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**PIPELINE** is published four times a year. It is funded by the Michigan Association of County Drain Commissioners, and with advertising revenues. The Michigan Association of County Drain Commissioners is a nonprofit, statewide association.

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Cover Photo Credit: Brian Jonckheere

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**Michael Hard**  
**Branch County Drain Commissioner**



Greetings everyone,

The 126<sup>th</sup> Annual Winter Conference of the Michigan Association of County Drain Commissioners was a huge success. I would like to thank the conference committee, staff, associate members, presenters and volunteers who put in countless hours to make it happen. I would also like to thank the more than 50 vendors who displayed in the exhibit area. The conference would not be the same without you.

Congratulations to Stacy Hissong for receiving the Geoffery H. Seidlein lifetime member award. Stacy's contribution to drain law and drain commissioners is unmatched.

Congratulations to Ingham County and Allegan County on winning the innovation and excellence awards for the Montgomery Drain and the Baughman Drain. Thank you to all who submitted for the awards.

The groundhog saw his shadow predicting six more weeks of winter weather. I am not sure about you but I have had enough of the cold. When the weather turned cold and stayed cold it put a halt to many drain projects. We are definitely looking forward to warmer weather, and getting back to work.

This past year, with most counties having been in drought conditions, it would appear that there were no drainage issues. However, we all know that history shows we are one major storm event from understanding the importance of good drainage. With climate change, the weather events are becoming more intense and more frequent, which showcases the need for good drainage. Roads and houses do not do well with flooding conditions.

The world is run by those who show up. I am looking forward to seeing each of you at the May 19th legislative meeting at the Capitol. This will be an excellent opportunity to meet legislators and staff and talk about what we as Drain Commissioners do.

Sincerely,  
*Michael*



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# 2026 MACDC

# INNOVATION & EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## BAUGHMAN DRAIN IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT Allegan County

The Baughman Drain, established in 1875, serves as a tributary to Pine Creek and conveys runoff from approximately 970 acres in Otsego Township and the City of Otsego. Over time, residential development expanded across historically agricultural land. Homeowners in several subdivisions reported chronic property damage, including basement flooding and saturated lawns, even during dry weather. Groundwater, trapped in coarse sandy soils and impeded by buried clay layers, could not effectively recede.

By the early 2010s, flooding had become a community-wide crisis. Homeowners invested tens of thousands of dollars in sump pumps and floodproofing efforts, yet water continued to rise after major rain events. Recognizing that conventional surface drainage improvements would not solve the problem, residents petitioned the Allegan County Drain Commissioner to pursue a comprehensive solution.

Land & Resource Engineering (LRE), in partnership with the Allegan County Drain Commissioner and sub-consultants, launched an extensive multi-year investigation. Field monitoring wells, piezometers, and hydrogeologic modeling revealed that a confining clay layer obstructed downgradient groundwater flow, trapping water beneath the neighborhoods and causing rapid groundwater rise after storms. The findings confirmed that meaningful relief would require a combined groundwater and stormwater management system – a solution rarely implemented at this scale under Michigan’s Drain Code.

The final design included five new branches to the Drain, incorporating open-channel improvements and more than 2,700 linear feet of perforated underdrain to intercept and lower groundwater. Two-stage channel design, replacement of undersized and perched culverts, rock riffles, and native vegetation were incorporated to improve sediment



transport, enhance habitat, and reduce long-term maintenance needs. Detailed groundwater modeling allowed the project team to optimize underdrain placement while avoiding impacts to adjacent wetlands, eliminating the need for costly wetland mitigation.

Permitting required close coordination with EGLE and DNR Fisheries, with multiple design refinements over a five-year review process. Construction presented additional challenges, including dense residential settings, limited easement corridors, and utility conflicts. Through careful planning and community coordination, the project was completed efficiently while maintaining neighborhood access and safety.

With a total construction cost just under \$2 million, the Baughman Drain Improvements Project now provides long-term groundwater relief and flood protection for dozens of homes, restores natural channel function, improves aquatic habitat, and modernizes aging infrastructure. What began as a decades-long flooding problem has become a model for innovative groundwater management and collaborative watershed restoration.

### PROJECT TEAM

Chris Machiela, Allegan County Drain Commissioner

Engineer: Land & Resource Engineering (LRE)

Sub-Consultants: Fishbeck, SME

Contractor: Quantum Excavating

Legal Counsel: FSBR

## MONTGOMERY DRAIN PROJECT Ingham County

The Montgomery Drain Project is a Chapter 20 stormwater infrastructure project in Lansing, petitioned by the Ingham County Board of Commissioners and the City of Lansing. It is designed to reduce pollution and improve water quality in the Red Cedar River.

The Montgomery Drain services an approximately 300-acre, highly urbanized watershed commonly referred to as “Frاندor,” along the borders of the City of Lansing and the City of East Lansing. The project also involves Lansing Township, MDOT, and Ingham County roads.

Originally built over 100 years ago, the system was outdated and contributing 50,000-75,000 pounds of pollution annually. The high level of contamination is a major contributor to the impairment of the Red Cedar River.

The new drain is a treatment train featuring rain gardens, limestone water walls, and ponds that naturally filter and aerate water. It collects urban runoff and channels it toward the Red Cedar River, mimicking natural processes to clean the water before it reaches the river.

The overall Montgomery Drain construction consisted of 13 separate divisions. The work included such features as a recirculating stormwater treatment system, aeration creek, a water quality wall, water walk, and 34 separate rain gardens constructed on private business lands and within the median of Michigan Avenue.

The goals of the drain project were to treat the stormwater and significantly reduce the pollutant load to the river, as well as to provide a unique experience for area residents and visitors, highlighting the green infrastructure and low-impact design (LID) technologies, the importance of water quality to our ecosystem, and the contributions of the many community stakeholders with interests in this project.

The drain project had an existing cost of just under \$50 million, funded through



apportionments to the five municipal entities: City of Lansing, City of East Lansing, Lansing Township, MDOT, and Ingham County.

The project used a low-impact design approach. This alternative was chosen because it 1) provided practicable source control with less burden to property owners; 2) avoided mandatory acquisition of additional rights of way by building treatment and storage facilities in existing public open spaces (Ranney Park and Red Cedar Park); 3) maximized previous infrastructure investments by using existing pipes that would otherwise require upsizing; 4) reduced traffic disruption when compared to other alternatives; 5) treated contamination by conveying the stormwater through a “treatment train,” which was considerably less expensive than other acceptable alternatives; and 6) met all six of the Clean Water Act’s Phase II minimum control measures.

There were also many indirect benefits of this design approach, including 1) enhancement of public space and wetlands; 2) improvement of habitat for native plants and animals; and 3) connection of drain access and maintenance paths with regional trail systems that can be used for outdoor recreation.

### PROJECT TEAM

Patrick Lindemann, Ingham County Drain Commissioner

Engineers: Spicer Group, GEI, Eng.

Contractor: Hoffman Brothers, Dunigan Brothers, E.T. MacKenzie, Jackson Dirt Works

Legal Counsel: Vlahakis Cole Law Firm

## HONORABLE MENTION

### **GOFLO SEWER INSPECTION Macomb County**

In Macomb County, the Macomb County Public Works Office has jurisdiction of 475 drains, including 401 miles of open-air drains and 330 miles of enclosed drains.

On Christmas Eve 2016 – seven days before newly-elected Public Works Commissioner Candice S. Miller took office – a section of the Macomb Interceptor Drain on 15 Mile Road on the border of the City of Fraser and Clinton Township, collapsed, causing a sinkhole that partially swallowed one home and forced the emergency evacuation of that residence and other neighboring houses.

Drain Commissioner Candice Miller and her team launched a comprehensive inspection program of the largest enclosed drains that are under the county’s jurisdiction to detect whether other infrastructure was at significant risk of collapse and to prevent another large sinkhole from occurring.

Typically, those inspections of underground pipes involved the use of contractors walking in large interceptors.

But in Spring 2024, MCPWO purchased a drone equipped with high-resolution video with improved lighting for enclosed spaces, from drone manufacturer Flybotix and artificial intelligence software from Sewer AI Corp.

The Sewer AI program can detect defects and then code or rate the defects on the Pipeline Assessment and Certification Program level. It eliminates any human bias in coding and detects defects that may have been missed. The total cost was \$100,000.

It also vastly improves inspections of critical underground infrastructure and is saving millions of dollars of inspection, video recording and data analysis/reporting.

Department officials have nicknamed it “GoFlo” because it literally goes with the flow of wastewater in the pipes while recording video.



The mostly-plastic device was designed by a couple of in-house engineers. Using a 3D printer, GoFlo was built by JMD Engineering. It is equipped with a mounted splashproof GoPro360 brand camera and eight LED lights that illuminate the interior of dark pipes while recording video.

GoFlo is helping MCPWO administrators and drain board members with key decisions on capital improvement planning, budgeting, and prioritizing spending on underground infrastructure.

### **PROJECT TEAM**

Candice Miller, Macomb County Drain Commissioner

Engineer: Macomb County Public Works, JMD Engineering



## **HONORABLE MENTION**

### **RAINSMART REBATES Oakland County**

Through a combination of financial incentives, community engagement, and collaboration, the goal of RainSmart Rebates is to promote the adoption of green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) practices on residential property by fostering resilience, enhancing water quality and promoting environmental stewardship.

Launched as a pilot program in January 2024 by the Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner's office (WRC), RainSmart Rebates currently operates solely within the combined sewer area of the George W. Kuhn Drain Drainage District (GWK District), an area that is roughly 36 square miles and over 50% residential land use.

This program empowers residents to take proactive steps towards capturing stormwater before it reaches the combined sewer system. RainSmart Rebates offers homeowners up to \$2,000 for implementing sustainable stormwater practices such as tree planting, rain barrel installation, or creating a rain garden on their properties.

The RainSmart Rebates program provides assistance throughout the GSI implementation process through a partnership with the local non-profit Clinton River Watershed Council (CRWC), which conducts 1-on-1 site assessments for each homeowner accepted into the program.

After an application is submitted, a site assessment is conducted to discuss options and ensure project viability. Once a homeowner's proposed project is approved, the homeowners are responsible for the installation of their chosen GSI projects. When installation is complete, participants submit a rebate request that includes documentation of installation, receipts, and adherence to long-term maintenance requirements via a Property Owner Agreement.

The two-year pilot program was widely successful with over 650 projects installed and an estimated annual (March – November) capture of over 1,400,000 gallons of stormwater. These



projects will prevent over 1.3 million gallons of stormwater from entering the combined sewer system each year.

RainSmart Rebates is the first program of its kind in Michigan. While similar programs have been successfully implemented in other parts of the country, largely through stormwater utilities, WRC was able to successfully create a public-private-nonprofit partnership. Overall, the program represents a proactive approach to address pressing environmental concerns while promoting community involvement and sustainable practices in the GWK District.

### **PROJECT TEAM**

Jim Nash, Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner

Engineer: Clinton River Watershed Council, Center for Watershed Protection



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# STACY HISSONG RECEIVES LIFE MEMBER AWARD

For her many years of dedication and service to the drain world, Stacy Hissong, Member of Fahey Schultz Burzych Rhodes, was presented with MACDC's Lifetime Member Award at the MACDC Winter Conference. This was Stacy's 29th conference.

A practicing attorney since 1996, Stacy has more than a decade of experience representing clients on issues relating to stormwater and inland lakes and streams, working on projects involving county and intercounty drains, lake levels, lake improvement boards, sewer authorities and county public works offices.



*MACDC President Mike Hard presenting Stacy with her award*

***“Thank you for allowing me to serve you in this way. I truly think we have, as a group, and I really mean this, made a difference in making this state a better place to live.”***

*Stacy Hissong*

Deena Bosworth, Director of Government Affairs for the Michigan Association of Counties, who's a close friend and colleague of Stacy's, gave tribute to her work and passion.

“She has been a great mentor to me and for that I am personally grateful and honored,” Deena said. “She has become the face of the Michigan Association of County Drain Commissioners, and I can attest to that because I'm there every day, but we know where the brains are for sure.”

For her tribute to Stacy, Deena spoke with several people about Stacy's contributions to the drain world. Below are a few comments:

“Stacy is the expert in all things drain law. She's never wrong. She's never wrong.”

“Stacy has shaped how we approach compliance and best practices. Her guidance has helped counties avoid costly mistakes and shaped our credibility with state agencies.”

“Stacy has a rare talent for communicating with landowners. Even on controversial projects, she can break down complex issues so people can understand them, especially when she brings candy to sweeten them up ahead.”

After receiving her award, Stacy thanked her supporters and her drain family.

“The part I like the best is being your counsel,” she said. “That's the part that means the most to me. So, to be counsel is not just to give legal advice; it's to stand by people who are being asked to make difficult decisions – the types of decisions that affect communities, that affect livelihoods, that affect families – that may depend on whether you get re-elected to your position.”

## “STACY-ISMS”

“Mom and Dad need to talk.”

“Look, you could pay me now or you can pay me more later.”

“Stop trying to pick an ant out of a pepper shaker.”

“Thank you for allowing me to serve you in this way. I truly think we have, as a group, and I really mean this, made a difference in making this state a better place to live.”



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*Stacy with fellow attorneys Matthew Smith (L) and Doug Kelly (R)*



*Stacy presenting at a drain conference*



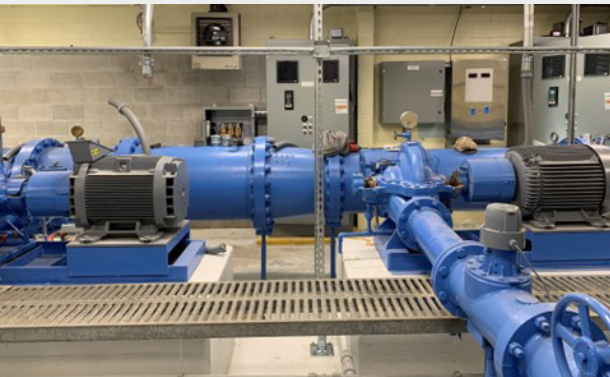
*Stacy with Mike Quaine (L) and Darwin McLeod (R) after being presented the McLeod Leadership Award*



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# Understanding Generative, Predictive, and Agentic AI

By: Brian Jonckheere  
Livingston County Drain  
Commissioner

Tim Inman, PE  
Spicer Group, Inc.

*“Artificial intelligence will not replace engineering judgment—but it can help drainage professionals turn data into better decisions.”*

## INTRODUCTION

Drain commissioners today operate in an increasingly complex environment. Weather patterns are becoming less predictable, infrastructure is aging, regulatory oversight continues to expand, and public expectations for transparency are higher than ever. Artificial intelligence (AI) is emerging as a tool that can help public infrastructure managers analyze data, forecast infrastructure risk, and communicate with the public more effectively.

For drainage professionals, most practical applications of AI fall into three categories: generative AI, predictive AI, and agentic AI.

## WHAT ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ACTUALLY IS

Artificial intelligence refers to computer systems that are designed to perform tasks that normally require human reasoning. These systems analyze large amounts of data, identify patterns, and then apply those patterns to produce useful outputs.

In practical terms, AI can help offices:

- Generate written materials quickly
- Analyze historical infrastructure data
- Forecast potential maintenance needs
- Support operational decision-making



Rather than replacing professional judgment, AI should be viewed as a tool that assists experienced staff in making more informed decisions.

For drain commissioners, most practical applications fall into three categories.

### GENERATIVE AI: CREATING CONTENT

Generative AI produces written material, summaries, and other content based on instructions provided by the user. In a drain office, it functions like a drafting assistant capable of producing initial versions of documents quickly.

- Draft meeting minutes
- Prepare public flood advisories
- Summarize engineering reports
- Draft grant narratives
- Prepare grant applications
- Create briefing documents for board meetings

A Good Rule of Thumb	
Type of AI	What It Does
Generative AI	Writes things
Predictive AI	Forecasts things
Agentic AI	Does things

### PREDICTIVE AI: FORECASTING INFRASTRUCTURE RISK

Predictive AI analyzes historical records to estimate future outcomes. Drain offices often possess decades of rainfall, maintenance, and infrastructure data that can be used to identify patterns associated with flooding or asset deterioration.

DATA SOURCE	AI ANALYSIS	POTENTIAL INSIGHT
Culvert age	Compare with historical failures	Identify high-risk assets
Rainfall records	Storm pattern analysis	Estimate flood probability
Maintenance logs	Detect recurring issues	Prioritize maintenance



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## AI CONT.

### WHAT IS AGENTIC AI?

Most people are becoming familiar with AI tools that write things—emails, reports, or meeting summaries. That type of AI is called generative AI. But there is another type of AI that goes a step further.

That is called **Agentic AI**.

Instead of just creating information, agentic AI can take actions on your behalf within rules you define. Think of it less like a writer and more like a digital assistant that can perform tasks automatically.

#### A Simple Way to Think About It

If generative AI is like a secretary who drafts a letter, then agentic AI is like a staff member who can carry out a job once you give them instructions.

You set the rules..... The system carries out the work.

#### Drain Office Example

Imagine your office receives rainfall forecasts and water level sensor data.

An agentic AI system could be instructed to:

1. Monitor rainfall forecasts
2. Compare them to watershed conditions
3. Check water level sensors
4. Send alerts when thresholds are reached
5. Notify staff automatically
6. Draft a public advisory if flooding risk increases

### MYTH VS. REALITY:

MYTH:	REALITY:
• AI will replace staff	• AI assists staff
• AI knows everything	• AI needs human oversight
• AI is only for big cities	• AI benefits small offices



No one has to manually check each dataset.  
The system acts within the guidelines you set.

**Another Example: Maintenance Priorities**

Suppose your office tracks:

- Culvert age
- Inspection reports
- Flood history
- Maintenance records

An agentic AI system could:

1. Monitor the database
2. Identify culverts approaching failure risk
3. Create a recommended inspection schedule
4. Notify staff when assets reach priority thresholds

**QUICK EXAMPLE:**

**Draft Public Notice**

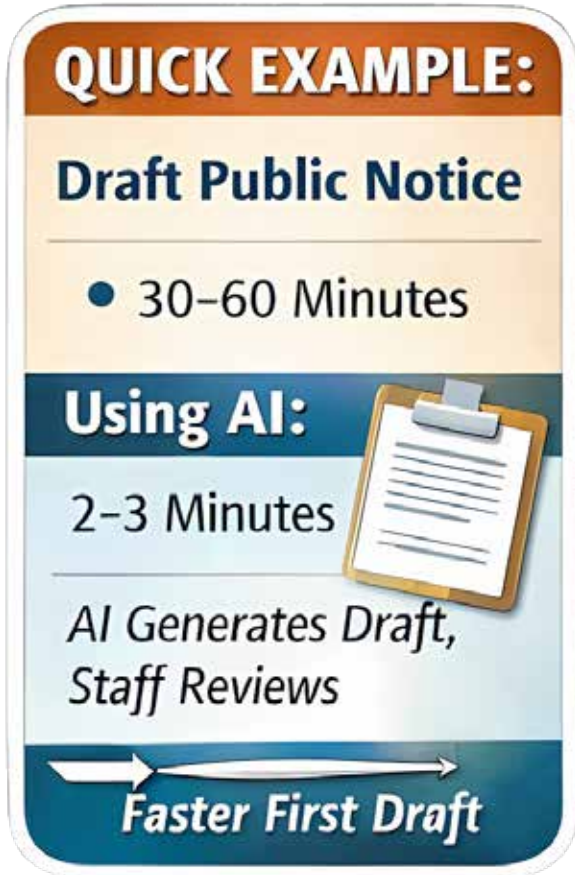
- 30-60 Minutes

**Using AI:**

2-3 Minutes

AI Generates Draft,  
Staff Reviews

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**AI CONT.**

**A PRACTICAL FIRST STEP FOR DRAIN OFFICES**

- The best way for most offices to begin exploring AI is by focusing on a small, manageable task that consumes staff time.
- Examples might include:
  - Preparing board meeting agendas
  - Drafting maintenance summaries
  - Creating public information notices
  - Summarizing engineering reports
- Testing generative AI on routine administrative tasks allows staff to become familiar with the technology while maintaining full oversight of the final product.
- Small experiments can help offices build internal understanding before considering more advanced applications such as predictive modeling or automated systems.

**LOOKING AHEAD**

Future columns will explore practical ways AI can assist with everyday tasks in drainage offices, from drafting documents to analyzing watershed data and forecasting infrastructure risk. It will also move into more complex AI processes such as Agentic AI.

**SURVEY**

To better understand where the needs are for members, we would like to ask for your input in a survey. This survey will help us understand what the needs are and where we should best focus future columns on this topic. Please click on the link below to take the survey. Feel free to have staff members take the survey as well so that we can gauge which job focus areas match up with the needs.



**Survey Link:**

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# ADA WEBSITE & APP ACCESSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

By: Amanda Knutson, Senior Associate, Fahey Schultz Burzych Rhodes

In April 2024, the U.S. Department of Justice (“DOJ”) issued a rule under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. § 12131 et seq. (“ADA”) to ensure websites and mobile applications (“apps”) maintained by state and local governments are accessible to people with disabilities. As the deadlines for compliance with the new rule loom closer, it is important that drain and water resources commissioners work with their respective counties to make any necessary updates to their public websites and apps.

## TITLE II

Title II is the portion of the ADA that prohibits state and local units of government from discriminating against people with physical and/or cognitive disabilities. Title II applies to all services, programs, and activities of state and local governments, including those that are offered online and through mobile apps.

## NEW ACCESSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The DOJ’s rule adopts the [World Wide Web Consortium’s Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, Version 2.1, Level AA](#) as the new technical standards for website and mobile app accessibility. (Note: There are multiple levels of the Version 2.1 standards, but the new rule requires compliance with Level AA.) The standards focus on four key principles for websites and mobile apps, which direct that online content must be:

**1 Perceivable** – The information should be presented in a way that users can perceive, even if they are limited to using one of their senses. This includes providing text alternatives for non-text content (images, photos, etc.); providing captions and other alternatives for multimedia (videos, etc.); creating content that can be presented in different ways, including by



assistive technologies, without losing meaning; and making it easier for users to see and hear content.

**2 Operable** – The user interface and navigation should allow for ease of operation by users. This includes making all functionality of the website or mobile app available from a keyboard, providing users enough time to read and use content, avoiding content that causes seizures or other physical reactions, helping users navigate and find content, and making it easier to use inputs other than a keyboard (screen readers, hand-free devices, etc.)

**3 Understandable** – Users should be able to understand the information and operation of the user interface. This includes making text readable and understandable, making content appear and operate in predictable ways, and helping users avoid and correct mistakes (e.g., providing instructions when user input is required).

**4 Robust** – Content should be reliably interpreted by a variety of assistive technologies. In other words, efforts should be made to maximize compatibility of the website or mobile app with existing and future user tools.

### DEADLINE FOR COMPLIANCE

State and local governments have differing deadlines to comply with the new requirements, depending on their population. The table below includes the deadlines for compliance based on population:

POPULATION	DEADLINE
0 – 49,999	April 26, 2027
50,000+	April 24, 2026

### EXCEPTIONS TO COMPLIANCE

While most website and mobile app content must comply with the new requirements, there are a few exceptions for content that is used less frequently or will be more difficult for state and local governments to update right away. The exceptions include:

1. Archived web content that meets specific requirements;
2. Pre-existing conventional electronic documents (word processing, presentation, PDF or spreadsheet files);
3. Content posted by a third-party that is not acting on behalf of the state or local government (e.g., content posted by members of the public);
4. Individualized documents that are password-protected (e.g., a water or tax bill for a specific resident); and
5. Pre-existing social media posts.



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## IMPACT ON DRAIN AND WATER RESOURCES COMMISSIONERS

Drain and water resources commissioners should communicate with their county administrators and other staff to make any necessary updates to their websites and any mobile apps to comply with the new requirements. The Worldwide Web Consortium also provides the following free resources to aid in achieving compliance:

### [Website Evaluation Report Generator](#)

– The Report Generator can be used to evaluate a website and provide a report regarding the level of compliance with the new technical standards.



[Quick Reference](#) – This guide offers a quick reference list of the standards, along with techniques for implementing them. (Note: When using this guide, be sure to look at the Level AA guidelines.)



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## YP Profile

### SAM LAWRENCE

**MS4 Compliance Officer  
Kalamazoo County**

My name is Sam, and I am a graduate of Michigan State University (“Go Green!”), where I studied Agribusiness with a focus in Environmental Economics.

I’ve been with Kalamazoo County for a year and a half and currently serve as the MS4 Compliance Officer in the Drain Office. I enjoy working on projects that strengthen our infrastructure and promote environmental stewardship throughout the county.

This summer I plan on launching a stewardship fishing program for the Kalamazoo community, designed to promote responsible practices and highlight the importance of protecting our local waterways.

The 2026 Winter Conference was my first time fully attending. I found the MACDC family to be an engaging and inspiring group of professionals. It was a great opportunity to learn, connect, and gain valuable insight from a knowledgeable and welcoming community.



*Sam fishing*



*Sam presenting*

I had the pleasure of joining YPC following the 2025 Summer Conference. I look forward to helping continue the welcoming and collaborative atmosphere that makes YPC so strong, while supporting professional development and inspiring growth within MACDC.

For the upcoming 2026 MACDC Summer Conference, I look forward to reconnecting with friends from Winter Conference. I’m also excited to explore Sault Ste. Marie, and, after conference, I hope to take a vacation, adventuring into Canada and spending some time fishing.

To leave you with a fun fact about myself, I recently started the journey of learning how to play the Banjo.

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# AVOIDING AND MINIMIZING IMPACTS IN STREAM PROJECTS

## A Guide to Sustainable Design

By: John Saltanovitz, Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy

Stream projects, whether for drainage maintenance or infrastructure development, often face a complex regulatory and ecological landscape. The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) emphasizes a hierarchy of Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation. By integrating stream function into the early planning phases, applicants can create more stable systems, reduce long-term maintenance costs, and navigate the permitting process more efficiently.

### UNDERSTANDING STREAM FUNCTION

Before designing a project, one must understand what a stream actually does. A healthy stream is more than just conveyance for water; it is a dynamic system that performs several critical "jobs":

- **Hydraulic & Geomorphic:** Conveying water, effectively transporting sediment and providing energy dissipation during floods.
- **Environmental:** Supporting wetland functions, maintaining the water table and providing aquatic habitat
- **Social:** Enhancing aesthetics and providing opportunities for recreation.

When these functions are compromised—for example, when a stream loses its ability to transport sediment—it leads to aggradation (buildup) or degradation (scouring), both of which increase maintenance burdens.

### THE PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE: GENERAL AND MINOR PERMITS

EGLE has established General (GP) and Minor Permit (MP) categories that incorporate pre-approved techniques for avoiding and minimizing impacts.

- **Benefits:** Projects designed to meet these criteria enjoy an expedited permitting process.
- **Cost Savings:** By working within these categories, applicants can avoid the high costs and long-term monitoring associated with formal stream mitigation.

### KEY AVOIDANCE AND MINIMIZATION TECHNIQUES

#### 1 Floodplain Connectivity and the Two-Stage Ditch

One of the most effective ways to stabilize a modified stream or drain is the Two-Stage Ditch design.

By creating benches at the "bankfull" height (the height at which water begins to flow out of the channel in a stable stream), the stream is reconnected to a functional floodplain.

- **The Math:** An ideal bench width is approximately 2.2x the bankfull width at minimum. This total bench width can span both sides of the channel or simply be present on one side based on site conditions.
- **The Payoff:** This design dissipates flood energy, increases lateral stability, and ensures sediment is transported efficiently rather than settling in the channel.

#### 2 Proper Culvert Sizing

Undersized culverts are a primary cause of localized stream failure. They act as bottlenecks that cause "backwater" conditions upstream and high-velocity "fire hoses" at the outlet. This leads to:



*Floodplain connectivity dissipates flood energy and increases bank stability*

- Upstream sedimentation.
- Severe downstream scour pools and bank erosion.

Properly sized and sloped culverts maintain the natural flow regime and protect the structural integrity of the stream bed.

### 3 Geomorphology: Sinuosity and Grade Control

Nature rarely moves in a straight line. By creating sinuosity—alternating bankfull benches to create meanders within an existing drain—we can dissipate energy and improve habitat.

Additionally, Grade Control structures (such as cross-vanes or constructed riffles) prevent "downcutting," where the stream bed erodes vertically. These features lock the channel slope in place, preventing the "unzipping" of the stream profile.



*Source: Adapted from Kingdon (1999)*

*Stream cross section with riffles and pools*

## 4 Bank Stabilization and Riparian Buffers

Moving away from hard armor (like vertical concrete) toward bioengineering (like soil lifts or wood toes) provides structural stability while creating habitat. This is bolstered by protecting the Riparian Buffer—a strip of native plants and trees along the bank.

- *Buffers provide:* Filtration for runoff, overhead cover for fish, and deep root systems that hold the soil together.

### THE MITIGATION HIERARCHY: AVOID > MINIMIZE > MITIGATE

Mitigation—the process of creating or restoring a stream elsewhere to offset losses—is a last resort. Stream Mitigation is required for projects that are larger or impact more stream functions (e.g., longer enclosures, relocations, channelization, dredging, armoring, etc.). Reminder that projects that meet a General or Minor Permit Category would not require mitigation.

To avoid mitigation, applicants must provide documentation in their permit application showing that design alternatives were investigated and that every effort was made to minimize the "footprint" of the project.

### START EARLY FOR BEST RESULTS

The greatest number of creative solutions are available at the very beginning of the planning process. Looping in EGLE early with a pre-application meeting will ensure the project has less obstacles during the permitting process. Protecting stream function is not just an environmental hurdle; it is a fiscal strategy that leads to more stable, low-maintenance infrastructure. Reach out to EGLE's MACDC liaison, Kate Kirkpatrick, local EGLE staffers, or our Stream Team friends with any questions on your project.

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# STAFF SPOTLIGHTS

As a new feature of Pipeline, we will profile drain office staff and associate members

Do you have someone in your office who deserves recognition? Are you an associate member doing cool things?

Please reach out to Communications Committee Chair Joel Morgan at [joel.morgan@kentcountymi.gov](mailto:joel.morgan@kentcountymi.gov).

For the inaugural staff profiles, **Joel Morgan (Kent County)** and **Lori Hyland (Clinton County)** tell us a bit about themselves.

## JOEL MORGAN

### Senior Engineer, Kent County Drain Office

#### Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

I grew up in Wyoming, graduated from Calvin College, spent time in Minnesota and somehow wound up living only a mile or so from my childhood home. I've been married for 12 years and have three wonderful kids and two cuddly cats who adopted us (Cinnamon and Clovis). I love playing guitar (hit me up guitar players!) and reading (anyone else love Brandon Sanderson's work?).

#### What is your position at Kent County and what individuals do you work with?

I am the senior engineer in the Drain Commissioner's office. I work with a wide variety of people - county residents who have drainage problems, contractors doing work for us, engineers designing improvement projects, attorneys, real estate developers, and many more!

#### What are two or three things people should know about your role?

Our office deals with drainage and flooding issues, which is quite a niche set of problems to solve, but each day is diverse and poses its own unique challenges. My role largely lies in coordination and communication - making sure people with problems are heard and that we are solving their issue in a timely manner. I love to talk and to make things happen, so my role suits me.

#### What is the most rewarding part of your job? What is the most challenging?

Watching a construction project finish and handling the first big rain event as it was designed is a huge fist-pound moment. One

challenging aspect of our office is that we specially assess (tax) costs back to county residents and many times they don't like or understand why they must pay more on their property taxes. Try as we might, "a person convinced against their will is of the same opinion still," and they like to let us know how upset they are, loudly.

#### Do you have any interesting/fun stories about your experience working with co-workers or clients/residents?

Ken Yonker, the Drain Commissioner, and I always seem to get stuck whenever we go out to inspect a county drain. Sometimes, it's a dead battery or flat tires. Once, we ended up face-first in a ditch. Sometimes, we leave our boots behind in the muck. Whatever the situation, it's always quality time when Ken and I are out together.

#### Is there anything else you want to say/ talk about?

We are always willing to take someone on a ride along to see what we do. It'll be fun but you might get stuck!



Morgan

**LORI HYLAND**  
**Accounting/Assessing Specialist,**  
**Clinton County Drain Commissioners**  
**Office**

**Where are you from?**

Fowler, Michigan

**How long have you been working in the drain world?**

Five years

**What are two or three things we should know about what you do?**

I am responsible for the accounting of over 600 county drains. I handle the annual drain assessments with the help of the drain commissioner. I watch the financial situation of each county drain and advise when funding is needed.

**What is the most rewarding part of your job?**

Being able to organize and keep over 600 drain accounting records separated.

**What is the most challenging?**

Making sure each drain has the funds needed to accomplish what needs to be done.

**What is your favorite (pizza, book, album, circus ride)...**

I love a good ham, bacon, and pineapple pizza!



*Hyland*

An advertisement for Fleis &amp; Vandenberg. The top half features the company logo, which consists of a blue square with a white 'F' shape inside, followed by the text 'FLEIS &amp; VANDENBRINK' in large blue letters and 'DESIGN. BUILD. OPERATE.' in smaller blue letters below it. The background of the top half is white with a faint geometric pattern. The bottom half of the advertisement is a photograph of a concrete bridge over a stream, with a rocky bank in the foreground. The text 'MANAGING WATER. PROTECTING COMMUNITIES.' is overlaid on the bottom left of the photo in white. Below this, a list of services is provided: 'Dam Inspections', 'Detention &amp; Retention Basins', 'Hydraulic Modeling', 'Open &amp; Enclosed Drains', 'Site Plan Reviews for Stormwater Compliance', and 'Stormwater Management Plans'. The website 'www.fveng.com' is printed in white at the bottom right of the photo.

# ASSOCIATE MEMBER NEWS

## Fahey Schultz Burzych Rhodes Announces Cole Hedrick and Kyle O'Meara as Members of the Firm

Fahey Schultz Burzych Rhodes PLC (FSBR) is pleased to announce that Cole Hedrick and Kyle O'Meara have been named Members of the firm, effective January 1, 2026.

Both attorneys' paths to membership reflect the way FSBR measures leadership: consistent client service, sound judgment under pressure, and the ability to take ownership of complex matters. Kyle and Cole have each grown into trusted advisors who manage sophisticated work, deepen client relationships, and bring the steady, solutions-oriented approach public clients rely on.

"Cole and Kyle's careers reflect what we strive to offer at FSBR—a place where attorneys can begin their careers, develop deep expertise, and grow into long-term leaders," said Stacy Hissong, Member. "They have built their practices here by earning client trust, taking ownership of complex work, and investing in the people around them. We're proud to see that growth continue."

### COLE HEDRICK

Cole began with FSBR as a law clerk in 2016 and joined the firm as an attorney in 2017. He has since become a key leader within the firm's Water Resources practice, developing deep experience in the legal and practical realities of public infrastructure.

Cole's work focuses on public drainage projects under Michigan's Drain Code and the property and agreement work that allows those projects to proceed. He supports matters from early planning through design, acquisition, bidding, and construction. His work includes easements, right-of-way issues (including condemnation when necessary), and coordination with development and utilities. His involvement across the full lifecycle helps clients manage compliance, documentation, and coordination

when priorities, funding sources, and stakeholders converge. In addition to Drain Code work, Cole has played meaningful roles in multiple dam removal and river restoration projects, including necessary easement acquisition and contract negotiation that helped lead to successful grant-funded efforts to remove aging infrastructure, improve public safety, and restore river function.



*Hedrick*

Cole's leadership is reflected in his approach. He identifies issues early, communicates plainly, and translates complex requirements into clear next steps for engineers, public officials, and project teams. He also brings a broader lens to the work through his involvement with the Michigan Association of County Drain Commissioners (MACDC), supporting professional education and legislative initiatives that strengthen Michigan's water-management framework and advance the interests of the public clients he serves. Within the firm, he mentors law clerks and associates and helps lead project teams. Outside of his client work, Cole serves as an adjunct professor at Michigan State University College of Law, co-teaching Land Use and Planning. Cole was also recognized as an Ingham County Bar Association "Top 5 Under 35" honoree.

### KYLE O'MEARA

Kyle joined FSBR after clerking with the firm as a summer associate in 2017 and began his legal career at the firm in 2018. With a long-standing interest in public policy and local government

service, he has built a practice advising municipalities on matters where legal strategy, public process, and practical implementation all must align.

Kyle's work focuses on municipal, water resources, and administrative law. His work spans land use and zoning, renewable energy, inland lake level and lake improvements, special assessments, public safety, and professional licensing defense, among other matters. He is often called on when projects are complex or high-visibility, and he helps boards and staff navigate stakeholder pressure, regulatory requirements, and funding realities while keeping decisions legally defensible. Following Michigan's widely publicized 2020 dam failures and spillway emergencies, he helped guide lake-level and restoration matters requiring coordinated governance, sustained public communication, and long-term project and funding strategy. He also continues to innovatively advise municipalities on utility-scale renewable energy developments, including helping communities impose creative conditions to protect the public, such as one that required deployment of

Michigan's first aircraft detection lighting system (ADLS) on a wind turbine project

As his responsibilities have expanded, Kyle has become a trusted point of contact for clients. He helps them evaluate options, understand implications, and make decisions they can carry out in practice. Kyle is an active writer and presenter on municipal topics and has been recognized as a Michigan Super Lawyers Rising Star (since 2023) and Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch (since 2025).



O'Meara

### LOOKING AHEAD

As Members, Cole and Kyle will continue to lead complex client work and contribute to the firm's long-term direction, supporting Michigan communities and public infrastructure projects with expert counsel and real solutions.




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# Attorney Dan Bock recognized by the Michigan Natural Resources Commission and Great Lakes Fishery Trust

In August 2025, Fahey Schultz Burzych Rhodes PLC (FSBR) Senior Attorney Daniel P. Bock was recognized for public service supporting Michigan's natural resources and Great Lakes fisheries.



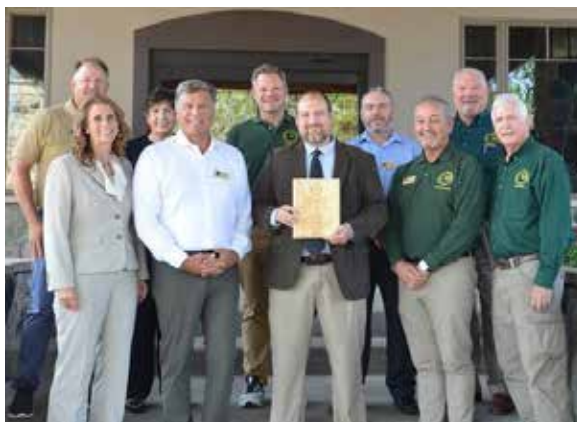
*Bock*

At the Michigan Natural Resources Commission's August 14, 2025 meeting in Gaylord, the Commission recognized Dan's work from his time with the Michigan Attorney General's Office, where he served as legal counsel to the Commission and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

In remarks during the recognition, DNR Director Scott Bowen highlighted Dan's legal expertise, integrity, and dedication to public service. He noted Dan's role advising on the Line 5 litigation and leading teams handling complex natural resources matters, including issues involving commercial fishing, tribal treaty rights, and questions tied to public land ownership and riparian rights. Over many years working with the DNR and NRC, Dan provided practical guidance to multiple DNR Directors and numerous NRC Commissioners.

Dan was also honored by the Great Lakes Fishery Trust with the Jack Bails Award, recognizing his board leadership and service as Treasurer from 2022 to 2025. In that role, he helped review grant proposals and oversee grantmaking for projects intended to strengthen the Great Lakes fishery and expand access to fishing opportunities. The trust's work supports initiatives such as fisheries research, fish hatcheries, dam removals, and improved public access, including projects designed to broaden opportunities for underserved communities.

Before joining FSBR, Dan served for 17 years with the Michigan Attorney General's Office, most recently as Assistant Chief of the Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture Division. At FSBR, he supports clients on water resources, environmental and energy matters, public utilities, and litigation, drawing on deep public-sector experience and a practical understanding of how these issues affect communities across Michigan.



*Attorney Dan Bock with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Director, DNR Deputy Director and the Natural Resources Commissioners (NRC)*



*Attorney Dan Bock with Randy Claramunt, Fisheries Chief, Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR)*

# IN MEMORIAM

## Marya Noelle Colpaert

DECEMBER 7, 1974—FEBRUARY 18, 2026



Marya was a dedicated Deputy Drain Commissioner and Engineer for Saginaw County Public Works, where her passion for civil engineering shone through in every project she undertook. Marya greatly enjoyed the time spent with the Michigan Association of County Drain Commissioners, developing many close friendships over the years. A proud graduate of Michigan Tech University, she embraced challenges with a positive outlook and an ever-present smile.

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# MACDC EVENT CALENDAR

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**JULY 15-17, 2026**

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**FEBRUARY 10-12, 2027**

MACDC Annual Winter Conference  
Grand Traverse Resort | Acme, MI

To place your event on this calendar, contact us at [admin@macdc.us](mailto:admin@macdc.us) or 517.484.9761. For the most up to date details visit, [macdc.us/calendar/](http://macdc.us/calendar/).



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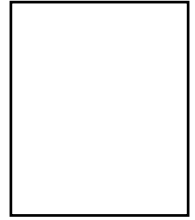
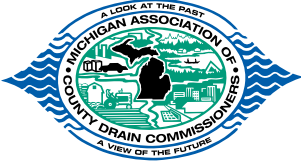


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