



Candice S. Miller

Public Works Commissioner
Macomb County

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Trash out, minnows in
Fish move into drain outfall after Macomb County project prevents litter from reaching Lake St. Clair

A pilot project in Macomb County to block litter and other trash from getting into Lake St. Clair is proving to be effective and beneficial to the environment.

Two weeks after a significant amount of trash was raked out from a device designed under the direction of Macomb County Public Works Commissioner Candice S. Miller and installed along Jefferson Avenue at the outfall of dual, 11-foot-wide sewer pipes that carry storm water runoff and melted snow from parts of St. Clair Shores and Roseville, numerous minnows were swimming there.

“Going from a trash-filled storm drain emptying into Lake St. Clair, to that same storm drain filled with minnows, is a remarkable change,” Miller said.

As water temperatures get significantly colder, some fish seek warmer waters. The removal of the trash from the enclosed outfall of the 11 ½ Mile Drain benefits the ecosystem.

The trash capture structure in St. Clair Shores started with a steel bulkhead that was built and installed in 2021 at the end of the dual box pipes, approximately 250 feet before the end of the enclosed outfall to the lake. A plastic curtain resembling a boom was then tied across to capture floatables. To improve its effectiveness, a grate with a metal frame and fiberglass mesh was added to capture items flowing beneath the surface of the storm water flow.

The cost of the pilot project was \$30,000.

“Like everything we do, this project is about water quality. Designed in-house, it appears to be very effective thus far,” Miller said. “Snagging litter before it discharges into Lake St. Clair is an excellent way to block trash when it’s not prevented at the source. We will continue to study it and hope to install these devices at other locations as well in the near future.”

Public Works officials are seeking a federal grant to replicate the trash capture structure at the 11 other outfalls from the Macomb County shoreline into Lake St. Clair that are under the county department’s jurisdiction, including in Harrison Township and New Baltimore.

The volume of trash captured from the storm water flow before reaching the lake depends on how much trash gets directly into the large 11 ½ Mile Drain interceptor sewer and its lateral pipes upstream, and the rate and quantity of flow that carries its downstream toward the outfall. The litter, collected periodically, usually includes plastic liquor and water bottles and personal hygiene products.

PHOTOS:

1 & 2: Trash captured at the outfall of the 11 ½ Mile Drain to Lake St. Clair in St. Clair Shores.

3. Minnows seen in the trash capture structure two weeks after litter was removed.

4. The outfall of the 11 ½ Mile Drain, just east of Jefferson Avenue near Martin Road in St. Clair Shores, to Lake St. Clair.



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