



## Presque Isle County Drain Commissioner

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### Mission

To provide for the health, safety and welfare of Presque Isle County citizens and the protection of surface water and the environment and to promote the long term environmental and economic sustainability of Presque Isle County.

### Drain Commissioner's Responsibilities and Services

**A.** Under Michigan's Drain Code, the Drain Commissioner is responsible for the operation and maintenance of county drains in Presque Isle County. These systems can be designed to provide storm water management, drainage, flood prevention, and stream protection for urban and agricultural lands. The Drain Commissioner also develops standards and design criteria for management of storm water runoff in new developments, with a goal of protecting private property and natural resources. These standards and criteria are called the "**Storm Water Management Rules of the Drain Commissioner**".

**B.** The Drain Commissioner is responsible for review and approval of storm water management systems in private developments under the **Michigan Land Division Act, Mobile Home Act, and Site Condominium Act**. A storm water management plan with rules and design standards has been adopted by the County Board of Commissioners and is available from the Drain Commissioners Office.

**C.** Under the **Inland Lake Level Act (Part 307 of P.A. 59 of 1995)** the Drain Commissioner can be designated by the County Board to maintain a Court ordered lake level. Recently, the Drain Commissioner was delegated authority and administrative duties for the Lake Emma Dam repair project. These duties included construction, operation, and maintenance of facilities necessary to maintain the lake level and to develop an assessment district, apportion the costs, and assess for these activities. The Court ordered level for Lake Emma is 800.7 feet above mean seal level (msl). Lake Esau, Grand Lake and Black Lake also have lake levels set by Court order. Lake Esau is 597 msl and is maintained by contract between Presque Isle County and the Presque Isle County Road Commission. The Court-set level for Black Lake is 612.2 msl and is

maintained collaboratively by Cheboygan County and the operators of the Alverno Hydropower Dam.

**D.** To advance **water resource protection**, the Drain Commissioner is involved in implementing a wide range of watershed planning and water quality programs by working with businesses, citizens, local government officials, Presque Isle Conservation District, and local schools to make stream, lake, and waterway protection an integral part of the land use decisions and land management activities. Stream and watershed protection projects have been implemented or are underway in many parts of the County including the Ocqueoc River Watershed, Lake Nettie, Swan River, and the Rainy River Watershed. The Drain commissioner is a permanent exofficio member of the Ocqueoc River Watershed Commission appointed by the County Board of Commissioners. A newly formed partnership with the Rogers City Schools will provide students an opportunity to conduct water quality studies and watershed mapping of the Trout River system. This partnership will not only promote increased awareness about watersheds but also will introduce scientific methodology and promote a value system toward good stewardship of the wetland ecosystem.

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The farthest you can get from a stream, lake, river or pond in Michigan is six miles. Water is the fundamental defining characteristic of our state. The Great Lakes alone represent the largest system of fresh surface water on Earth, containing roughly 18% of the world's supply. Michigan citizens have an obligation to manage this resource with the utmost care.

Originally designed to speed settlement in Michigan, Michigan drain laws tailored in the late 1800s and early 1900s gave county drain commissioners broad taxing and spending authority to provide wholesale swamp drainage primarily for agricultural practices. As a settlement and development statute, the Drain Code has succeeded. Michigan develops land at a pace that exceeds population growth by eight times. Fifty percent of the state's wetlands have been lost-including 70% of our coastal wetlands. New drains today are more likely to accommodate sprawling development than agriculture.

Times have changed dramatically since even the last update of Michigan's drainage laws in 1956. Our understanding of the importance of our water resources, including wetlands, has deepened significantly, and we now have broad public consensus on the need to manage water on a regional or watershed basis. We know now that land development results in water table, sewage, and storm-water impacts that burden our already insufficient public infrastructure. We know that "green infrastructure" is a proven alternative to constructed drains and water treatment facilities. We know that our state's economy depends as much on a strong tourist industry as housing starts and that a failing environment hurts us all.

The role of the locally elected county drain commissioner has evolved to also be a water resource manager and to promote the protection and wise use of our counties precious water resources.