



The Road Newsletter, Volume 8, Issue 2

February 2018

Keeping Our Water Clean

The Road Commission is a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System Agency (MS4). We are one of several MS4 agencies responsible for managing storm sewers in Ottawa County. Storm sewers, which collect and move polluted storm water, affect water quality throughout the County. Our extensive and beautiful fresh water resources are important to residents and visitors alike. Taking care of our water resources is essential to all of us.

What is a Storm Water System?

Storm water is runoff, such as rain and melted snow, from roads, sidewalks, driveways, parking lots, and other surfaces that prevent runoff from soaking into the ground. This polluted water is carried through a Storm Water System, using street drains, and leads directly into our freshwater. This water does not go through a treatment process like wastewater, so it directly flows into our lakes, rivers, and streams from streets and driveways. Any contaminants in the storm water can have an affect on the fish populations and other ecological processes in our freshwater system.



Since the Road Commission maintains roadside drainage systems, including ditches and storm drains, we share storm water management responsibilities with other agencies and communities in Ottawa County.

What does the Road Commission do to help keep our water clean?

In addition to maintaining its Storm Sewer System, by keeping the water flowing and reducing contaminates, the Road Commission has utilized other strategies and methods to reduce possible pollutants from entering our freshwater resources.

While the affects of salt and or other road treatments on the environment have not been specifically established, there have been concerns about their effect on bodies of freshwater. Concerns have also been raised about the affect of road salt on agriculture when salt in storm water was shed off

the road and into water and soil. To help reduce salt usage and establish best practices, the Road Commission in 2004 developed its Salt Management Plan working with other interested local agencies.

This plan helped the Road Commission develop goals and strategies for minimizing salt usage, such as determining when, where, and how much salt to use in achieving the plan's goals. In implementing this plan, the Road Commission must carefully balance our public safety mission and our environmental stewardship responsibilities.

The Road Commission works hard to keep the County Storm Sewer System well maintained and operational, while reducing contaminants into the water system.

What can Residents Do?

The Road Commission isn't the only responsible party in the Storm Sewer System. Much of the storm water runoff comes from roofs and driveways of private residences. There are best management practices that you can put in place to help reduce your impact.

Just like the Road Commission monitors and manages its salt usage, we urge residents to do the same. Always make sure you shovel first and salt second. Salt is much more effective on a thin surface of ice rather than a foot of snow, so it will take much less salt to do the job. By minimizing your salt usage, you can help reduce the amount that goes into our lakes and rivers. Remember that any excess salt on your driveway and sidewalk will likely get washed into the Storm Sewer System when the snow melts.

Another practice to consider is making sure you pile your snow on the grass and not on the driveway or sidewalk. By placing it on the grass the melting snow can get absorbed by the ground and not become storm water runoff.

Lastly, always make sure to keep street drains clear. Leaves, sticks, litter, or any other debris can clog street drains, which can not only contribute to neighborhood flooding, but also increase pollutants in storm water. By keeping these drains clear the runoff water can flow freely and there will be less contaminants added to our fresh water system.

Several watershed groups are also working in Ottawa County to reduce the impact of polluted storm water on our water resources. You can learn more about the Lower Grand River Watershed (LGROW), the effects of storm water, and best management practices by visiting www.lgrow.org. Learn more about the Lake Macatawa Watershed on the Macatawa Area Coordinating Council Website: www.the-macc.org. The Road Commission works to manage the Storm Sewer System as best as possible, and we hope residents will join us to help keep our freshwater clean and healthy.

• PROTECT OUR WATERSHED •

WINTER TIPS

- SHOVEL**
Shovel snow onto vegetated areas. Grass and plants will act as a natural filter once snow melts, reducing runoff that goes down stormdrains directly to rivers and streams.
- PLAN AHEAD**
Shovel and scrape early and often. De-icers work best when there is only a thin layer to remove.
- USE LESS**
A little salt goes a long way. Apply sparingly, and remove slush once the snow melts to prevent refreezing.
- RECYCLE**
Save money by reclaiming salt for re-use by sweeping or vacuuming the solids from the sidewalk after the storm.
- STORAGE**
Practice good housekeeping by storing salt or other de-icers under a roof or other cover to minimize polluted runoff.
- VEHICLES**
Winterize vehicles so that there are no leaks. Do not wash the car in the driveway - ensure that dirty washwater is not entering the storm sewer.

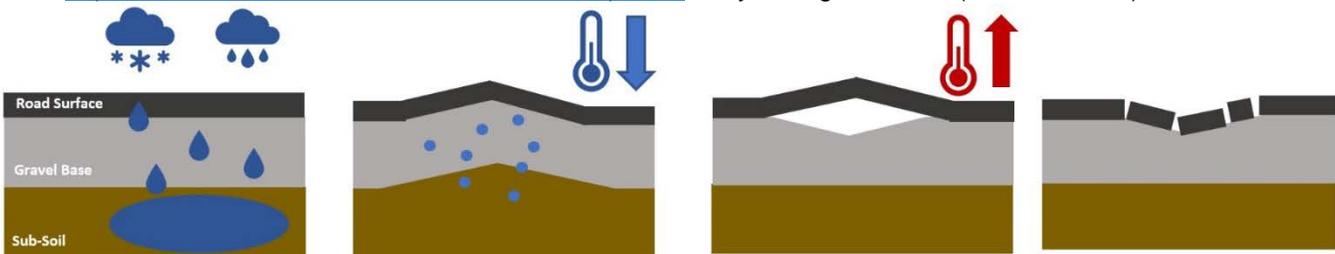
• VISIT WWW.LGROW.ORG FOR MORE INFO •

Pothole Season!

Most people don't always associate winter with pothole season, but periods of thaw and freeze are the perfect recipe for potholes. The process for creating a pothole begins when water (usually from rain or melted snow) permeates the pavement surface, sometimes through cracks in the pavement. This water saturates the road base and ground below the road pavement. When we have a freeze, the water expands. This is called "frost heave". Then, when we have a thaw, the water retracts, leaving a pocket of air underneath the pavement. Now the weakened pavement is likely to crumble under the weight of cars driving over it.

The creation of potholes is unavoidable, especially with our typical winter weather creating perfect conditions for potholes to form. The Road Commission tries to respond to potholes in as timely a manner as possible. Remember to be careful driving over potholes, as they can potentially cause a lot of damage to vehicles. You can report potholes on our website using the service request form:

<http://www.ottawacorc.com/contact/service-requests/> or by calling our office (616-842-5400).



Looking Back at Past Winters

1936 was one of the worst blizzards to hit the Lakeshore in Michigan. News reports from the time say that cities, such as Muskegon and Grand Haven, were stranded for days, with no one able to come in or out. A report from a Ludington newspaper says that there were two blizzards that hit Michigan back to back. There isn't a record of exactly how much snow fell, but from the pictures of US-31 at this time, it was a lot! Interestingly, 1936 was the year Michigan has seen some of its most extreme weather. Not only were we hit with one of our worst blizzards, the summer of 1936 contains some of the record hottest temperatures recorded in the State.



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www.ottawacorc.com



Important Dates

Thursday – February 1, 2018 | 9AM | Board Meeting

Thursday – February 15, 2018 | 9AM | Board Meeting



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616-842-5400
Office Hours: Monday-Friday; 7:30AM-4PM

The Ottawa County Road Commissioners: Tom Bird | Tom Elhart | Betty Gajewski | Tim
Grifhorst | Jim Miedema
Managing Director: Brett Laughlin

Who manages the roads and how are they funded? The Ottawa County Road Commission manages the roads--not the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners or County staff. The Ottawa County Road Commission is primarily funded by fuel taxes and vehicle registrations. Concerns about roads should be directed to the Ottawa County Road Commission.