

WRC Quarterly Newsletter

We collaborate with communities across Oakland County and throughout the region to maintain safe, reliable drainage, water and sewer systems. We work to protect public health, preserve natural resources, maintain reliable, high-quality service, ensure the value of investment and contribute to economic prosperity.

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Local Leaders to Earmark Federal Funds for Oakland County Sewer Expansion



Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner Jim Nash joined Oakland County Executive Dave Coulter, U.S. Representative Elissa Slotkin, Brandon Township Supervisor Jayson Rumball, Holly Township Supervisor George Kullis, and other local leaders and business owners in August to discuss an agreement to allocate \$10 million in federal funding for a new sanitary sewer system. Earlier this year, the Oakland County Board of Commissioners voted unanimously to move forward with allocating federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act to the Northwest Oakland County Sewer Project. Commissioner Nash helped lead this effort.

“This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for these communities to address issues of failing septic systems and to protect the environment by providing access to a sanitary sewer,” said Commissioner Nash. “This project will protect the lakes, streams and headwaters of the Flint River Watershed for years to come and represents regional collaboration at its finest.”

This project will allow some of Oakland County’s smallest, most rural communities to connect to a sewer system for a fraction of the cost of building their own. The entire project is estimated to cost \$90 million. Construction is expected to begin in 2023.

“The plan is to seek out grants from the state and federal government to cover all phases,” said Oakland County Water Resources Environmental and Public Services Manager Brian Coburn. “Much of this project is three years out but we hope to have all this done at no local cost.”



County Executive Coulter discusses the Northwest Oakland County Sewer Project.



Ortonville, Groveland Township, Brandon Township and Holly Township reps gather with County Executive Coulter, Representative Slotkin and Commissioner Nash.

This partnership with Genesee County will improve wastewater treatment in our region. Several septic systems in the impacted area have been identified as failing, including the Holly State Recreation Area and Groveland Oaks, part of Oakland County Parks and Recreation. With this project, the recently opened Holly Oaks ORV Park will have more options for amenities as it expands its offerings to the off-roading public.

Genesee County is thrilled to provide residents in the southern part of the county with expanded sewer lines. The lines run to a Genesee County plant in Montrose, where treatment is provided at the Anthony Ragnone Wastewater Treatment Plant and discharged into the Flint River.

Phase One of the project involves constructing a 17-mile sewer in Genesee County, which will be extended to the county line at an estimated cost of \$33 million. Oakland County’s portion is around 45% based on proposed pipe capacity, or \$14 million of which \$10 million is committed by Oakland County.

Phase Two will run a sewer line along Dixie Highway and Grange Hall Road to serve Groveland and Holly townships at an estimated cost of \$49 million.

The third and final phase will be a sewer extension to serve the Village of Ortonville and Brandon Township at an estimated cost of \$59 million.

MDARD, Oakland County Responds to Invasive Spotted Lanternfly



The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) worked with our office to limit the spread of the spotted lanternfly invasive species. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) confirmed a small population of spotted lanternfly in Pontiac in Oakland County in August. This was the first confirmed case of live spotted lanternfly in Michigan.

MDARD's Pesticide and Plant Pest Management Division (PPPM) surveyed the affected area to determine the extent of the infestation in Pontiac and Oakland County. Surveying revealed the spotted lanternfly population was contained to a small, wooded lot in Oakland County.

"We appreciate the partnership and quick action by our partners in Oakland County to help contain the spotted lanternfly infestation," said Michael Philip, PPPM Division Director within MDARD. "Early detection gives us more tools in the toolbox for response and containment."

Spotted lanternfly moves easily on firewood, tires, campers, vehicles and more. Prevention and early

detection are vital to limiting the spread of spotted lanternfly.

"We hope to limit the spread of this invasive population of spotted lanternfly by using targeted pesticide applications and tree removal," said Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner Jim Nash. "Our priority is working alongside the Michigan Department of Agriculture to protect our agriculture, natural resources and environment both in Oakland County and across the state."

Although spotted lanternfly prefers to feed on tree of heaven, it also feeds on a wide range of plants including grapes and trees such as black walnut, river birch, willow, sumac, and red maple. When feeding, spotted lanternfly produces a sticky liquid, honeydew, that can collect on the ground or surrounding vegetation. This results in the growth of sooty mold, which can discolor and kill plants.

For additional information on the spotted lanternfly, visit michigan.gov/spottedlanternfly. As of this summer, the impacted area has been isolated.



Adult photo of a spotted lanternfly in Pontiac, Michigan in August 2022.

Lt. Governor Garlin Gilchrist Highlights Clinton River Water Resource Recovery Facility



In September, Lt. Governor Garlin Gilchrist visited the Clinton River Water Resource Recovery facility in Pontiac for a press conference with local officials to shed light on investments in water infrastructure in Oakland County. A \$32 million investment under the State of Michigan's Clean Water State Revolving Fund helped our organization construct the Biosolids Handling and Septage Receiving Facility.

"This facility, and the investment that helped Oakland County implement this innovative technology, is an example of the progress we can make when we come together and focus on getting things done," said Lt. Governor Gilchrist.

The Clinton River Water Resource Recovery Facility treats approximately 30 million gallons of stormwater and sanitary sewage each day, serving 13 communities in Oakland County. The Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan program helped Oakland County construct the biosolids building and made the Clinton River Water Resource Recovery Facility the second in the nation to use the Thermal Hydrolysis Pretreatment (THP) process. THP recycles methane gas created by wastewater to power the treatment process.

"The biosolids facility benefits Oakland County residents by contributing to a better environment for all," said Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner Jim Nash. "A portion of this project was financed through the State of Michigan Revolving Fund Loan program, and we are thankful for the support. It was an honor to host the Lt. Governor."



Commissioner Nash and Lt. Governor Garlin Gilchrist II in Pontiac, Michigan on September 12, 2022.



Speakers of the press conference are shown left to right as Lt. Governor Garlin Gilchrist II, Pastor Douglas Jones, Oakland County Executive Coulter, State Representative Brenda Carter, Commissioner Nash, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy Director Liesl Clark and City of Pontiac Mayor Tim Greimel.

Water Affordability Solutions Report: An Inside Look at a Water Utility's Perspective



In May 2021, our office was awarded an Affordability and Planning Grant by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) to accomplish many objectives related to water affordability while maintaining water quality and safety standards. The grant deliverables required we create customized water affordability plans to meet the needs of a larger community, the City of Pontiac, as well as a smaller community, the Charter Township of Royal Oak. After nearly 15 months of research, we are proud to release our report and findings to the public, which include a scalable water affordability framework designed to assist water systems of all sizes across the state.

The project was led by Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner Jim Nash, and a team of in-house lawyers, engineers, finance experts, and communication and marketing professionals, who collaboratively examined, studied, and analyzed a wide range of affordability programs regionally and across the nation.

“Collectively, my staff has spent hours planning, researching and organizing information to help understand what makes water unaffordable for far too many individuals” said Commissioner Nash. “It was a huge undertaking, but we were up for the challenge, and we are proud to share our research and process.”

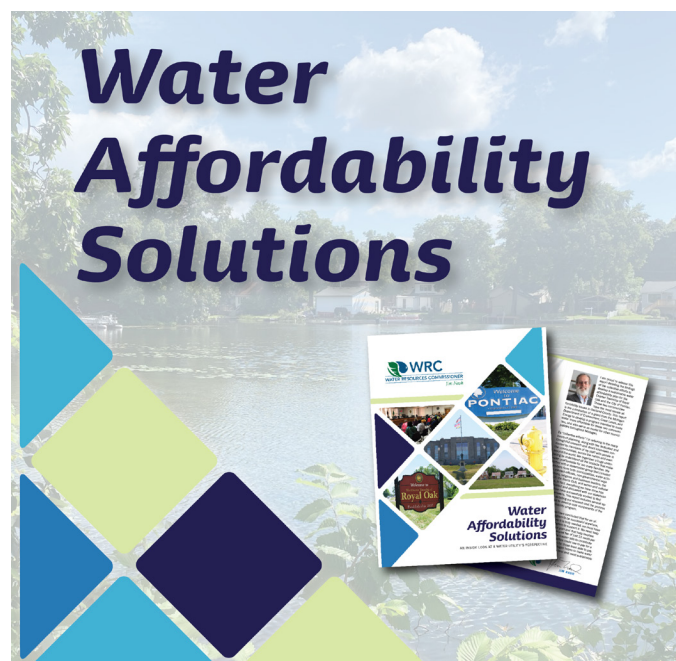
The work began by establishing a group of stakeholders that included members from both municipalities, water activists, elected officials, non-governmental organizations, religious and business leaders, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Sierra Club, and senior and cultural groups. We engaged with these individuals monthly, creating space for open discussion, project updates and planning. The coalition was invaluable to us in the sense that we welcomed their feedback, questions and ideas every step of the way, making their involvement critical to the overall success of this project.

Another major aspect of the project was developing a strong connection and sense of trust with the communities of focus. Making their voices heard was necessary to help us progress toward our goal of making water more affordable for all.

Part of that process included interviewing our stakeholders and community members to give them a platform to provide their own feedback and personal experiences pertaining to water affordability.

The final report culminates the vast amount of work that went into this project, and it includes a step-by-step process of how our office organized, planned and accounted for its research so other communities can do the same. In addition, the report includes the plans specific to both Pontiac and Royal Oak Township showcasing the plan's adaptability. The report also includes several appendices which explain specific areas of interest including legal analysis, affordability planning as well as public outreach and communications.

To view the report, Water Affordability Solutions: An Inside Look at a Water Utility's Perspective, visit oakgov.com/affordability.



Blue Planet Jobs Event for Oakland County Students about Careers in Water



Our office, Pure Oakland Water, the Freshwater Forum at Cranbrook Institute of Science and Oakland Schools' Career Readiness program partnered together to create an event that is one for the books—Blue Planet Jobs: Careers in Water.

On Monday, October 17, sophomore and junior high school students from several Oakland County schools arrived at Cranbrook Institute of Science, to kick off the one-day event from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Students learned about careers in water from keynote speaker, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy Director Liesl Clark as well as various other water industry professionals.

“Collaborating with Cranbrook Institute of Science and Oakland Schools to offer Oakland County students this one-of-a-kind event is terrific,” said Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner Jim Nash. “I often say it’s up to this generation to fix the environmental problems that my generation created and a career in water is an excellent opportunity to make a difference. We are looking forward to helping students explore career opportunities in this industry.”



Students joined Commissioner Nash and Director Clark at Cranbrook Institute of Science to learn about careers in water at the Blue Planet Jobs event on October 17.

Nash welcomed students to the Blue Planet Jobs event from Ferndale High School, Lapeer High School, Oakland Schools Technical Campus Northwest, Oakland Schools Technical Campus Southwest, Pontiac Academy for Excellence and introduced keynote speaker, Director Liesl Clark.

“Michigan is home to more than 20% of the world’s fresh surface water and 40 million people’s drinking water. That responsibility requires deep abiding commitment to protecting the source water—whether it be a Great Lake, a stream, creek, pond or groundwater,” said Director Clark. “It was thrilling to see the enthusiasm from the future generation of high school students at the Blue Planet Jobs event who see climate and water as integral to our future.”

Students attended four, 25-minute hands-on and interactive sessions with industry professionals—from engineering and environmental science to nonprofit and skilled trades. Representatives were available to speak to students about a wide variety of possibilities in the water industry.



Blue Planet Jobs Event for Oakland County Students about Careers in Water



"Through the Institute's Freshwater Forum initiative, we are dedicated to educating and motivating youth about the benefits of having a healthy Great Lakes ecosystem," said Michael D. Stafford, Ph.D., Cranbrook Institute of Science Director. "The Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner's Office has been instrumental in promoting water stewardship in our community, and through this partnership with the Oakland Schools Career Readiness program, together, we can expand our reach, and even get students interested in pursuing water-related careers."

The interactive sessions and presenters were:

- Civil Engineering: Real World Problem Solvers from Oakland County Water Resources Engineering
- Working in Water: Education and Community Opportunities to Protect Water Resources from Michigan State University Extension and the Clinton River Watershed Council
- Water Facility Operations: Catch the Wave from Bay College
- Closed Circuit TV Pipe Inspection: Camera Robots in the Sewer from Oakland County Water Resources Sewer Maintenance and Pipeline Management

"We always want to partner with schools, employers and organizations to provide students with opportunities to have meaningful interaction with professionals in various industries. Blue Planet Jobs is another example of this type of partnership," said Jarrad Grandy, Oakland Schools Executive Director of Student Services. "Students will learn about the high-skill, high-wage and high-demand careers related to one of the Earth's most precious natural resources: water. This authentic learning experience will help students to continue to refine their answers to three key questions that result in career readiness for students:

1. What problems do I like to work on?
2. What am I good at doing?
3. And will someone pay me to work on this?"

This unique event left students with the importance of the water industry, what it means to be a water professional, current labor and market trends, water industry career pathways, education requirements, industry technology advancement and so much more. Sponsors of the event were Pure Oakland Water, Bay College, Michigan State University Extension, Clinton River Watershed Council and Pipeline Management.

WRC and HRC Secure Low-Interest Loan for Sewer Rehabilitation Project



Residents of the Charter Township of Royal Oak may have noticed WRC trucks throughout their neighborhood recently due to a sewer rehabilitation project taking place in their community. This effort was largely made possible by our team in partnership with Hubbell, Roth & Clark Inc., consulting engineers. Together, we secured a low-interest loan of nearly \$836,000 and 20% principal forgiveness, from Michigan's Clean Water State Revolving Fund. This loan will save the community roughly \$167,000 and repair 22 sewer pipes that have severely deteriorated.

"Many of the sewer pipes in this area were first installed in the 1940s," said Commissioner Jim Nash. "Today, we have incredible technology known as Cured-In-Place-Pipe that allows us to renew and rehabilitate existing infrastructure through relining the inner pipe. When completed, this process essentially gives new life to a system that is already in place."

Since late September, crews have been working to make the necessary repairs which involves lining 3,155 feet of sewer pipe ranging between eight to 30 inches in diameter. Crews insert Cured-In-Place-Pipe, an epoxy composite reinforced with glass-like material, into the existing pipe using a water inversion process before curing it with hot water. Once this process is complete the lining acts as a brand-new pipeline.

Additionally, crews have replaced 70 feet of 12-inch sewer pipe and completed repairs at nine other locations. They have also been tasked to inspect and clean 28,000 feet of sewer and combined pipes, moving from reactive to proactive maintenance. Doing this will identify and prioritize enhancement opportunities in uninspected pipe stretches.

The sewer rehabilitation project is non-invasive to the community because in addition to avoiding major construction, residents will not receive a direct increase in their taxes or sewer rates.

"This project demonstrates our office's ability to find cost-effective solutions to address aging infrastructure for the communities that we maintain," said Oakland County Water Resources Chief Engineer Drew Sandahl. "This proactive project helps prevent high-cost emergency repairs and environmental hazards that are associated with sewer failures. These repairs will also reduce the volume of inflow and infiltration into the sewer system; therefore, the volume of sewage sent to the wastewater treatment facility is reduced."

Contractors for the project include Pipeline Management, Insituform and D'Angelo Brothers Inc. The project is expected to wrap up this month.



Maintenance Mechanic II Tom Wittke uses a camera robot to inspect the condition of pipes in the Charter Township of Royal Oak.



Crews inserting Cured-In-Place-Pipe lining into host pipe.

Annual Regional Stormwater Summit Celebrates its 10th Anniversary



Government and engineering leaders gathered for the annual Regional Stormwater Summit on Friday, October 21 at Lawrence Technological University (LTU) in Southfield.

The event brought together approximately 160 attendees with opening remarks by LTU College of Engineering Dean Nabil Grace, LTU Associate Vice President for Economic Development Mark Brucki, Oakland County Water Commissioner Jim Nash, and Drummond Carpenter LLC Principal and LTU Great Lakes Stormwater Management Institute Director Donald Carpenter.

“In this year’s 10th anniversary of the Regional Stormwater Summit, I want to thank Lawrence Technological University for the long and important role they have played in these meetings,” Nash said. “Stormwater pollution and flooding and the increase in extreme

weather due to climate change are challenges that the WRC and LTU are working together to educate the public about and help local policy makers address.”

After the opening session, industry experts made presentations on stormwater management, creating climate change resilience, and nature-based design. The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy even did a presentation on funding opportunities for municipalities in fighting stormwater damage.

Event sponsors included the Clinton River Watershed Council, Friends of the Rouge, and the engineering firms Giffels Webster, Hazen and Sawyer, Hubbell Roth & Clark Inc., NTH, OHM, and Spicer Group.

Visit mi-stormwatersummit.com for more information.



Industry professionals joined Commissioner Nash to discuss stormwater topics and projects to move our region forward when it comes to climate change.