



**Candice S. Miller**

Public Works Commissioner  
Macomb County

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Macomb County drain project creates new hike/bike path**

Walkers, joggers and bicyclists can enjoy a scenic new route in Sterling Heights as part of a recently completed project along the Red Run Drain.

The new 1.35-mile hike/bike trail branches south from the Freedom Trail on Metropolitan Parkway, curves behind Freedom Hill County Park and continues west to Schoenherr Road.

“The trail makes a beautiful area accessible to the public. It’s a suburban area but you feel like you’re up north,” Macomb County Public Works Commissioner Candice S. Miller said.

The idea for a non-motorized trail in that location was added during plans to stabilize the north bank of the Red Run Drain, including restoration in spots that had eroded. As part of the drainage work in the open channel drain, the excavation contractor removed sediment from the Red Run and painstakingly built three new peninsulas just beyond where the Sterling Relief Drain flows into the Red Run. Known as “J-hooks” because of their shape, each is made of thousands of limestone boulders and work in unison to direct strong flow – particularly after heavy rain events – toward the center of the open channel for a long-term improvement away from the banks and the landfill upon which the park was built several decades ago.

In recent years, a rough path was created in some areas by maintenance vehicles however it was not open to the public and was being washed away by erosion.

“Unfortunately what happened over the years is the banks eroded here significantly, particularly on the north side. The erosion on this drain had actually gotten to within 10 feet of the landfill on which the park was built so we knew we had to do something,” Miller said.

The Public Works Office and the Macomb County Department of Planning and Economic Development explored the idea of developing a hike/bike trail that could be shared with the public behind Freedom Hill and west to Schoenherr Road. The Red Run Intercounty Drain Board and the Sterling Relief Drain Board approved the plan, and Sterling Heights officials endorsed it.

The 1.35-mile path along the north bank was carved, and top soil was used to make the trail. The planting of 475 trees, 2,500 shrubs and 4,000 native pollinator plants along the north side of the Red Run Drain and within the Sterling Relief Drain began this year and will be completed in spring 2023. Once fully established, the plantings help prevent erosion and act as green infrastructure to capture and filter an estimated 200,000 gallons of stormwater runoff per year to remove phosphorus and nitrogen. It’s also part of the Green Macomb Urban Forest Partnership and will increase habitat biodiversity.

County and city officials touted the combined environmental, recreational and stormwater management aspects of the project.

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Macomb County Executive Mark Hackel said the project also has economic benefits. Noting that the Red Run Drain connects to the Clinton River, which flows into Lake St. Clair, Hackel said clean lake water is important.

"Leveraging the natural beauty of Macomb County and the creativity of our environmental champions, we are developing transformational, recreational and environmental projects. This trail and restoration plan has helped us reimagine an underutilized area that is quickly becoming a celebrated community asset. Whether you are an avid runner or someone who loves nature, we welcome you to come and explore," Hackel said.

"This trail project, born out of need for an access road along the Sterling Relief and Red Run drains, is a gift to our community in a lot of ways," said Sterling Heights Mayor Michael Taylor. "The trail creates yet another non-motorized asset for our community, provides an appealing option for walking, running and biking and aligns well with Sterling Heights' commitment to sustainability. We're grateful for the intergovernmental collaboration we have that allow projects like this to happen."

Other partners in the project include: Sterling Relief Drainage District board; Macomb County Department of Roads; Lake St. Clair CISMA; Clinton River Watershed Council; Oakland County Water Resource Commissioner's Office; South Macomb Disposal Authority; and Consumers Energy.

The \$1.3 million drain restoration was funded by the 22 communities in the Red Run Intercounty Drainage District. The trail development and plantings were funded with a \$300,000 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and \$260,000 in state highway funds to Macomb County.

#### PHOTOS:

During strong or higher flow, especially after heavy rain, the three completed "J-hooks" at the Red Run Drain work in unison to prevent erosion of the drain bank by directing the flow toward the center of the channel.

Macomb County Public Works Commissioner Candice S. Miller discusses the Red Run Drain bank restoration and hike/bike trail project in Sterling Heights.

#### VIDEO:

Macomb County Public Works Commissioner Candice S. Miller, County Executive Mark Hackel and Sterling Heights City Councilwoman Barbara Ziarko discuss the Red Run Drain project that created a new hike-bike trail. [https://youtu.be/DWH\\_OPQzo-Q](https://youtu.be/DWH_OPQzo-Q)



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