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- 4 PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
- 6 2025 SUMMER CONFERENCE PREVIEW
- 11 WILLIAMS APPOINTED AS MDARD INTERCOUNTY DRAINS MANAGER
- 13 NEW FACES: MEET OUR NEWEST DRAIN COMMISSIONERS
- 17 YPC UPDATE
- 18 GAGE DRAIN PUMP STATION *2025 Innovation & Excellence Winner*
- 25 HERON COVE *Lessons Learned from the Four Lakes Lake Level Appeals*
- 28 REVOLUTIONIZING DRAIN MANAGEMENT WITH GIS
- 31 ASSOCIATE MEMBER NEWS
- 33 CALENDAR
- 34 THANK YOU ADVERTISERS

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Michael Hard
Branch County Drain Commissioner



Greetings Everyone,

I hope you were able to attend the spring District Meetings; this is a perfect opportunity to really get to know your fellow Commissioners and other drainage professionals. MACDC is like a big family. The relationships that you foster could prove very beneficial in the future. You know, someone else may even have a really good idea that you could use.

I was reading through one of the old drain files from the 1890's the other day and I find it very interesting the lengths that our forefathers went to trying to improve our state. The file talked about surveying for a drain. If they could just break through one hill over 500 acres could be drained and farmed on the other side. The file talks about how a crew of 20 men worked for three months with shovels and horses pulling slip scrapes. The hill was over 300 feet long and 22 feet deep at the deepest point. The file tells how many horse drawn wagons were sent to the railyard over five miles away to pick up the 22 inch clay tile that would be installed through the hill. That tile is still working today, and resulted in creating some of the best farm ground in our county.

Soon the children will be out of school for the summer (or in my case grandchildren). The demands of being a Drain Commissioner can be overwhelming at times. We tend to take for granted those who are most precious to us. Take the time to appreciate those who are more important. Family, friends, co-workers. Our time is so short. As they say "blink and you will miss it". Remind yourself of what is really important in life.

I am looking forward to seeing all of you at the Summer Conference, July 16-18th, at Shanty Creek Resort.

Michael Hard



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125TH SUMMER CONFERENCE

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

Tuesday, July 15

- 1:30 pm Legislative Meeting
- 3:00 pm Board of Directors Meeting

Wednesday, July 16

- 9:00 am Registration Begins
- 12:00 pm Lunch on your own
- 1:15 pm How to Train an Inspector
- 2:00 pm Right of Way Roundup
- 2:30 pm Embracing the Future: AI and Public Sector Innovation
- 3:00 pm Break
- 3:15 pm YPC Presentation
- 4:00 pm Drain Code Trivia
- 4:30 pm Legislative Update
- 6:00 pm Reception
- 7:00 pm Dinner
- 9:00 pm Entertainment (off-site)

Thursday, July 17

- 7:30 am Breakfast
- 9:00 am WAMC—Current State of Water Assets in Michigan
- 9:30 am Sinking or Swimming Through Lake Level Assessments
- 10:00 am Incorporating land preservation into water resource projects
- 10:30 am Break
- 10:45 am Broadband for All
- 11:30 am Private to Public: Navigating Section 433 for New Drains
- 12:00 pm Lunch
- 1:00 pm Networking Activities
- 6:00 pm Reception
- 7:00 pm Dinner

Friday, July 18

- 7:30 am Breakfast
- 9:00 am Associate Member Meeting
- 9:30 am MACDC District Meetings
- 10:00 am MACDC Business Meeting
- 10:30 am Adjourn

CONFERENCE SESSIONS

Wednesday, July 16

1:15—2:00 pm

How to Train an Inspector

*Ross Jackson, Owner, Jackson Dirt Works, Inc.
Terry Belill, Construction Manager, Spicer Group, Inc.*

This session provides a foundational overview of how to work effectively with inspectors.

2:00—2:30 pm

Right of Way Roundup

Ken Yonker, Kent County Drain Commissioner

Rustling up new easements is a necessary evil in our work and many of us approach getting easements with dread. The Kent County Drain Commissioner's office lasso'd in over 175 drainage, flooding, two-stage ditch, or agricultural buffer strip easements over the last few years on a variety of projects. The goal of the talk is share how we've managed to round up right of ways and inspire you to get on your horse and do it, too.

July 16-18, 2025

Shanty Creek Resort

2:30—3:00 pm

Embracing the Future: AI and Public Sector Innovation

Sam Bialorucki, Project Manager, Spicer Group, Inc.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer a concept of the future—it's a powerful tool already transforming how local governments manage data, infrastructure, and community services. This session introduces the fundamentals of AI and its key types, then examines how public agencies are leveraging AI to enhance efficiency, and enable smarter, data-driven decisions. Real-world case studies will be discussed to illustrate how AI is reshaping infrastructure management for the public sector and how it applies to the management of County Drains.

3:15—4:00 pm

YPC Presentation

MACDC Young Professionals Committee

Join our Young Professionals Committee for an interactive presentation featuring audience participation and test your MACDC Knowledge.

4:00—4:30 pm

Drain Code Trivia

Test your knowledge on a variety of drain code related trivia and little known facts.

4:30—5:00 pm

Legislative Update

Deena Bosworth, Michigan Association of Counties

MACDC lobbyist Deena Bosworth will discuss the bills that have been introduced this legislative session that affect the work of county drain offices.

Thursday, July 17

9:00—9:30 am

WAMC—Current State of Water Assets in Michigan

Carrie Ricker Cox, Special Projects Manager, Oakland County Water Resource Commissioner's Office

Providing an overview of the current condition of water assets across the state and outline future infrastructure needs. Highlighting the benefits of participating in the Water Asset Management Council Survey, including recent updates and showcases tools and training resources to support utilities in their asset management efforts.

9:30—10:00 am

Sinking or Swimming Through Lake Level Assessments

Luke O'Brien, P.E., Project Manager, Spicer Group, Inc.

Amanda Knutson, Associate Attorney, Fahey Schultz Burzych Rhodes

Lake levels vary in size and characteristics across the state that can make the creation of a fair and consistent assessment methodology seem like a daunting task. Join us for a discussion covering the different options for lake level assessment methodologies, ranging from the simple to the complex.

125TH SUMMER CONFERENCE

July 16-18, 2025

Shanty Creek Resort

CONFERENCE SESSIONS *cont.*

10:00—10:30 am

Incorporating land preservation into water resource projects

Chris Bunch, Executive Director, Six Rivers Land Conservancy
Jamie Burton, P.E., Vice President, Hubbell, Roth and Clark, Inc

Benefits of land preservation on water quality and stormwater management. Working with your local land conservation organization to enhance project outcomes.

10:45—11:30 am

Broadband for All: Facilitating Protection of Drains During Large-Scale Infrastructure Installation

Erik Tamlyn, P.E., Huron County Drain Commission
Lindsay Oswald, Permitting Manager, Michigan High-Speed Internet Office

Provide an understanding of the scale and general proposed roll-out of Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD). The goal of the presentation is to give Drain Commissioners tools to address concerns and plan for logistics involved with permitting of installation of broadband facilities. Best practices for agreements and permitting will be shared along with potential online and software solutions to help in administering the broadband roll-out while protecting drainage infrastructure.

11:30 am—12:00 pm

Private to Public: Navigating Section 433 for New Drains

Ryan McEnhill, President, ENG.
Cole Hedrick, Attorney, Fahey Schultz Burzych Rhodes

Developers or Landowners requesting you establish a new drain? This presentation will walk through the process of establishing a new drain via a Section 433 agreement rather than a petition, and it will highlight recommended practices and requirements to ensure your new drain is properly established (physically in the field and in your files).



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WILLIAMS SELECTED AS NEW INTERCOUNTY DRAIN MANAGER

The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) is pleased to announce the selection of Brandon Williams as the new Intercounty Drain Program Manager effective Monday, April 14, 2025.

Brandon will serve as the supervisor and coordinator for the administration of the Department's Intercounty Drain Program, including assuming responsibility for over 775 intercounty drainage districts. He will assist with the administration of the Drain Code procedures for the maintenance and improvement of intercounty drainage systems and chair intercounty drainage boards. Other duties include enhancing the Department's Geographic Information System and representing the MDARD Director as a member of the Michigan Association of County Drain Commissioners on their Executive Board.

Prior to his hire, Brandon worked at Spicer Group as a Project Engineer/Manager overseeing the design, permitting, and construction of numerous county drain projects across the state. Other duties included on-site inspection, facilitating public meetings, and corresponding with landowners, public officials and contractors.

Brandon earned his Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from Michigan State University. He is a licensed certified Stormwater Operator and certified Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control Agent.



Williams

Brandon is an avid outdoorsman and resides in Lansing, Michigan with his fiancée Meredith and their three dogs.

You can reach Brandon Williams at 517-331-3661 or at williamsb53@michigan.gov.



John DeLisle - CERP, Principal Ecologist Ph: 248-672-7611

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NEW FACES

Meet Michigan's Newest Drain Commissioners

Editor's Note: With over 20 new drain and water resource commissioners elected or appointed for 2025, we have a lot of new faces. We will be featuring several commissioners in each issue of Pipeline throughout 2025.

MIKE FIEBING **Benzie** **County Drain** **Commissioner**

As a lifelong resident of the area, I have spent a lot of time exploring the outdoors. The land, woods, and water are important influences on me. I started my journey by becoming involved in organic farming, working with farmers to help them get their farms certified organic. This led me to start a very successful business picking up yard waste for 16 years and selling it as compost. My next step took me to a company that applied municipal biosolids, which introduced me to county drains, ditches, and tiled fields, mostly in southern Michigan. When the opportunity presented itself, I decided to run for County Drain Commissioner. There is certainly a big difference in the duties of County Drain Commissioner when you compare the northern part of Michigan to the southern part.

Mike Fiebling
Em: m fiebing@benzieco.gov
Ph: 231-882-4932



Fiebling

BRENT SINGER **Shiawassee** **County Drain** **Commissioner**

How will your experience and background help you in your new role?

From a business owner standpoint, and blue-collar worker, I like to get things done efficiently and done right the first time.

What are you most looking forward to in this role?

I am looking forward to daily challenges and being able to think outside the box. No task is too big or too small. At the end of the day, it's all about results, doing what is right and having fun doing it.

What inspired you to be a leader for improving drains and/or water resources?

This gives me the opportunity to be hands on and use my leadership skills while helping my team help those in our communities.

What challenges does your county face as it relates to functions of the Drain Commissioner?

The county's biggest struggle is the lack of funds for the drainage districts. So doing what we can to help and for those we cannot, we come up with a plan to help moving forward and utilize all our resources.

Brent Singer
Em: drains@shiawassee.net
Ph: 989-743-2398



Singer

NEW FACES CONT.

RUSSELL SMITH Charlevoix County Drain Commissioner

How will your experience and background help you in your new role?

I've been the Soil & Erosion, as well as the Storm Water CEA, for Charlevoix County for the past seven years.

What are you most looking forward to in this role?

Drain improvements and corrections.

What inspired you to be a leader for improving drains and/or water resources?

It wasn't something that I aspired to be a part of; I guess it was the next logical step.

What challenges does your county face as it relates to functions of the Drain Commissioner?

The Drain Commissioner position in Charlevoix County has always unfortunately been viewed as unimportant. Hopefully that will change.

Russell Smith

Em: smithr@charlevoixcounty.org

Ph: 231-547-7236

GEORGE MCMANUS Berrien County Drain Commissioner

How will your experience and background help you in your new role?

My experience in vegetable farming is helpful in my new job as Drain Commissioner because water management is necessary to produce a crop. I also think managing a business and serving on a school board have prepared me for some of the administrative duties that drain commissioners must handle.

What are you most looking forward to in this role?

I am most looking forward to helping citizens with their drainage issues by providing cost effective solutions to their problems.

What inspired you to be a leader for improving drains and/or water resources?

I was approached by friends who wanted to see improvements made in our county drain department and they asked me to serve.

What challenges does your county face as it relates to functions of the Drain Commissioner?

We face challenges with accessibility to the drain commissioner, and accountability and affordability have been lacking. New leadership is turning that around. My staff has been receptive to the changes I am making, and they are proving to be a major part of the success of our office.

George McManus

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Ph: 269-983-7111 x8633

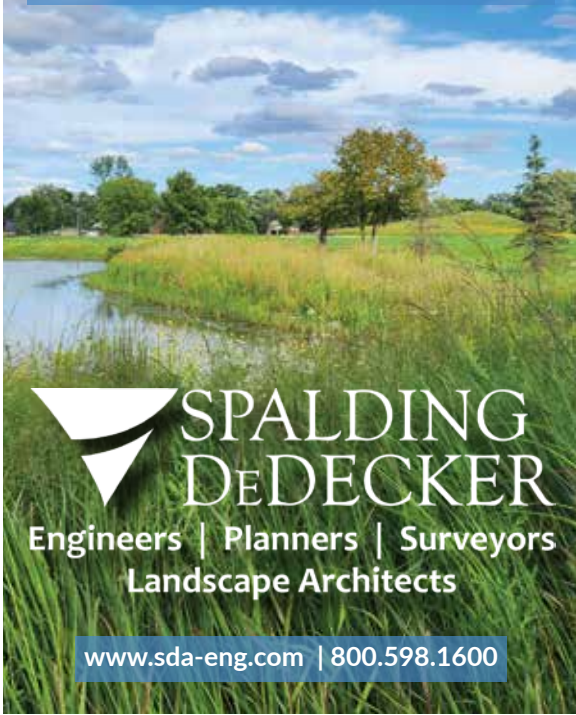


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- 2022 Cloverdale Drain (Barry Co.)
- 2024 Lake Bluffs Drain (Leelanau Co.)

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YOUNG PROFESSIONALS COMMITTEE

The MACDC Young Professionals Committee (YPC) is a group of individuals consisting of drain office staff, contractors, suppliers, engineers, and lawyers. The YPC plans drain conference events, social events, and charitable giving opportunities. The YPC is always looking to expand and find new members, and we welcome both drain office staff and consultants.



The YPC hosted its Spring social event on May 29th at the Lansing Shuffle with ten members in attendance. If you would like to get involved in YPC, or help with drain conference events, please contact Tanner Kragenbrink at tkragenbrink@wadetrim.com.



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Gage Drain and Pump Station Project Improves Saginaw County Flood Control

By: Erin P. McGrath, Spicer Group, Inc.

For over 75 years, the Gage Drain and its pump station have been quietly managing stormwater across parts of Saginaw County, Michigan. This system spans from the urban streets of Buena Vista Charter Township to the agricultural fields and industrial zones nearby and drains into the Saginaw River. Over the decades, though, it started showing its age through old equipment, growing maintenance needs, and a watershed hit by modern development and shifting weather patterns that put pressure on the system.

That's when the Gage Drain and Pump Station Project came along. The project is a major upgrade led by Saginaw County Public Works Commissioner Brian Wendling, with Spicer Group taking charge of engineering and design. In 2025, the project earned the Innovation & Excellence Award from the Michigan Association of County Drain Commissioners (MACDC).

The Gage Drain got its start in 1879 and runs 6.9 miles through Buena Vista Charter Township. Its watershed covers approximately 4,500 acres, pulling in stormwater from all kinds of environments – urban neighborhoods, commercial properties, farm fields, and even



2025 Innovation & Excellence Winning Project

the Crow Island State Game Area. It also serves small parts of Zilwaukee Township, Bridgeport Charter Township and the City of Saginaw. Water from approximately 3,300 parcels, two railroads, state highways, and local roads all flow to the Gage Pump Station, located along M-13 near the Saginaw River. The station has been the heart of flood control in the area since it was built almost 80 years ago.

In 2016, Buena Vista Charter Township asked for improvements because the pump station's original mechanical equipment, while still running, was becoming increasingly hard to repair and maintain due to lack of replacement parts, which meant the station's reliability was suffering. A board of determination meeting was held where residents and stakeholders spoke up about flood worries near their homes and businesses.

Drain maintenance was also getting tougher, and the drain itself – last worked on in 1969 – had problems like large sediment accumulations, undersized culverts, and bank erosion. The Saginaw County Public Works Commissioner

turned to Spicer Group, a company with a long history on this project, to help.

Spicer Group developed a plan to update both the pump station and the drain itself. At the pump station, the old trio of pumps were removed, and three new axial-flow pumps were installed. Each pump can move 35,000 gallons per minute, a step up from the original pumps in both capacity and reliability. The new vertical axial-flow pumps rely on high-efficiency motors and Variable Frequency Drives (VFDs), which allow them to adjust their speeds in real time based on the water levels in the drain. This saves energy and extends their lifespan.

The project also included the implementation of a self-cleaning trash rack, made by Saginaw's own Duperon Corporation. It uses radar sensors to spot debris buildup and cleans itself without anyone having to step in. Everything was tied together with a Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system, which gives real-time updates on pump performance, water levels, and weather, all accessible on phones or computers. The system even connects to a county weather station to get ahead of storms –



Spicer Group engineer overseeing the installation of sheet pile wall.

a big deal for a spot at the downstream end of one of Michigan's largest watersheds.

Drain maintenance with the project included sediment and log jams along the 6.9-mile channel being cleared out, eroded banks fixed, and old, undersized culverts replaced with larger ones.

One of the more critical jobs on this project was replacing a box culvert at Wadsworth Road. That meant moving a 24-inch City of Saginaw water main and coordinating with the Saginaw County Road Commission. Spicer Group also teamed up with railroad companies to replace several crossings that were in poor condition and off-grade.

To reduce project costs, the original wet well, which also served as the foundation of the pump station, was kept. In addition to replacing the existing building over the wet well, the project added a building expansion that provided space for the updated pump controls and SCADA system, as well as a spot to collect



Installation of one of the new axial-flow pumps.



New self-cleaning trash rack.



Winter time work on Gage Drain Open Channel Division.



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debris from the self-cleaning trashrack. Material and part selections were made as part of the project to provide reduced overall maintenance requirements and promote longevity.

The project improved flood control and the surrounding environments. Better drainage with improved channel stability coupled with properly sized culverts reduces sediment loading, which improves water quality in the Saginaw River and helps wildlife along the drain. Also, replacing crossings with wider, lower culverts allows aquatic life to more easily move through the drain

Spicer Group and the Saginaw Public Works also coordinated with industrial landowners in the watershed to update how they handle stormwater. By updating the infrastructure and how the storm water is managed, the watershed is more resilient and healthier for the long haul.

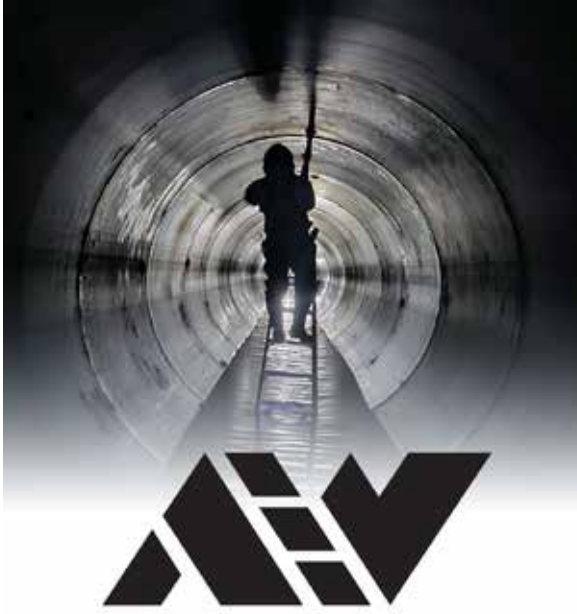
The Gage Drain and Pump Station Project shows what's possible when you mix smart engineering with practical solutions. The setup rivals high-tech wastewater plants, with automation and monitoring that has set a new bar for stormwater systems.



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HERON COVE

Lessons Learned from the Four Lakes Lake Level Appeals

By: Kyle O'Meara, Fahey Schultz Burzych Rhodes PLC

On April 11, 2025, the Michigan Supreme Court denied an application for leave from the “Heron Cove Association” related to an appeal of lake level assessments to restore the lake levels of the Four Lakes (Wixom Lake, Sanford Lake, Smallwood Lake, and Secord Lake) in Midland and Gladwin Counties. This effectively ended the state law appeals (referred to as the *Heron Cove Appeals*) from these property owners, and the decision of Michigan Supreme Court aligned with the Michigan Association of County Drain Commissioners (“MACDC”) requested relief in its March 24, 2025 amicus brief. The article below will highlight legal principles from the state law litigation to help drain commissioners with the lake level assessments process.

Part 307 of Michigan’s Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, “Inland Lake Levels,” MCL 324.30701 *et seq.*, governs “normal lake levels” in Michigan. Under Part 307, a circuit court may establish a normal level (or normal levels often associated with summer and winter levels) after a court hearing. See MCL 324.30707(5). In addition, Part 307 specifies that a court shall confirm special assessment district boundaries within 60 days following any lake level determination. *Id.* The special assessment district boundaries should include properties that are benefitted from a lake level. See e.g., MCL 324.30711(1). Often times, a county drain commissioner serves as the delegated authority responsible for day-to-day operations required to maintain an established normal lake level (including preparing proposed lake level assessments). See e.g., MCL 324.30701(e) and MCL 324.30711(1).

Courts have described Part 307’s purpose to provide for the control and maintenance of inland lake levels for the benefit and welfare of the public. *In re Van Ettan Lake*, 149 Mich App 517, 525-26; 386 NW2d 572 (1986) (“read as a whole,

the Act essentially authorizes counties to make policy decisions as to the levels of their inland lakes and build and finance dams as necessary to maintain the desired lake levels”). According to data from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy, there are over 350 established lake levels on inland lakes throughout Michigan subject to Part 307.

The *Heron Cove Appeals* related to imposing lake level assessments for the Four Lakes. After the tragic dam failures in 2020, it was determined that repairing, improving, and replacing the four dams to restore the Four Lakes would cost approximately \$399,700,000, of which over \$200,000,000 was secured in federal and state grants by the “Four Lakes Task Force,” which is the delegated authority of the Four Lakes. Because the federal and state grants did not cover the entirety of the project, the Four Lakes Task Force needed to assess the remainder of funds through lake level special assessments.

After a public hearing held consistent with Part 307 on January 15, 2024, and an approval of corresponding assessment rolls and computations of cost on February 6, 2024, by the Midland and Gladwin County Boards of Commissioners, the Heron Cove Association appealed the assessments in the Midland County Circuit Court. After not being successful in the Circuit Court, the Heron Cove Association filed an unsuccessful appeal in the Michigan Court of Appeals, and then its unsuccessful application for leave with the Michigan Supreme Court. The Heron Cove Association described itself as representing property owners who live near the Four Lakes and within its lake level special assessment district.

In the state law appeals, the Heron Cove Association made the following arguments (as summarized) that are important for drain commissioners to consider when imposing lake level special assessments:

1. The special assessments were improper because their properties received little to no special benefit or increase in market value from the assessment, beyond what the community as a whole received.
2. The assessment amounts imposed on their properties were grossly disproportionate to the increase in market value attributable to the improvements, constituting a taking of property without due process of law.

In turn, the Midland County Circuit Court and Michigan Court of Appeals rejected all of the Heron Cove Association's arguments. Importantly, the Court of Appeals recognized that it is a well-settled principle of law that lake level special assessments are presumed valid, citing *Kadzban v City of Grandville*, 442 Mich 495, 502; 502 NW2d 299 (1993). It also dispatched with the argument from the Association that there was unreasonable disproportionality in the assessments (or that they did not consider public benefit) as it did not cite any evidence such as appraisals that would show how the lake level restoration project would impact properties within the district. Instead, the Association picked just 12 out of 800 properties subject to the appeals, and discussed their state-equalized values.

Moreover, the Court of Appeals also recognized that Part 307 provides enough procedural safeguards (e.g., notice, opportunities to participate in public hearings, and county board approval of assessment rolls and costs) to meet procedural due process requirements. It did not reverse Michigan precedent and require fact-finding trials to review special assessment decisions.

Overall, the *Heron Cove Appeals* upheld traditional special assessment standards for these lake level assessments. The state law decisions were favorable to and consistent with MACDC's amicus brief. Although many of the legal principles cited above show deference to public entities, it should be noted that the Michigan Court of Appeals recognized the care taken by Midland and Gladwin Counties as well as the Four Lakes Task Force when preparing

the proposed assessments by noting: (1) the extensive special assessment process beginning in 2021 with public comments and engagement beginning in 2022; and (2) the 2024 public hearing on the assessments that resulted in a minimum of 780 adjustments to the special assessment roll based on benefit.

- i. *Heron Cove Ass'n v Midland Co Bd of Comm'rs*, ___ NW3d___; 2025 (SC No. 168165).
- ii. An order of a federal district court also dismissed various appeals from the Association. *Heron Cove Ass'n v Gladwin Co Bd of Comm'rs*, ___F Supp 3d___; 2025 (ED Mich, Mar. 20, 2025).
- iii. *Heron Cove Ass'n v Midland Co Bd of Comm'rs*, unpublished per curiam opinion of the Court of Appeals, issued January 6, 2025 (Docket No. 371649), pp *12-13.

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PEA GROUP

REVOLUTIONIZING DRAIN MANAGEMENT WITH GIS:

A Montcalm County Success Story

By: Sam Bialorucki, Spicer Group, Inc.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and their ability to streamline large amounts of data are transforming how drain commissioners across Michigan manage and maintain their county drains.

In Montcalm County, GIS has evolved from a static reference tool into a daily driver of efficiency, transparency, and better service—all while helping stretch taxpayer dollars further by making office and field operations more efficient.

At its foundation, GIS organizes and layers geographic data—such as drain routes, districts, parcels, and more—into a single, interactive map. For county drain and public works offices, this means bringing decades of scattered paper records, PDFs, and institutional knowledge into one live system that's accessible both in the office and out in the field.

When the Montcalm County Drain Commissioner's GIS journey began, their drain information, much like other offices' drain information, was spread across paper maps, historical documents, and even different departments, making it challenging and time consuming to accurately track drainage locations and manage evolving drainage infrastructure.

“When I became Drain Commissioner, we were constantly using the county's existing parcel viewer to view our drains, as they were layered over current aerial pictures,” said Todd Sattler, Montcalm County Drain Commissioner. “At the same time, I flipped through paper or digital plans as I tried to piece together the current condition and needs of the drain system. I knew there had to be a better way to see the history and plan for the future. The more I looked at various GIS applications at different

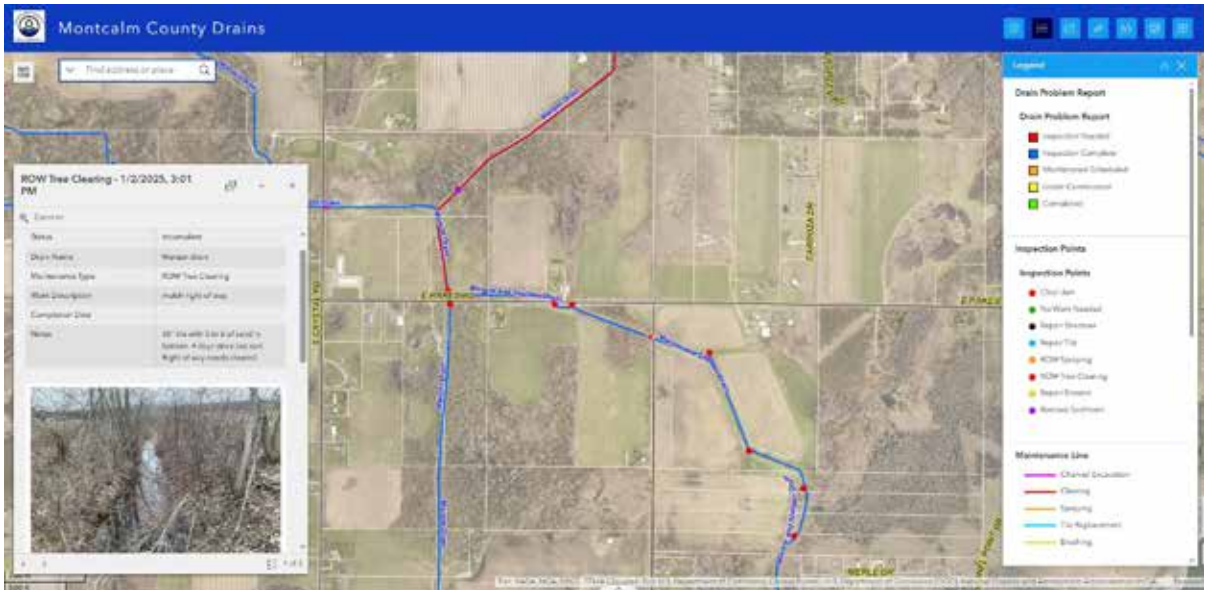
agencies, I began to realize this is the future for customizable data storage. The ability to have instant access to everything we use daily, all in one simple location layered over current aerial images, was the future for this office.”

Montcalm County began working with Spicer Group in 2021 to consolidate its drain information into a centralized, web-based mapping application designed to serve as a one-stop-shop for all drain-related data. Rather

than completing the project all at once, the Drain Office and Spicer Group took a phased, cost-effective approach — gradually identifying what information existed, where it was located, and how to best organize, display, analyze, and use it to support decision-making and day-to-day operations.

If you're currently using GIS, I encourage you to ask what else it can do. If you're not using it, you need to be looking into it. In my humble opinion, it's the future of data storage.

Todd Sattler, Montcalm County Drain Commissioner



Shows drain inspections that were collected using ArcGIS Field Maps application out in the field displayed on the office web mapping application.

This information included drain locations and centerlines, drainage districts, aerial imagery, municipal boundaries, parcel data, and topographic information. It also involved locating and incorporating drainage districts and drain centerlines that had previously been mapped through the Section 197 process of the Michigan Drain Code.

“By combining the drain centerlines and district maps that we already had with aerial images and parcel data from the counties GIS, it was a simple first step,” Sattler said. “From there we created a way to record drain problem requests from landowners, capture and store drain inspection photos, and create layers of existing completed work. This was a pretty low-cost initial investment that proved to be the springboard to so much more. The response from our residents was nothing but positive. When they had questions or came into our office, it was as simple as looking at the map to see everything from the drain work that was done to the size of their parcel that was being assessed. It was all right there for them to see and very transparent.”

Once the base layers and web map were in place, Montcalm County and Spicer Group worked together to incorporate ways that would allow the drain office staff to track other information and activities as well. This includes the ability to perform inspections, track maintenance projects, photos, maintenance

history, and landowner drain problem reports. Field staff can also enter data directly from their mobile devices, streamlining workflows and creating a complete, accessible history for each location.

By utilizing this web-based GIS platform, updates made in the field—such as drain maintenance activities and inspections—can be viewed instantly by office staff, enabling real-time coordination and tracking.

Every drain issue or landowner inquiry that’s reported to the Montcalm County Drain office by the public is entered into the application as a record, triggering inspections and potential maintenance. This allows the entire lifecycle of the issue—from the first phone call to initial inspection to final construction—to be tracked, monitored, and documented.

These records are accessible by everyone in the drain office and the information includes contacts for landowners along with the history of that area of the drain. This clarity has made it easier for drain office staff to follow up with landowners, plan future work, and improve long-term budgeting.

Beyond maintenance, Montcalm County Drain Office’s GIS has grown to support other essential workflows within the office. Drain staff use it for state-mandated Authorized Public Agency Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control (APA SESC)



Displays special lake assessment information.

procedures on large maintenance projects, creating SESC site plans, and performing SESC inspections out in the field. It is also a powerful tool for reviewing solar projects, understanding assessment impacts, and responding to resident questions with confidence and clarity.

GIS has enabled Montcalm County to shift from reactive drain management to proactive, data-driven planning.

“The ability to have all aspects of our drain data and maintenance program stored in one location has proved to be invaluable,” Sattler said. I can’t stress enough how it has simplified and drastically improved both our efficiency and our organizational needs. Today, with a few clicks of the mouse, I can see the entire history of the drain, starting with the drain problem reports, the pictures showing the needed work, the planned improvements, and then completed work right through grass establishment. This information helps us prioritize the needs, all while being conscious of the residents and ensuring good coordination with both the road commission and townships. We are using GIS as a tool to interact with the public on our county drains as well as all our Lake Improvement Boards, county-managed sewer systems, and our legal lake levels. If you’re currently using GIS, I encourage you to ask what else it can do. If you’re not using it, you need to be looking into it. In my humble opinion, it’s the future of data storage.”

With scalable, cost-effective tools like the ESRI ArcGIS platform, it is easier than ever for drain offices to adopt GIS and foster collaboration across departments and government agencies, all while providing greater transparency and better service to constituents.

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ASSOCIATE MEMBER NEWS

Hubbell, Roth & Clark, Inc. Board of Directors Announce 2025 Promotions

The Board of Directors at Hubbell, Roth & Clark, Inc. (HRC), a private Michigan-based engineering consultant with headquarters in Bloomfield Hills, recently announced the promotion of eight key employees. Known for its robust employee engagement strategies, HRC has been a thriving Michigan business for over 110 years. Throughout that time, the corporate culture has focused on rewarding loyal employees, nurturing strong talent, and promoting from within.

Promoted employees have shown their commitment and support to the organization and have been instrumental in helping HRC's clients achieve continued growth and success. Congratulations go out to those who have been promoted to the level of manager or above:

Aaron Uranga, PE, was promoted to Senior Associate. He has been with HRC since 2013 and works as a Leader in the Process Department. Aaron is responsible for design and project management for water treatment plants, wastewater treatment plants, and pumping stations. He is experienced in construction management and administration, contract specifications, and construction dispute resolution. Aaron is a member of the American Water Works Association.

John Bergsma, PE, was promoted to Associate. He has been with HRC since 2017 and works in the Process Department. John is responsible for designing and managing various water, wastewater, and combined sewer projects. He is experienced in hydraulic modeling, project management, and construction administration and observation. John is a member of the Michigan Water and Environment Association.

Christa Crist, PE, was promoted to Associate. She has been with HRC since 1999 and manages the Structural Department. Christa is responsible for structural analysis, design, and development of contract plans and specifications

for various projects, including concrete, steel, and masonry construction for water and wastewater treatment facilities and bridges. She is a member of the American Institute of Steel Construction.

Cathrine Carver was promoted to Human Resources Director. She has been with HRC since 1993 and is responsible for administering the staffing, recruitment, workforce planning, compliance, benefits, HR operations, and training and development programs for all HRC employees.

Christopher Bauer, PE, was promoted to Manager. He has been with HRC since 2014 and works in the Transportation Department. Christopher is responsible for traffic signal design, optimization studies, crash analyses, and road design. He has experience conducting road safety audits and preparing traffic control and detour plans. Christopher is a member of the Institute of Transportation Engineers and the American Society of Civil Engineers.



Uranga



Bergsma



Crist



Carver



Bauer

ASSOCIATE MEMBER NEWS CONT.

Jeremy Brockert, CDA, SHRM-CP, was promoted to Manager. He has been with HRC since 1999 and works in the Business Office. Jeremy is responsible for managing business operations, including payroll, accounting, and assisting with the annual audits.



Brockert

Sarah Plumer, PTP, was promoted to Planning Manager. She has been with HRC since 2023 and works in the Transportation Department. Sarah has experience with grant administration, multiagency coordination, public engagement, asset management planning, and local, state, and federal policy and funding program analysis. She is a member of the Institute of Transportation Engineers, the Transportation Asset Management Council, and the Michigan Transportation Planning Association.



Plumer



Ross

Christopher Ross, PE, was promoted to Manager. He has been with HRC since 2016 and works in the Asset Management Department. Chris has experience in asset management programs, including asset inventories, condition assessment, and capital improvement planning for sewer collection systems, pump stations, and wastewater treatment plants. He is a member of the Water Environment Federation and the Michigan Water Environment Association.

HRC believes that appreciating hard work creates a profound positive impact on overall company morale. Whether employees have been at the company for decades or are just starting out in their careers, everyone's role and contributions are valued.

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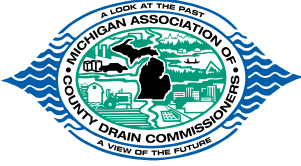


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