

Oakland County Drain Commissioner's Water and Wastewater Master Plan

February 2, 2008

Before it was unveiled last October, the Oakland County Water and Wastewater Master Plan had been in the works for more than two years. Its original purpose was to assist Oakland County communities in meeting their water and wastewater obligations effectively and efficiently.

It is important to note that by developing a water and wastewater master plan, the Oakland County Drain Commissioner's office charted new territory. The creation of a comprehensive master plan involving water and wastewater infrastructure issues had never been done before in Oakland County. In short, there had never been a coordinated effort to ensure that supply, treatment and infrastructure decisions were based on sound, realistic evidence and projections.

That deficiency now has been corrected. Not only have the requirements of Oakland County communities been evaluated, the needs of neighboring counties have been assessed comprehensively as well. That ensures that water-related actions taken to alleviate a problem in one community are not just simply pushed to a downstream community.

The master plan also took into consideration the reliability of the major water and wastewater providers. So, while the typical master plan is seen as a road map for individual communities, this plan was more comprehensive.

Instead of making specific recommendations, this master plan looks at the county as a whole and it seeks out opportunities. It offers a guide for each community to assess its own needs and provides them with the planning tools to allow them to make their own decisions. It's an apparatus for them to make some sound environmental decisions.

The ultimate objectives of the creation of a water and wastewater master plan are to evaluate alternatives to address the county's needs while managing user rates and charges to our residents by properly setting the basis for capital investment while involving stakeholders to ensure that their needs are met. This is done through an ongoing examination of water and wastewater studies, review and assessment of land use and demographic data and incorporating key findings of an ongoing environmental inventory.

With the support of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners and the county executive, \$1.5 million in funds were secured which was supplemented with a \$.5 million federal grant to cover the cost of the \$2 million project.

Now that it is completed, the master plan can provide the Oakland County Drain Commissioner's Office with sufficient, accurate information to establish comprehensive plans to meet the county's long-term needs for water supply and distribution and wastewater collection and treatment.