



# FACTS ABOUT DRAIN COMMISSIONERS

## MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY DRAIN COMMISSIONERS

- Michigan's drain commissioners, sometimes called water resources commissioners, administer laws involving flood protection, stormwater management, and soil erosion and seek to protect Michigan's water resources in the process.
- Today, drain commissioners strive to balance the need for proper drainage with water quality and natural resource management in a cost-effective manner, resulting in public health benefits.
- Drain commissioners are county-level officials typically elected to four-year terms (counties with a population under 12,000 may opt to have the drain commissioner's duties performed by the county road commission).
- With the goal of making land habitable and usable, one of the first laws passed when Michigan became a state led to the establishment of drain commissioners.
- The Drain Code of 1956 is the primary statute, or law, that spells out the responsibilities of the drain commissioner and provides the process for constructing and maintaining county drains.
- Some county drains are historic creeks or natural watercourses, while others are underground pipes.
- Many counties have 100 or more established drains, and some have over 1,000 drains. In some cases, primarily in northern Michigan, the drain commissioner's primary duty is maintaining lake levels.
- Not all drains are part of the county drainage system. Some, such as roadside ditches, are the responsibility of the county road commission or private property owners. If you have a question as to whose jurisdiction a drain falls under, please contact your local drain commissioner's office.
- Each drain administered by a drain commissioner's office has a contributing area (similar to a watershed) called a drainage district. A watershed is an area of land that captures rainwater and eventually carries it to the nearest lake, river, stream, or drain, and everyone lives in a watershed.
- Drain commissioners inspect, repair, and clean drains that are part of a drainage district, as needed. Preventative maintenance helps extend service life, like an oil change on your car.
- The costs of drain maintenance are paid through drain assessments to property owners and governmental units within a drainage district based on the benefits derived.

*The Michigan Association of County Drain Commissioners (MACDC) is the professional association for county drain and water resources commissioners. For more information, contact MACDC at: 517-484-9761 or [admin@macdc.us](mailto:admin@macdc.us).*