

## OPEN DITCH IMPROVEMENTS & RECONSTRUCTION OPTIONS

Each method of improving the ditch has differences and similarities regarding how the ditches are designed, who pays what, whether they go on maintenance, etc. These methods also are used for group tile mains involving more than one landowner.

### Methods of Doing Improvements:

Private Ditch Bottom Clean Out – Individual landowners do the ditch on their own with assistance from Lucas SWCD\* on assessments for landowners draining into the ditch. The Lucas SWCD can also collect assessments for the project and pay the contractor at the completion of the project.

Design-completed by landowners or contractor, usually no plans drawn up.

Construction Costs-paid however landowners decide to split it up but is usually based on benefits and figures by SWCD/NRCS. The Lucas SWCD can assist groups with construction cost assessments if they so desire.

Construction Assessments-individuals or the Lucas SWCD does collection of moneys.

Contractor-chosen by group, often not bid out.

Construction-contractor does with varying amounts of supervision.

Maintenance-if completed, it is done by landowners at their own expense; can only be put on County Ditch Maintenance if it meets NRCS\* and County's specifications.

Mutual Group Reconstruction – Group of landowners ask for assistance for survey, design, construction inspections, etc.

Design-plans completed and drawn up by Lucas SWCD and approved by NRCS and County Engineer.

Construction Costs-paid however landowners decide to split it up but is usually based on benefits and figures by SWCD/NRCS.

Construction Assessments-construction cost assessments are collected by a group treasurer (anyone from the group, chosen by the group.) Money is deposited at a local bank in an account set up by the group treasurer specifically for the project. All payments to the contractor, etc. are made out of this account.

Contractor-chosen by group, usually bid out through the SWCD using bid packets.

Construction-contractor does with SWCD/NRCS providing construction supervision.

Maintenance-if completed, it is done by landowners at their own expense; or can be put on County Ditch Maintenance if group request it through the County Commissioners.

Senate Bill 160 (Conservation Works of Improvement) Project – Group of landowners formally requests SWCD/County Commissioners assistance for survey, design, construction inspections, etc.

Design-plans completed and drawn up by Lucas SWCD and approved by NRCS and County Engineer. No cost for any of the SWCD/NRCS engineering work.

Construction Costs-divided up as County Commissioners decide to split it up as figured by SWCD/NRCS based on benefits to each individual landowner, and formal hearings held by SWCD Board of Supervisors and County Commissioners to review those costs with affected landowners.

Construction Assessments-the County Auditor collects construction cost assessments. The assessments can be paid in advance or collected through real estate taxes. If collected through taxes, the landowner pays interest and any other costs incurred by the County to secure the funds in advance.

Contractor-chosen by County Commissioners, after following formal hearing/bid process; the SWCD makes up bid packets, and they, along with County Engineer, review bids and make recommendations to Commissioners. Prevailing wage rate must be followed if project costs exceed \$50,000.00.

Construction-contractor does with SWCD/NRCS providing construction supervision and approval. Maintenance-automatically put on County Ditch Maintenance once ditch is certified as complete by NRCS and County Engineer.

Petition Ditch Project – Group of landowners formally request County Engineer/County Commissioners assistance for survey, design, construction inspection, etc.

Design-plans completed and drawn up by County Engineer. The group through their construction assessment pays for all engineering costs incurred by the County Engineer.

Construction Cost-divided up as County Commissioners decide to split it up as figured by County Engineer based on benefits to each individual landowner, and formal hearings held by County Commissioners to review these costs with affected landowners. Prevailing wage rates must be paid.

Construction Assessment-the County Auditor collects construction cost assessments. The assessments can be paid in advance or collected through real estate taxes. If collected through taxes, the landowner pays interest and any other costs incurred by the County to secure the funds in advance.

Contractor-chose by County Commissioners, after following formal hearing/bid process; the County Engineer makes up bid packets; review bids and makes recommendations to Commissioners.

Construction-contractor does with County Engineer providing construction supervision and approval. Maintenance-automatically put on County Ditch Maintenance once ditch is certified as complete by County Engineers.

Cost of Improvements and Reconstruction Options:

Cost of these options can vary greatly which ultimately affect the landowner's assessment. The least costly method is the Private Ditch Bottom Clean Out since the least amount of dirt/silt is being removed. This method generally needs to be re-cleaned sooner than the other three. Mutual Group Reconstruction and Senate Bill 160 are three to five times more expensive than Private Ditch Bottom Clean Out. This is due to clean out specifications, which require more dirt excavation and other practices. The difference in these two is how the landowner pays his assessment. The most costly is the County Petition method. This method is very similar to the Mutual Group Reconstruction and Senate Bill 160 except the added cost for the survey, design and inspection that is charged to the group through the County Engineer's Office. The Lucas SWCD does not charge for these services in the Mutual Group Reconstruction and Senate Bill 160.

\*Lucas SWCD-Lucas Soil and Water Conservation District

\*NRCS-Natural Resources Conservation Service