



## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **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. All these bridges and roadways are within Greenfield, Hocking and Bloom Townships, along with the City of Lancaster. This system also regulates the Base Flood Elevation on the current FEMA maps, which provides for more developable land.

### **What is an assessment? Is this a tax?**

Properties (residences and businesses) that are within the Hunter's Run Conservancy District will pay an annual assessment calculated using several factors, including property tax values established by the county auditor.

- Assessments are different from taxes because assessments provide a benefit like when you are assessed for sidewalks or streetlights in your neighborhood.
- You receive a benefit in the form of reduced risk of catastrophic flooding in the Upper Hocking River and Hunter's Run flood plains.

### **When do I pay the assessment?**

The letter sent on April 19 was the notice of a readjustment of appraisal benefits for all properties in the Hunter's Run Conservancy District. It is NOT a bill. The assessment amount will be included in your 2025 tax bill from Fairfield County. You do not need to pay anything at this time.

### **Why do I pay a flood protection assessment?**

- The assessment pays for the ongoing maintenance of a system of 28 dams that control over 50 percent of the runoff that flows through Lancaster within the Upper Hocking Watershed.
- This system provides direct and indirect benefits to more than 40,000 residents, farms, homes and businesses, along with bridges and roadways.

- The assessment is based on either the indirect or direct benefits received. Indirect benefits might include access by emergency response personnel, reduced road closures and detours, along with other quality of life benefits. Those within the inundation area receive a direct benefit in the reduction of flooding. This benefit is calculated using the value of the buildings affected based on the appraised value of the building as determined by the county auditor. The assessments appear on the tax bills issued by the county treasurer.

### How do I file an objection/exception to the appraisal of benefits?

- Owners who do not agree with the proposed *benefit* may object by filing an *exception*.
- Ohio Revised Code §6101.33 allows property owners or public corporations to file exceptions to the readjusted appraisal of benefits.
- As a property owner subject to the assessment, you have the right to file exceptions to the report filed by the appraisers. To do so, you must file in writing with the Fairfield County Clerk of Courts, located at 224 E. Main St., Lancaster, OH, 43130.
- Exceptions must be postmarked or submitted in person, in writing **on or before May 20, 2024 at 4:00 p.m.**
- A hearing on the appraisal report, and any exceptions thereto, will be held between May 29, 2024 and June 7, 2024. Those filing timely exceptions will be notified of the time and place where their exceptions will be heard.

### Is this related to the county's reappraisal?

This is an entirely different process. However, the direct assessment is based on the appraised value of the buildings on the property.

### Where does the Hunter's Run Conservancy District get the authority to charge this assessment?

HRCDC is organized under the [Ohio Revised Code 6101](#), which was originally created in 1914 following the Great Flood of 1913 in the Miami River Valley.

### Who pays to be protected?

- Individual properties, residential, commercial, industrial, government, non-profit and agricultural properties will pay an annual assessment.
- The State Government is exempt from the assessment.

### How is the assessment calculated?

An economic benefit analysis is performed by an independent team of economists and engineers to determine the current economic benefit to the watershed area. The current analysis was 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 following Direct and Indirect Benefit.

**Direct Benefits:** Direct financial benefits (value of damage avoided) to structures and land protected by the dams. The assessment amount is based on the value of the structures on the parcel.

**Indirect Benefits:** The indirect benefit assessment is calculated by dividing the number of occupied structures into the total calculated indirect benefits such as transportation impacts, emergency response costs, National Flood Insurance Program administration impacts, business losses, business cleanup costs, business emergency preparation costs, agricultural losses, environmental and overall quality of life impacts.

### **What does the assessment consist of?**

There are three levels of assessments planned.

1. Those properties directly impacted will be assessed based on the value of the structure being protected so those values will vary from structure to structure. This direct assessment will be for all structures in the inundation area.
2. The indirect benefit assessment is applied to all parcels with occupied structures (homes and businesses) both within and outside of the flood inundation areas within the watershed. These parcels will be subject to a \$41.00 per year assessment.
3. For vacant parcels or parcels with an improved value of less than \$10,000 the indirect benefit assessment will be \$2.00 per year.

All property owners will pay the indirect assessment of either \$2.00 or \$41.00. Property owners with structures within the inundation area will also receive a direct assessment based on the appraised value of the buildings.

### **Why do I pay a larger amount than my next-door neighbor does?**

- The direct assessment is based on the likelihood of your home actually being flooded. Your neighbor's house may be at a higher elevation and only the yard would flood. In addition, the appraised value of your home is used to calculate the direct benefit. If your house's appraised value is more than your neighbor's, you would pay more.

### **Why did my assessment go up/down?**

There are a few reasons that your assessment would increase or decrease:

Beginning in 2025 all assessments are established based on the Readjustment of Appraisal of Benefits approved by the Court. The original Appraisal of Benefits was completed in 1958 and there have been many changes since then. The District requires a significant increase in funding for needed maintenance and updates to the dams.

There is no direct comparison between your current assessment and your new assessment.

### **I'm from a church/non-profit. We should be exempt.**

Your property may be exempt from taxes, but under ORC 6101 the property is not exempt from special assessments as you receive the same benefit as others.

### **My building wasn't even here in 1948. How can you assess me?**

The engineering studies performed simulate the inundation area if the dams did not exist. This data is used to identify those properties that would be flooded today in the event of what is known as a 500-year storm. This does not mean that a storm of this magnitude would only happen once in 500 years. It indicates there is a 1 in 500 chance of a storm occurring to that level, or a .2 percent chance in any given year. It should be noted that in the Upper Hocking River Valley, there is little difference in the physical area covered between a .2 percent and 1 percent storm. It is, for most of the area, just a difference in water depth.

### **What is the inundation area?**

The inundation area for this study is the calculated area with a .2 percent chance of a flood occurring in any year. This area is calculated using detailed hydrologic and hydraulic modeling software. Hydrologic modeling determines the amount of water that will become runoff for a given storm. In this study, a 500-year recurrence interval, which has been known as a 500-year storm and better described as a .2 percent chance of a flood in any given year.

Hydraulic modeling takes the quantity of water, shape of the landscape and stream or river channel and determines how deep and fast the water will be and what area it will cover. The area covered is the inundation area.

To learn more about flood recurrence intervals, visit USGS website at: [www.usgs.gov/special-topics/water-science-school/science/100-year-flood](http://www.usgs.gov/special-topics/water-science-school/science/100-year-flood)

Below are maps that outline the area. Click on the maps for a larger view.

**Northwest Inundation Area (in blue)**



**South Inundation Area (in blue)**



## **Why is the reassessment taking place now?**

After 64 years, additional funding is needed for increased maintenance that will extend the life of the system. In addition, modifications are being planned for several of the primary flood control dams to meet current dam safety regulations. This will require additional funding to provide matching dollars for federal grants to complete these projects in the coming years.

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 has been 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.

## **Why did the District wait so long to do a reassessment, allowing so many property owners to benefit from the flood protection system without paying for it?**

The reassessment process is very complex and expensive. Unfortunately, in the past there was no plan to prepare for future maintenance and the next 50 years of service. Over the last 20 years the District has been able to maintain the system at minimal levels, without increases.

It was after a couple of incidents that occurred five years ago that the Board was reorganized and instructed by the Court to begin the process to increase funding and bring attention to the need for upgrades and compliance with current dam safety requirements. This Board began exploring alternative funding to address maintenance and to be able to fund the readjustment of appraisal of benefits. The Board was fortunate to receive \$139,000 from the County Commissioners through the American Rescue Plan that was established after the COVID pandemic. This funding, along with funds that have been saved by the Board, has provided the dollars necessary to complete the study and fund the implementation. The current estimate is that approximately \$225,000 will be spent implementing this process.

## **Why do I have to pay both flood insurance and a Hunter's Run Conservancy District assessment?**

- Your assessment helps pay for the maintenance of the system of dams in the District.
- Insurance pays in the event you were ever flooded.
- Some people are subject to mandatory flood insurance, but flood insurance is something that Hunter's Run Conservancy District has no control over. We only

have authority over the operation and maintenance of the dams within the district.

- The flood reduction provided by the system positively influences flood insurance rates. Without Hunter's Run Conservancy District flood protection, you would likely have much higher flood insurance costs.