. In addition to increased maintenance and monitoring requirements, additional dollars are required to decommission those smaller dams that are no longer providing benefit and to upgrade those that are still needed.





## WHY NOW?

The dams were originally designed for a 50-year life of providing sediment storage, and they are reaching the end of their useful life. The smaller dams were designed with corrugated steel risers and outlets, and the aging steel is corroding. The concrete in the larger flood retarding dams continues to deteriorate and must be repaired or replaced to continue to safely reduce flooding within the watershed area.

When the dams were built, the watershed was predominately agricultural with the City of Lancaster near the lower end of the watershed. Since that time, the watershed has changed to predominately urban or unincorporated residences. In fact, approximately 50 percent of the farmland in the area is developed, as it is located in one of the fastest growing counties in the state. This development downstream of the dams has required additional measures to assure the safety of those living below the structures.

## WHAT IS THE REASSESSMENT PROCESS?

An economic benefit analysis is performed by a team of economists and engineers to determine the current economic benefit to the watershed area. The analysis is being conducted by Faucett Associates with assistance from Stantec Engineering. The modeling software is a product of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and determines where flooding would occur without the dams, and from that, both the direct and indirect benefits to the properties are identified. The property is then assessed based on the proportionate percentage of benefit received.

Once the study is completed, a Notice of Filing will be publicized and each affected property owner will receive notice by mail. Those who object to the proposed assessment will have a 30-day period to file exceptions and to have those exceptions heard by the court. The District plans to have informational meetings to better inform the public of the importance of the District and the need for increased maintenance and improvements to be made.



## WHEN WILL I SEE THE SPECIAL ASSESSMENT BILLED?

Special assessments must be approved and filed with the Auditor prior to September 30, 2024. Assessments will be included in the 2025 tax bills.

## HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

Details, as they are available, will be posted on the Hunter's Run Conservancy District website.



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