

Friedens water project needs rights of way

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The Somerset Township Municipal Authority needs rights of way from property owners along Route 281 from Geiger to Friedens.

The area will benefit from a 12-inch, 13,929-foot water line connecting a water storage tank along Route 281 to the Quemahoning pipeline's main line, according to authority and county officials.

"We will construct the line from the Que's main line to the Somerset Township Municipal Authority's tank and then that group will construct the line and supply water to individual users," Commissioner Brad Cober said.

This is where the county's direct involvement with the Friedens project ends. The county will lease the line back to the authority to own and operate.

"The county is in the business to provide wholesale water to municipalities so they can expand their services," said Jon Wahl of Somerset Planning & Engineering Services LLC in Friedens.

The "spur" is part of the \$23.9 million Quemahoning pipeline base project, said Wahl, who has been the project's engineer since its inception.

There are 83 residents and 22 businesses that have the opportunity to hook onto the connecting service line if they want to, Wahl said.

The authority is in the process of obtaining a \$2.5 million loan from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Utilities Service to build a 500,000-gallon storage tank and construct the piping, hydrants, valves, meters and taps in Friedens. The authority will operate the water distribution system in Friedens and properties receiving service will be its customers, according to Wahl and authority Manager Nancy Aultz.

The Friedens project will follow close behind the Quemahoning pipeline project.

"We have one-half of the DEP (state Department of Environmental Protection) permits in place for the project," Wahl said.

"On day one the water will serve between 200 and 250 customers in the Friedens area," Wahl said.

County and authority officials expect that number to double in less than three years.

"The Friedens spur puts the Quemahoning water supply halfway to Stoystown already," Wahl said. The spur will open the door to future water supply to Stoystown and Hooversville boroughs.

County commissioners recently gave permission for the authority to service the Somerset County Airport along Route 281 as part of the spur project.

The county has obtained 65 percent of the rights of way necessary for the entire 22-mile Quemahoning pipeline project, said Brett Hollern, county trail coordinator. County officials are confident they will have the remaining 35 percent in hand by late spring so that the bidding process can begin.

Both projects are slated to be finished within 18 months.

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