



MUSKEGON COUNTY
M I C H I G A N
OFFICE OF THE DRAIN COMMISSIONER



Brenda M. Moore
Drain Commissioner
moorebr@co.muskegon.mi.us

141 E. Apple Avenue, Muskegon, Michigan 49442-3404

231-724-6219
(Fax) 231-724-3480
www.co.muskegon.mi.us/drain

January 12, 2018

To: Property owners in the Black Creek Drain watershed
From: Brenda M. Moore, Muskegon County Drain Commissioner
Re: **Request for Public Input on Black Creek Drain Project**

As you may know, some time ago my office received a petition to work in the Black Creek Consolidated Drain Drainage District. We are in the investigative stage of deciding the scope of work that will be conducted as part of this petition. To date we have conducted a topographic survey of the drain and condition inventory. We are also reviewing the assessment structure for this project, taking into consideration a property's proximity to drain work and the land cover (e.g., woodlots and wetlands have a lower assessment rate than fields). I have not made any decisions on the extent of this project. We hope that property owners who live in the area (those who know the lay of the land best) will provide critical input by dropping by one of four scheduled meetings (or calling our office) to help us decide what work is most needed.

The district has thousands of properties so we have divided the area into smaller sections to host drop-in discussions at several township halls. **The third area of focus is lands generally East of Swanson Road and West of Slocum Road.** The "drop-in" session is scheduled for **Thursday, January 25, 2018, from 6-8 p.m. at Moorland Township Hall 12416 E. Apple.**

Property Owner Input Requested

We will be taking input about *this area only*. We will have maps on hand and I'll be taking notes of relevant comments with respect to:

- Areas that need the most help in terms of drainage improvement.
- Sections of drain that no longer serve a useful purpose that may be abandoned.
- Portions of drainage ditches (if any) that should be extended.
- Better ways to provide drainage in a more economical manner.
- Areas for storm water detention that may also provide water quality improvement.
- Private culverts that can be removed (cost savings measure).
- Private culverts that should be replaced.
- Need for additional private culverts (these will be at the property-owner's expense, but the cost will be spread over time).
- What other drainage/flooding, environmental concerns or ideas that people have regarding this project.

Please note: If we do not get specific input from property owners, then I will be forced to make the best decisions I can with the information we have, so please drop in for a couple of minutes to share your perspective. I am already very aware of concerns over project costs and potential assessments and will do my best to make the project as fair and equitable as possible. As such, my hope is that input focuses on the above questions rather than people not wanting assessments.

A potential side benefit - Farm Bill Compliance Assistance

In preliminary investigations for grants and financial assistance for this project we became aware that farmers who receive Farm Bill payments may not damage or drain wetlands, no matter what the size. Federal officials are using historic aerial photography to determine if there are violations on Farm Bill properties—dating back to the mid-1980s. In some cases, property owners lose eligibility for Farm Bill payments, must pay back all previous payments and/or mitigate the loss of wetland on their property. This can put property owners in a very tough spot. Off-site mitigation is possible but it must occur within the same watershed.

Wetlands that provide detention storage for storm water and also improve water quality can be created as part of the drain project and could also serve as an exclusive wetland mitigation bank for the agricultural community of the district, with mitigation credits being significantly less than other wetland banks. We are investigating this potential with the Michigan Municipal Wetland Alliance, a partnership that includes the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). If you are a property owner who needs mitigation assistance, you can call 517.853-5806 or go to info@michiganwetlands.com for more information. If there is a large enough identified need in the Black Creek Watershed, we hope to tap outside funds to create the wetlands (which keeps assessments lower) that can be used for wetland credits at a greatly reduced rate (which helps agricultural producers with Farm Bill compliance).

Again, if you cannot make this meeting, please call 231.724-6219. I'm also willing to schedule additional meetings or personal meetings with property owners to accommodate their schedule. Thank you in advance for your consideration and time.