

Drain Commissioner
2024 Annual Report
CASS COUNTY MICHIGAN



Christiana Lake July 4th Ontwa Township Edwardsburg

“Both residents and visitors of Cass County enjoy the beauty of over 250 lakes and ponds. Maintaining county drains for agricultural, commercial, industrial, and residential use is critical to our economy and our quality of life. Managing established lake levels and protecting the waters of our county will ensure the protection of these waters as one of our most valuable resources for our current and future generations.”

– Jeff Van Belle, Cass County Drain Commissioner

Forward

Cass County started off the year in a dry cycle. By late June the County was in drought like conditions as wetlands dried up and the lakes began to drop. This weather pattern soon ended, and a series of large storms hit the County in parts of Wayne and Silver Creek and Marcellus Townships. This led to areas receiving up to 14 inches of rain in July. This caused most lakes to rise well above their normal levels causing some localized flooding. The lake levels eventually came down but not as quickly as they went up. August ended up the driest month in 11 years.

**ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
CASS COUNTY DRAIN COMMISSIONER**

**October 1, 2024
By Jeff Van Belle – Drain COMMISSIONER**

I. COUNTY DRAINS

Inspection of County Drains

County drains, Lake levels and dams are inspected on a weekly basis as needed.

New Drainage Districts

One: Porter Township Shave head Lake drain

Cleaning, Maintenance and Repair

Drains cleaned or maintained from Drain fund accounts or revolving Drain funds:

Red Run Drain/ Whitaker Drain Volinia Township
Parkshore #2 Drain- Lagrange Township
Union Stateline Drain Porter/Mason/Calvin Township
Lilly Lake Drain/Jones & Bair Lake – Newberg Township

Hayes Drain/ Mud & Pine Lake Drain-Marcellus Township
Twin Lakes Road Drain/Twin Lake Level- Wayne Township
Finch Lake Drain-Volinia Township
Smith Lake Drain- Pokagon Township
Beaver Stateline Drain/Pleasant Lake Drain/Garver Lake-Ontwa Township

Drains needing cleaning or maintenance: Most.

Status Report:

Red Run/ Whitaker Drain Marcellus Township

Ditching north and south of Dewey Lake Road was completed restoring flow.

Hayes Drain

Maintenance mowing continues to keep the drain in working order. Marcellus Township

Parkshore Drain #2 LaGrange Township

A sink hole was discovered. A broken pipe was repaired.

Wilson Creek Drain Wayne Township

Attwood Road crossing is slated for 2025 replacement. An EGLE permit was obtained by the Drain Commissioner for the project.

Twin Lakes Road Drain Wayne Township

An inspection was performed, and a driveway crossing is slated for improvement.

Union Stateline Drain Porter Township

Ditching work completed and assessments continue.

Mud & Pine Drain Marcellus Township

Emergency ditching took place to alleviate flooding.

II. INTERCOUNTY DRAINS

New Drainage Districts

None

Cleaning, Maintenance and Repair

Smith Lake Intercounty Drain Pokagon Township

Multiple beavers were trapped, and dams removed. Drain flow and lake levels have been restored.

Corey Lake Intercounty Drain Newberg Township

Easement acquisition is completed, bid documents are ready, currently waiting on an EGLE permit.

Van Cass Intercounty Drain

Marcellus Township

Survey and environmental report are complete. Easement work continues.

III. LAKE LEVEL CONTROLS

All County Dams (19) were inspected in late 2023. All reported in good condition except for two. Minor repairs are pending on one (Birch Lake) and the MacMillan Dam, an engineer has been retained and some clearing and survey work has commenced.

Barron Lake Well

Howard Township

The well is complete and operating. Restoration of the site is complete, and mowing is on-going. The well is in an enclosed building. The first of three installments to G.W. Jones bank have been paid.

Magician Lake

Silver Creek Township

Lake levels were elevated but have come down. Outlet channel inspections continue to facilitate drainage issues.

Twin Lakes

Wayne Township

Storm debris was cleaned up where pump is located. Maintenance is on-going.

Governmental Lake Boards

Indian Lake

Silver Creek Township

Lake treatments for invasives continue. A weed harvester has been ordered. Residents are reporting greatly improved lake conditions.

Shavehead Lake

Porter Township

Spot treatments of evasive weed controls continue.

Stone Lake

Lagrange Township

Invasive weed treatments and weed harvesting continues with good results.

IV. FINANCIAL

Assessments:

The following special assessments were submitted for approved for 2024:

2024 Drain Assessments										
Attachment A										
										Assessment
										Road
Drain	Township	Township	Township	City/Village	Commission	MDOT	COUNTY CASS	Freeholders	TOTAL	Period
Parkshore #2 Drain #55	Lagrange \$400.00(20%)				\$300.00(15%)		\$300.00(15%)	\$1000.00(50%)	\$2000.00	year 1 of 1
Whitaker Drain #89	Volinia \$1936.00(19%)		\$0	\$0	\$269.01(2.68%)	\$0	\$1452.00(14%)	\$6570.56(64.32%)	\$10,227.57	Year 1 of 1
Macmillan Dam #210	Marcellus \$560.63 (.025%)	Volinia \$560.63 (.025%)	\$0		\$420.47 (.01875%)		\$840.94.00 (.0375%)	\$19,950.00 (90.3%)	\$22,332.67	Year 1 of 1
Union Stateline Drain - #68	Calvin - \$540.00 (6%)	Mason - \$270.00 (3%)	Porter - \$990.00(11%)	\$0	\$450.00 (5%)	\$126.00 (.14%)	\$720.00 (8%)	\$8431.03 (64.6%)	\$11,527.03	Year 1 of 1
Round Lake #75	Silver Creek \$560.00(33%)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$560.00 (33%)	\$0	\$560.00(33%)		\$1680.00	Year 1 of 1
Twin Lakes Level - #204	Wayne - \$78.51 (1%)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$78.51 (1%)	\$7,851.37 (98%)	\$8,008.39	Year 1 of 1
Barron Lake Level - #209	Howard - \$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$96,750.00 (100%)	\$96,750.00	Year 1 of 1
Smith Lake Drain #112	Pokagon \$599.50(10%)	Berrien Cty \$2584	\$0	\$0	\$299.75 (5%)	\$0	\$299.75 (5%)	\$2212.00(35.3%)	\$5995.00	year 1 of 1
Pipestone Drain #58							\$352.58		\$352.58	year 1 of 1
Diamond Lake Level #214							\$122.00		\$122.00	year 1 of 1

Drain Funds

On September 1, 2024, the cash balances in the following accounts were:

Drain Fund	Amounts
801.00	\$ 167,527.56

Revolving Drain Fund 802.00	\$ 30,270.54
Lake Level Fund 841.00	\$ 56,279.76

Notes Payable

Barron Lake Level Note due 2026 \$200,000.00 first installment paid 7/01/24 \$76,191.15

VI. OTHER ISSUES

MS4 of NPDES

The Drain Office is nested with the Cass County Road Commission. A biannual report was submitted in March. The 2024-2028 stormwater permit was issued.

Cass County Road Commission

The Drain Commissioner and the Cass County Road Commission worked together on Parkshore #2 Drain, Lagrange Township and the Wilson Creek Drain, Wayne Township. Meetings are scheduled monthly. The Drain Office is currently housed at the Road Commission.

VII. DRAIN COMMISSIONER’S OFFICE

- 1) Implementing Drain and lake level districts into county GIS System continues.
- 2) Site Development Rules were updated, ready for approval.
- 3) Developing electronic spreadsheets for assessment rolls continues.
- 4) Web page development for the Drain Office continues.

I. PROFESSIONAL

Besides regular office hours and field inspections, the Drain Commissioner attends:
Board of Public Works – member
Parks Board – Member
Indian Lake Governmental Lake Board – Chair
Stone Lake Governmental Lake board-member
Shavehead lake Governmental Lake Board-Chair
Ontwa Township Sewer Board-Vice-Chair
Board of Commissioners - Bi-monthly meetings as needed.
Numerous County, Township, Village and City meetings

X. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Drain Commissioner is appreciative of the assistance of many individuals over the past year, but wants to give special recognition to:

Financial Director Jennifer Renfrow and James Tito for Drain and Lake level fund support.

Treasurer Hope Anderson and her staff for their assistance for the accounting and processing assistance.

Tami Stewart and LeeAnn Mroz from the Equalization Department for assessment assistance.

GIS Director Erica Espeland for the technology updates and ongoing efforts to map the drainage districts.

Clerk Monica McMichael and her staff for assistance with deeds, plats, and easement information.

Information Systems Director Jodi Nestich and their staff for technology support.

Cass County Board of Commissioners.

