



Candice S. Miller

Public Works Commissioner
Macomb County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Actions prevented many basements from flooding

'We became the last line of defense,' Macomb County Public Works Commissioner Candice Miller says

Actions taken by Macomb County Public Works employees at the height of last weekend's rainstorms prevented basement flooding in the county from becoming much more widespread, Public Works Commissioner Candice S. Miller said Monday.

Early Saturday morning, the crew at the Chapaton Pump Station on Nine Mile Road at Jefferson Avenue in St. Clair Shores opened the emergency bypass which sent chemically treated combined stormwater and sanitary sewage into Lake St. Clair. It was the first time in many years that the emergency bypass was used.

"We're aware that basement flooding unfortunately occurred in some spots in our county, and we sympathize with those residents," Miller said. "Our team really prevented thousands more basements in St. Clair Shores and Eastpointe from flooding and spared the many residents from the messy cleanup and having to throw away furniture or other personal possessions – a difficult and emotional task that too many individuals and families in metro Detroit have been experiencing the past couple of days."

Nearly 4 inches of rain fell in the St. Clair Shores-Eastpointe area between last Friday morning and before dawn Saturday. Other areas in metro Detroit reported 5 inches of rain, and totals in some locations topped 6 inches.

The widespread flooding that occurred in Detroit and the Grosse Pointes was caused in part when the Connor Creek Pump Station in Detroit shut down. Normally, combined sewer flow from St. Clair Shores and Eastpointe is sent to that pump station on its way to the Great Lakes Water Authority treatment facility.

"With that pump station down, we became the last line of defense," Miller said.

Combined stormwater and sanitary flow rapidly filled the Chapaton Retention Basin in St. Clair Shores. That volume and the combined heavy flow in the system serving the St. Clair Shores-

Eastpointe drainage district was treated with chlorine to state standards, and discharged into the lake. The exact number of gallons released is still being determined, but it will total in the millions.

“Let’s face it, the alternative is far less desirable. If we don’t discharge to the lake in those kinds of situations, the sewage will end up in basements,” Miller said.

Further north in Macomb County, the water level was high in many open drains, going across some roads and creeping close to yards of homes built close to drain easements. Thanks to extensive drain maintenance during the last four years by Macomb County Public Works Office crews working in many open channels to remove logjams and other debris, and who removed lots of sedimentation blockage from many underground storm sewers in cities all across Macomb County, the drains performed well over the weekend. Water levels receded significantly in less than 24 hours.

“That’s visual proof that the drains did their job,” Miller said. “Some of these drains, including creeks, streams and branches of the Clinton River, hadn’t undergone any drain maintenance for decades. The work of our crews in recent years also prevented crops from being completely underwater in farmers’ fields in the northern part of the county, which would have meant economic devastation for many farmers.”

The immediate impact of heavy rain like last weekend, and the cleanup that follows, are stark reminders that infrastructure below ground and out of sight cannot be out of mind throughout the region in order to better handle such rare rain events in the future.

“The reality is that no system can currently handle downpours totaling 4, 5 or even 6 inches or more occurring in 24 hours, like we saw last Friday and into early Saturday morning,” Miller said. “We need to have increased capacity and equipment redundancy so that we don’t have this kind of flooding. We need to invest in our underground infrastructure – not just immediately, but generationally.”

In Macomb County, for example, the Public Works Office is designing an additional pump station on Nine Mile Road which, as shown by the events of this weekend, would provide improved ability to convey combined sewer flow. Public Works officials also are working on projects to increase in-system storage of flow further upstream in order to reduce combined sewer overflows and discharges into Lake St. Clair.

Miller’s office is working with leaders at the state, local and federal levels in order to obtain funding for infrastructure improvements and reduce the cost of such improvements to ratepayers in the affected drainage districts.

PHOTOS:

The Gloede Drain at 22 Mile Road, east of Hayes Road in Macomb Township, after the rain stopped Saturday morning, June 26, 2021, and the same drain approximately 24 hours later.



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