

Special Assessments FAQs

What is a drain assessment?

County drainage districts are separate legal public entities. Each drainage district is supported by a drain special assessment that covers the cost of finance, construction, operation and maintenance for drainage system.

What is a county drain?

The term county drain is sort of a misnomer. The use of the word “county” in this context is simply to refer to its geographical location; the County is neither the owner or operator of a county drain. Rather, as stated above a separate legal entity known as a drainage district is the owner and the drain is administered by the Water Resources Commissioner or drainage board (depending on the type of drain). A drain may be an open ditch, stream or underground pipe. It also could include a detention pond or swale that conveys storm water. In addition, a drain can be a sewer constructed to transport sewage (sanitary drain); or a collection system that transports both storm water and sewage. Not all storm drains or sewers are drains that fall under the jurisdiction of the Water Resources Commissioner. To confer jurisdiction on the Water Resources Commissioner, starts with a process where a local city, village or township petitions the Water Resources Commissioner to establish a county drain. In some cases, property owners also may file apply and petition the Water Resources Commissioner to establish a county drain. That process is spelled out in the Michigan Drain Code.

How are assessments determined?

All properties within a drainage district are assessed according to a number of factors. These factors may include, size of the parcel, land use, proximity of the parcel to the drain and location of the parcel within the drainage district. For sanitary drains, benefit is typically determined by the average flow. The basis of the flow is a single family residential unit which is a factor of one (1).

Do all property owners pay drain assessments?

All property owners within a drainage district receive an assessment, unless exempted by law. Also, the municipality, Oakland County, the Road Commission of Oakland County and the Michigan Department of Transportation may receive an assessment for a portion of the costs. In the case of a sanitary drain, generally there is no assessment to the local municipality or road authorities.

How do I pay my assessment bill?

Drain assessments can appear on your property tax bill as a special assessment and paid with your property taxes; or a separate special assessment from the Water Resources Commissioner. Drain assessments may be assessed over multiple years to help spread out the cost.