

Drain Commissioner  
2025 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, but the spring rain did come late. By June the County was in drought like conditions as wetlands dried up and the lakes began to drop. We have been well below normal for rainfall all summer. Almost all the lakes are low with some over 3 feet low. August ended up one of the driest months in almost 15 years.

## **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE**

# CASS COUNTY DRAIN COMMISSIONER

October 1, 2025

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 Drain petitions

One: Shave Head Lake Drain Porter township

### Cleaning, Maintenance and Repair

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

Red Run Drain/ Whitaker Drain Volinia Township  
Union Stateline Drain Porter/Mason/Calvin Township  
Hayes Drain/ Mud & Pine Lake Drain-Marcellus Township  
Big Huckleberry Swamp Penn Township  
Finch Lake Drain-Volinia Township  
Smith Lake Drain- Pokagon Township  
Beaver Stateline Drain/Pleasant Lake Drain/Garver Lake-Ontwa Township  
Dibble Drain- Howard Township  
Regal Place, Hilltop Rd  
Red Run Extension Marcellus Township

Drains needing cleaning or maintenance: Most.

### Status Report:

Red Run/ Whitaker Drain Marcellus Township

Ditching north and south of Dewey Lake Road continues.

Hayes Drain

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

Wilson Creek Drain

Wayne Township

Attwood Road crossing is slated for 2026 replacement. An EGLE permit was obtained by the Drain Commissioner for the project.

Big Huckleberry Swamp Drain

Penn Township

A section from White Temple Rd to Hoffman Rd was ditched to restore flow.

Union Stateline Drain

Porter Township

Ditching work completed and assessments continue.

Dibble Drain

Howard Township

A section of Drain along Beebe Road, not cleaned in many years, was ditched to restore flow

Red Run Extension Drain:

Marcellus Township

A section off Burlington Road was ditched and an undersized culvert replaced. More work will continue once the water recedes.

## 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

The project was awarded to Pavlok Excavating. An October 2025 construction commencement is anticipated.

Van Cass Intercounty Drain

Marcellus Township

State of Michigan through EGLE has denied a permit for the work needed.

### **III. LAKE LEVEL CONTROLS**

All County Dams (19) were inspected in late 2023. All reported in good condition except for two. A grant for the removal of the McMillan Dam was obtained for design and engineering. The first phase is slated for completion in early 2026.

Barron Lake

Howard Township

The public boat launch was paved. The augmentation well is shut down over an issue with EGLE. The second of three installments to G.W. Jones bank have been paid.

Eagle Lake

Ontwa Township

The channel downstream of the dam was cleaned out improving flow dramatically.

Garver Lake

Ontwa Township

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

Twin Lakes Level

Wayne Township

A control panel was inspected and cleaned and painted that controls the pump. Monthly mowing is on-going.

### **Governmental Lake Boards**

Indian Lake

Silver Creek Township

Lake treatments for invasives continue. A weed harvester has been delivered and is operational. 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 continue with good results.

#### IV. FINANCIAL

##### Assessments:

The following special assessments were submitted for 2025:

2025 Drain Assessments										
Attachment A										
Drain	Township	Township	Township	City/Village	Commission	MDOT	COUNTY CASS	Freeholders	TOTAL	Assessment
Eagle Lake Level#205	Ontwa-\$119.44( 2%)				\$238.88(4%)		\$238.88(4%)	\$9555	\$10,152.20	year 1 of 1
Whitaker Drain #89	Volinia \$660.00-(20%)		\$0	\$0	\$91.71-(2.78%)	\$0	\$495-(15%)	\$2053.29-(62.22%)	\$3300.00	Year 1 of 1
Macmillan Dam #210	Marcellus \$555.67 (.025%)	Volinia \$555.67 (.025%)	\$0		\$416.75 (.01875%)		\$833.50 (.0375%)	\$20,070.00 (90.3%)	\$22,226.67	Year 1 of 1
Union Stateline Drain - #68	Calvin - \$553.20 (6%)	Mason - \$276.60 (3%)	Porter - \$1014.20(11%)	\$0	\$461.00 (5%)	\$129.08 (.14%)	\$737.60 (8%)	\$6112.39 (65.6%)	\$9220.03	Year 1 of 1
Red Run#61	Volinia-\$1352.10(15%)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$676.05-(7.5%)	\$0	\$676.05-(7.5%)	\$6309.00-(70%)	\$9014.00	Year 1 of 1
Twin Lakes Level - #204	Wayne - \$80.08 (1%)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$80.08 (1%)	\$7,848.53 (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
Corey Lake IC#200	Newberg-\$6150.00(10%)				\$1808.10-(2.94%)	\$615.00-(0.25%)	\$1808.10-(2.94%)	\$51,580.05-(83.87%)	\$61,500.00	year 1 of 4
Big Huckleberry Swamp#33	Penn-\$550(11%)	Newberg-\$200(4%)			\$375(7.5%)		\$375(7.5%)	\$3502.97(70%)	\$5000.00	year 1 of 1
Harwood Lake Level#212	Newberg \$0						\$849.00		\$849.00	year 1 of 1
Red Run Extension #62	Marcellus \$420.00 (6.0%)				\$700.00(10%)		\$700.00(10%)	\$5247.99(74%)	\$7000.00	year 1 of 1

##### Drain Funds

On June 30th, 2025, the cash balances in the following accounts were:

	Amounts
Drain Fund 801.00	\$ 204,116.92
Revolving Drain Fund 802.00	\$ 31,194.54

Lake Level Fund        841.00                    \$     616.47

Notes Payable

Barron Lake Level Note \$200,000 due 2026, the first and second installments paid.

**VI. OTHER ISSUES**

MS4 of NPDES

The Drain Office is nested with the Cass County Road Commission. A recent onsite inspection determined compliance in all categories.

Cass County Road Commission

The Drain Commissioner and the Cass County Road Commission are currently working together on Birch-Williamsville Drain Porter 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 and approved.
- 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 – Vice Chair  
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 administration.

GIS Director Alex Byles 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.



