

# Ottawa County Engineer's Office

Ronald P. Lajti, Jr., P.E., P.S., Ottawa County Engineer

8247 W State Route #163, Oak Harbor Ohio 43449  
Phone: (419) 734-6777 E-mail: OttawaCoEng@co.ottawa.oh.us

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## Maintenance Ditch Permanent Assessment Base Alterations (ORC 6137.11) Frequently Asked Questions

- 1 Why did I get this letter?**
  - a. It was previously determined that your property is a benefitting property for an existing petitioned drainage improvement. This was determined at the time the petition was approved by the Board of the Ottawa County Commissioners, or as a result of new drainage area analysis.
- 2 Do I have to pay the amount listed now?**
  - a. No. This is to notify all affected property owners of the amount of their present permanent assessment base, their proposed new permanent assessment base, and the date of the hearing on the proposed change.
- 3 What is the Permanent Assessment Base?**
  - a. It represents your property's portion of the total project cost to construct the drainage improvement.
- 4 Why is the Permanent Assessment Base changing?**
  - a. To put it simply, inflation. The PREVIOUS BASE represents your property's portion of payment required to complete the project when it was FIRST constructed. The NEW BASE represents your property's portion of the payment required to complete the same original project if it were to be constructed TODAY.
- 5 What does this mean for me financially?**
  - a. Nothing has changed for you financially. If a maintenance project were to be completed, you would be financially responsible for your percentage of the project. That same project costs more today than it did when the original project was done. This process just shows your Base Assessment in today's dollars instead of dollars from the past.
- 6 When should I expect to be assessed?**
  - a. There is no exact answer to this question. Assessments are made when the maintenance fund falls to a value that doesn't support proper maintenance. Please reference the County Engineer's website at <https://www.co.ottawa.oh.us/204/Ditches-Under-Maintenance> for more details regarding the Ditch Maintenance Schedule.

**7 Should I expect to pay the number next to “New Assessment Base” in the future?**

- a. This is a more complicated answer. Base Assessments were determined at the time of the original construction project. If that original project was to dig a new ditch, then the cost to maintain that ditch (like a bottom dip out) should always be cheaper than the original project (after correcting for inflation). Typical maintenance projects cost property owners a fraction of the amount listed because they are maintenance in nature, not new construction.
- b. An exception to this could be if the petitioned drainage improvement was a tile installation. At some point the entire tile system will fail and need to be completely replaced. At that point you should expect to pay something closer to your updated “New Assessment Base”.

**8 Can you give me an example of how this Assessment breakdown works?**

- a. Your Permanent Assessment Base is a percentage of the total maintenance base. If maintenance work is performed, your maintenance assessment is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Maintenance Assessment} = \text{Permanent Assessment Base} \div \text{Total Maintenance Base} \times \text{Maintenance Cost}$$

Example: If your permanent maintenance base is \$250 and we have a total maintenance base of \$25,000, and if the cost of a maintenance project is \$5,000, your maintenance assessment would be:

$$\text{Maintenance Assessment} = \$250 \div \$25,000 \times \$5,000 = \$50.00$$

**9 Are all property owners receiving this letter?**

- a. Yes. All property owners that receive benefit from the petitioned drainage project will receive this letter. Their Permanent Assessment Base will also be corrected to represent today’s dollars as well.

**10 Why didn't I have a Previous Assessment Base and now I do, or vice versa?**

- a. Through this review process, we look closely at the drainage area to see if it was identified correctly when it was first established. Today's technology allows us to better identify the exact area that should be considered as "benefitting" from a drainage improvement. Your property, while receiving benefit from the improvement, was mistakenly NOT identified as benefitting during the original petition. This process allows that mistake to be corrected.

**11 Why is this being done now?**

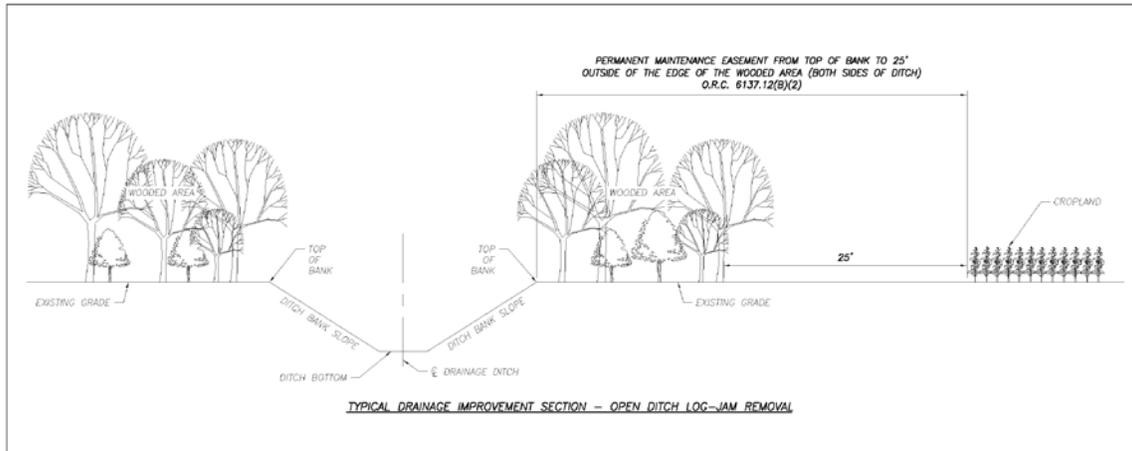
- a. The Permanent Assessment Base Alteration process requires the County Engineer to review and recommend changes to the permanent assessment base every six years to the Board. This is likely the first time the maintenance base has been reviewed since the establishment of the petition. Therefore, the changes to the permanent assessment base are significant. In the future, the changes will likely reflect inflation over the six-year review period.

**12 What is the purpose of the public hearing?**

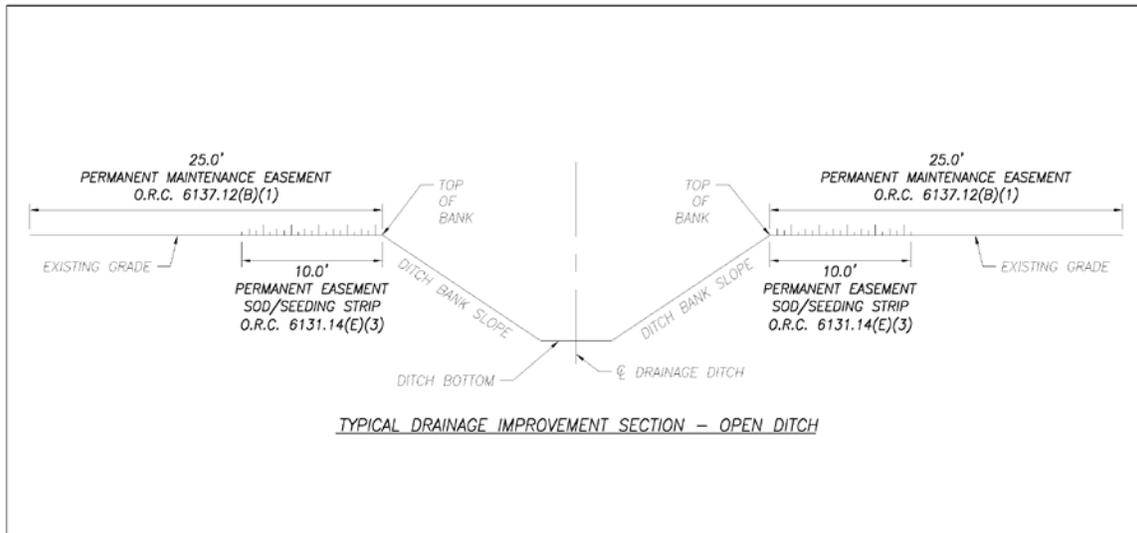
- a. The purpose of the hearing is to receive sworn testimony and/or evidence from affected property owners on the amount of their property's permanent assessment base. Testimony at the hearing does not impact the existence of the drainage facility, it is only in regards to the New Base Assessment. You are not required to be present.

**13 Is it true that there is an easement on my land along the drainage improvement?**

- a. In the case of an open ditch log-jam removal project within a wooded area, the permanent maintenance easement is from the top of bank to 25 feet outside of the edge of the wooded area.



- b. In the case of open ditches, the permanent easement is not fewer than 10 feet wide, measured perpendicular to the top of the ditch bank, on both sides of the ditch. This land area shall remain sodded and will be removed from your taxable land valuation. The permanent maintenance easement is not more than 25 feet wide, measured perpendicular to the top of the ditch bank, and wherever practical the area so used is on one side of the ditch only.



- c. In the case of closed ditches (underground drainage tile), the permanent maintenance easement is not more than 80 feet wide, centered on the centerline of the improvement.

