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Informing and engaging Ottawa County partners in water stewardship.

Holland Charter Township Edition

January 2026

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Did You Know?

FAQ Corner: Drains and Ditches — Responsibilities & Maintenance

Each quarter, we'll answer common questions to help residents better understand the work of the Water Resources Department, including responsibilities, maintenance, and services.

Who is responsible for my ditch or drain?

To find out whether a ditch or drain is a county drain, contact the Ottawa County Water Resources Commissioner's Office at 616-994-4526 with your address or property parcel number. Staff will use the county's GIS system to confirm its status.

If the ditch is not a county drain and is instead a roadside ditch, maintenance is typically handled by the Road Commission. You can reach them at 616-842-5400, Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

How can I request maintenance on a county drain?

If the drain is a county drain, a maintenance report will be created and submitted to the Drain Inspector. An on-site inspection may be needed before a work order is issued or before determining whether a petition project is required.

What does county drain maintenance include?

County drain maintenance is performed by Water Resources staff or authorized, pre-qualified contractors. Typical maintenance activities include:

- Removing obstructions
- Limited sediment removal
- Vegetation management

Who is responsible for removing a fallen or dead tree in a drain?

Trees located near a drain are the responsibility of the property owner. If a tree falls into the drain, removal is also the landowner's responsibility unless it obstructs the flow of water. If an obstruction occurs, the Water Resources Commissioner's Office may become involved.



Petitions & Potential Projects

Autumn Meadows / Deerfield Village

Residents submitted the petition with the required minimum of five freeholders. A Board of Determination (BOD) meeting was held on October 28, 2025, where the petition was approved.

During public comment, many residents voiced concerns about neighborhood-wide ponding, flooding, and stormwater infrastructure issues. Prein & Newhof is now televising the system to assess pipe conditions before beginning the design phase.

Brower Drain

Petitioned by Holland Charter Township due to numerous complaints regarding fallen ash trees, bank erosion, log jams, and stream rerouting. The project proposes extending the drain to incorporate portions of the natural watercourse. Prein & Newhof is completing design and assisting with easement acquisition.

Dunbrook Acres North

This petition was received on February 15, 2024. Initial review by Prein & Newhof identified several buried outlet structures. The petition is currently on hold until the Pilgrim Haven Drain is petitioned, as coordinating the projects may reduce construction costs.

Dunbrook Acres South

Similar to Dunbrook Acres North, with the same petition date and concerns regarding outlet conditions. This petition is also on hold pending the Pilgrim Haven petition to coordinate costs.

Dunbrook Acres West

Also received February 15, 2024. Preliminary review showed debris and bank erosion at outlets. Like the North and South areas, this petition is on hold until the Pilgrim Haven petition moves forward.

Flagstick Drain

Petitioned by Holland Charter Township on May 19, 2022. Maintenance was completed in 2023, including debris and sediment removal and pipe jetting. We are currently waiting on Zeeland Public Schools to finalize the easement and 425 agreement.

Hunters Creek North

Petitioned on December 5, 2024 following basement flooding in September 2024—an issue with a history in this neighborhood. The district lacks a suitable location for a detention basin, so Prein & Newhof is evaluating alternative, cost-effective design solutions to address the drainage problems.

Kragspough Drain

Petitioned on August 21, 2025 after flooding was reported on a cul-de-sac. Initial site visits revealed additional outlet issues. Engineers are in the design phase, with plans to bid construction next year.

Pineoaks Estates

The Ottawa County Water Resources Office received the drain application on March 3, 2022. The project is part of the township's program to formally adopt orphan drains, but had been on hold while

higher-priority orphan drains were addressed. A Board of Determination meeting is scheduled for February 25, 2026, at the Holland Township Community Center.

Popeyes Drain

The project was petitioned on May 20, 2021. A preliminary review identified a perched outlet that is currently functioning but could cause long-term erosion issues. This year, an easement was secured with Dutch Village, and the final remaining easement is currently in transit. The project is in the design phase and could move to construction next year, depending on timing.

Sleepy Hollow

A maintenance petition was initiated after multiple sinkholes developed in the roadway. Video inspection of the underground system identified material-related deficiencies within the road right-of-way. Engineers have reviewed the inspection results and are nearing 90 percent completion of the design. Coordination is underway with the township to align the improvements with future road paving, helping to reduce costs for residents. Prein & Newhof is preparing bid documents, with the project expected to be bid in February.

Shadybrook North

Petitioned on February 15, 2024. The preliminary review showed an aging system with overgrown catch basins and reports of backyard ponding. Prein & Newhof is in the design phase, with possible construction in 2026.

Sapphire Lakes

A resident reported roadway ponding on Sapphire Parkway near 128th Avenue. An evaluation by Land & Resource Engineering determined that the existing leach basins are undersized. Holland Charter Township submitted a petition on August 21, 2025, to address the issue. Prein & Newhof surveyed the project area this winter and is currently designing drainage improvements.

Van Ommen

This system is included on the township's orphan drain adoption list. The system has been televised, and the footage is currently under review to determine whether any additional work is required. At this time, no construction is anticipated as part of this orphan adoption. However, the system will need to be evaluated for catch basin cleanings within the next three years to remain compliant with MS4 standards.

Gritter

The Ottawa County Water Resources Office received the application for the drain on January 20, 2026. The drain is part of the township's schedule for adopting orphan drains. A Board of Determination meeting is scheduled for February 25, 2026, at the Holland Township Community Center.

Pilgrim Haven

The Ottawa County Water Resources Office received the application for the drain on November 5, 2024. The project is part of the township's schedule for adopting orphan drains but was placed on hold due to the cost and complexity of other petitioned drain projects submitted in response to flooding. A Board of Determination meeting is scheduled for February 25, 2026, at the Holland Township Community Center.



New Position Added – Stormwater Field Specialist

To better support growing drainage and stormwater demands across the county, the department has added a **Stormwater Field Specialist** position.

Stormwater Field Specialists support day-to-day field operations by conducting inspections, assisting with MS4-related activities, documenting system conditions, and serving as a point of contact in the field with residents, contractors, and local officials. With two staff in this role, we are better able to maintain consistent field coverage and respond to issues in a timely manner.

Why this matters: Additional field capacity improves responsiveness, supports preventative maintenance, and helps ensure reliable service for township partners — especially during periods of heavy rain or increased maintenance activity — all while maintaining continuity in our operations.

Summerlin South Drain Maintenance

A bid was recently issued to qualified contractors to address maintenance needs at a retention pond along the Summerlin South drainage course in Holland Charter Township, specifically in the area north of Garnet Drive. The proposed work will address significant erosion occurring along the banks of the retention pond.

Bank erosion is a common issue in open drainage systems and, if left unaddressed, can compromise water flow, reduce storage capacity, and affect the system's ability to properly manage water levels. Stabilizing eroded banks is an important part of maintaining the long-term functionality and reliability of the drainage infrastructure.

The planned maintenance will be completed using heavy equipment to place protective rock along the eroded bank. This work will help stabilize the shoreline, protect the pond from further erosion, and reduce the risk of future maintenance issues related to bank instability.



Understanding Ottawa County's MS4 Permit and Urbanized Areas

The County of Ottawa is required to hold a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit because many county drains and facilities are located within three designated urbanized areas: Grand Rapids, Holland, and Muskegon. These urbanized areas include the Cities of Ferrysburg, Grand Haven, Holland, Zeeland, and Hudsonville, as well as all townships except Chester, Polkton, and Olive.

The Ottawa County Office of the Water Resources Commissioner manages the MS4 permit, as the County is responsible for most of the stormwater infrastructure within these areas.

Urbanized areas are defined as densely populated regions with a population of 50,000 or more and are updated following each U.S. Census. Their boundaries are drawn along roads and waterways to encompass connected areas of dense development.

According to the 2020 Census, Ottawa County was the fastest-growing county in Michigan, adding more than 30,000 residents—an increase of approximately 12%. As a result, the size of Ottawa County's urbanized area will expand under the next MS4 permit, which is expected to be issued in 2026.

This expansion will affect all cities and townships that are not already fully within the current urbanized area. Notably, a small portion of Olive Township will now be included within an urbanized area.



Understanding Michigan Drain Code Section 433 — A Tool for Strategic Drainage Development

Michigan's Drain Code (Public Act 40 of 1956) provides the legal framework for how drainage systems and drainage districts are created and managed across the state, ensuring proper water management for public health, agriculture, and development.

While most county drains are established through a petition process that involves public notice and due process, there's another important but lesser-known option: Section 433 Agreements.

What is a Section 433 Agreement?

Section 433 allows a property owner or developer to work directly with the county Water Resource Commissioner or drainage board to add lands to an existing drainage district, extend an existing drain, or even have a privately built drain adopted as an official county drain — all without going through the traditional petition and hearing procedures.

The key to this process is an agreement between the landowner/developer and the Water Resource Commissioner. Under this agreement:

- The landowner agrees to construct the necessary drainage facilities on their property and connect them to the existing county drain according to plans and specifications approved by the Drain Commissioner or drainage board.
- The owner must also pay the full cost of construction, including right-of-way, engineering, inspection, legal, and administrative expenses, or deposit the estimated costs upfront.
- Before execution, a certification from a registered professional engineer must show the land naturally drains to the existing system or that the existing drain is the only reasonable outlet and has sufficient capacity to serve the added lands without harming service to the current drainage district.

Once executed, the lands become part of the drainage district and are subject to ongoing operation and maintenance assessments, just like other properties in the district.

Why Section 433 Matters

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The Section 433 process provides a flexible and efficient alternative for improving drainage infrastructure, particularly when development or land use changes require extensions to existing systems. It allows private initiative to align with public drainage needs while maintaining engineering oversight and fiscal responsibility.

For landowners and developers exploring drainage solutions, understanding the Section 433 option can help streamline project delivery and avoid more cumbersome public processes, while still ensuring responsible water management under Michigan law.

In our next article, we'll take a closer look at the Section 425 process and explain how it differs from a Section 433 agreement, and when each approach makes the most sense.

New Developments October 1st to December 31, 2025

- Sinclair Recreation
- Mannes Body Shop
- Fairway View at Macatawa Legends Phase 2
- Quincy Place Senior Living - Villa Expansion



What's Happening Financially

As we head into the new year, much of our financial work has been focused on wrapping up the **2025 drain assessment process**. This includes reviewing assessments, confirming payments and prepayments, and making sure each drain's financial records accurately reflect the work completed throughout the year.

At the same time, we are actively working through our annual audit. This process involves compiling documentation, reviewing transactions, and validating financial activity across multiple drains and funds to ensure everything is accurate and in order.

Why this matters: This behind-the-scenes work helps ensure assessments are applied consistently, township payments are recorded correctly, and drainage funds are managed responsibly. Careful year-end and audit work also helps keep future maintenance and project planning on solid ground.

Capital Improvement Plans (CIPs) – Planning for the Year Ahead

We are currently preparing **Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) projections for the upcoming year**, which will be shared with township partners in **early March**.

These projections will be provided through the **Yearly Drain Assessment Estimate**, a planning tool designed to support township budgeting. The estimate outlines anticipated drain-related costs for the year and includes projections for potential maintenance expenses that may arise due to weather events, MS4 cleanouts, or planned cleanouts and upgrades.

As we move into spring and summer, we know that drainage needs can change quickly based on field conditions and weather patterns. For that reason, the figures provided should be viewed as **preliminary estimates**, intended to assist with planning rather than represent fixed costs.

Why this matters: Receiving this information early allows townships time to plan ahead, ask questions, and prepare for potential drainage-related expenses. We encourage you to reach out if you'd like to review a specific drain or talk through anticipated needs in your township — we're always happy to connect.



Winter Salt and Water Quality: What Townships Should Know

Winter maintenance helps keep township roads, parking lots, and sidewalks safe, but it can also impact local water resources if not managed carefully. Salt, sand, and sediment used during snow and ice events can enter storm drains and flow directly into nearby lakes, streams, wetlands, and groundwater.

Road salt is effective at melting ice, but excess salt does not stay on the pavement. Once snow and ice melt, chloride-laden runoff can harm aquatic life, damage vegetation, and contribute to long-term water quality issues. Because storm drains often discharge directly to surface waters, preventing salt from entering the system is critical.

Using only the amount of salt needed is one of the most effective water-protection strategies. Calibrating spreaders, following recommended application rates, and adjusting use based on temperature and weather conditions all help reduce unnecessary chloride runoff. Plowing snow thoroughly before applying salt further minimizes the amount required.

Townships may also consider **pre-wetting salt or using brine**, which helps material stick to pavement and reduces bounce and scatter. In some areas, alternative deicing products may provide similar results with less environmental impact.

Storage and housekeeping play an important role in water protection. Salt should be stored under cover, away from flood-prone areas, and protected from runoff. After storm events, loading and storage areas should be cleaned, and wash water from winter maintenance vehicles should be discharged to sanitary sewers—not storm drains.

For parking lots and sidewalks, sand may be used for traction, but regular sweeping is important to prevent sediment from entering storm drains. Snow piles should be placed in vegetated areas whenever possible and kept away from catch basins and surface waters.

Smart winter maintenance practices help townships protect local water quality while continuing to provide safe winter travel for residents.