



Candice S. Miller

Public Works Commissioner
Macomb County

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Macomb County wins top award for green infrastructure project

A project by the Macomb County Public Works Office that uses green infrastructure to improve water quality has earned the top award from the Michigan chapter of the American Public Works Association.

The “daylighting and green infrastructure retrofit” of the Sterling Relief Drain in Sterling Heights was awarded Project of the Year in the category of Quality of Life/\$1 Million to \$5 Million, by the Michigan chapter of the APWA.

“We’re proud and honored to receive this award from the APWA,” Macomb County Public Works Commissioner Candice S. Miller said. “Like we always say, ‘Water quality equals quality of life,’ and this project has been a notable and innovative effort to improve both.”

The Sterling Relief Drain – located south of Metropolitan Parkway, from west of Ryan Road to east of Schoenherr Road -- was built in the 1960s and drains the stormwater from 20% of Sterling Heights. It outlets to the Red Run Drain to the east, and the flow eventually reaches Lake St. Clair.

The project’s primary goal was to improve water quality by redesigning and retrofitting two miles of open channel drain by forcing the flow into a naturalized green corridor after “daylighting” – or exposing – two lateral storm drains and removing a 300-foot stretch of pipe to make it appear more like an intermittent stream. The ground then acts as a sponge, soaking up harmful nutrients and sediment before they have a chance to reach the Red Run Drain during normal rain events.

Approximately 135,000 native perennial plant plugs were planted on the slope and bottom of the open channel including native pollinator plants to create a 2.5-mile-long butterfly flyway. Additionally, more than 1,000 shrubs were planted in the bio-retention areas. Hundreds of 1- to 2-inch caliper native species trees were planted to establish a tree canopy.

The project started in 2018, with most of the work performed in 2019. It was funded by grants from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation.

“This project is all about water quality and improving our environment, which improves our quality of life,” said Miller.

Macomb County Public Works is joined in the award by engineering consultant Hubbell, Roth & Clark, and contractor T.R. Pieprzak Company.

PHOTO:

Macomb County Public Works Commissioner Candice S. Miller, center, holds the American Public Works Association award and is joined by, from left: Macomb County Public Works Environmental Resources Manager Jeff Bednar; Duane Poole, president of the Michigan chapter of APWA; Greg Pieprzak of T.R. Pieprzak Company; and Jamie Burton of Hubbell, Roth & Clark engineers.

