

Crossroads

The Quarterly Journal of the County Road Association of Michigan

Volume 5 | Issue 2

Winter 2019

INNOVATION ON THE ROAD!

STORIES FROM THE 2019 CONSTRUCTION SEASON

*Dickinson CRC's
tire-rubber-enhanced
asphalt a rolling success* [Page 11](#)



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By the book - in Ottawa County
Houghton's disaster recovery - 18 months later



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Crossroads is the quarterly publication of the County Road Association (CRA) of Michigan. The 83 county members of CRA represent the unified, credible and effective voice for a safe and efficient county road system in Michigan.

The Association, headquartered three blocks north of the State Capitol, is dedicated to helping members promote and maintain a safe, efficient county road system including stewardship of the county road right-of-way in rural and urban Michigan.

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ON THE COVER:

Dickinson County Road Commission applies tire-rubber enhanced asphalt to CR 607.

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Next Publication

The theme for the Spring 2020 issue of *Crossroads* will cover trending topics and preview of features at the 2020 Highway Conference.

Crossroads' editorial team wants to hear from you. Call CRA at 517.482.1189 and share ideas for future issues!

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER



As I begin to write the President's column for the Fall issue of *Crossroads* magazine, I've just received the first forecast for snow of the 2019-2020 winter season. Perhaps I was enjoying the good fall weather a little too much and was pretending that warm weather would extend itself for a while longer.

But now it's back to reality. As my mind starts to prepare for the winter ahead, I look back on the successes of this season.

In our county, as well as yours, a lot has been accomplished. Across the state, agencies put every dollar, labor hour and piece of equipment to use

Every construction season is filled with challenges, and by this point in the year, every agency has been put to the test. But as I travel this state a little more often this year, I see the results of each agency's efforts.

Miles and miles of new pavement; endless amounts of chip seals; box culverts; bridges – the list goes on and on.

Before winter sets in to stay, I encourage each agency to look back and celebrate the successes of your summer season. Too soon, snow and other cold weather-related problems will come and take precedence over this year's projects.

Taking the time now to see the benefits of this summer's efforts will hopefully inspire us for the trials we must prepare for in the coming year.

I wish every agency a successful end to your construction season. May your projects end on time, under budget and as safely as possible.

Celebrate the success of the 2019 construction season, and best of luck with challenges that lie ahead.

David Pettersch
CRA President
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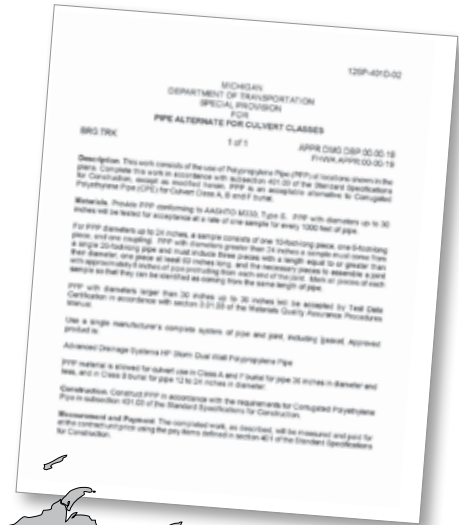
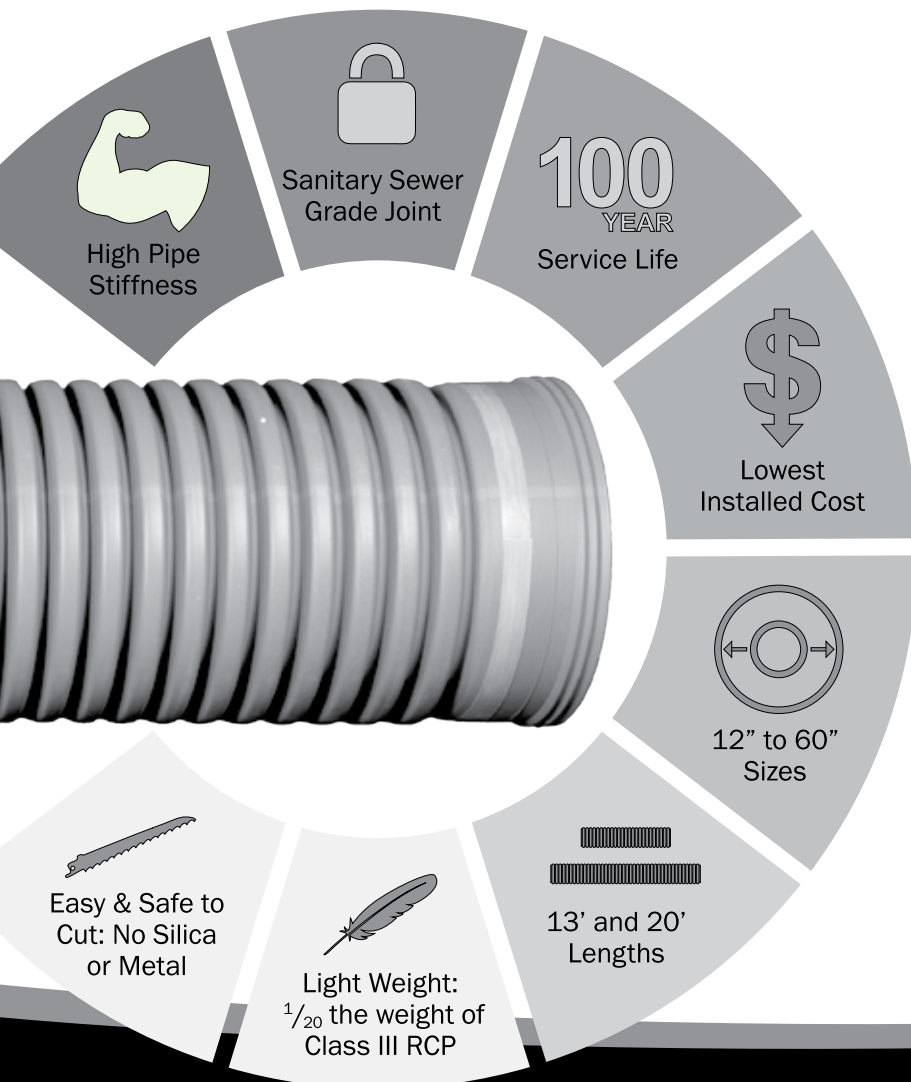
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MEMBER PROFILE

OTTAWA COUNTY

Working by the book: Ottawa's Strategic improvement Plan keeps communities on the same page coordinating road improvements.

Named, of course, for the Ottawa or Odawa native peoples, Ottawa County is diverse in its people, groups, geography and industry. Due largely to employment in the surrounding agriculture industry, the county has a strong Hispanic population, as well as a significant Native American population and European ancestry mostly from Holland and Germany.

The county with the slogan "where you belong," Ottawa also ranks as Michigan's second-healthiest county (after Grand Traverse)! With 30 miles of shoreline nestled against Lake Michigan, the interior of Ottawa is also a water wonderland and is 65% water.

A visit to the **Ottawa County Road Commission** (OCRC) makes two priorities very clear: Asset management planning and good communication with the community.

Managing director **Brett Laughlin**, PE, has been at OCRC for 21 years, including 10 years at the top. Before landing in West Michigan, he performed engineering work on some high-profile projects across the US including the theater plaza beneath St. Louis' famous Gateway Arch and the Denver International Airport.

Laughlin began one of his pet projects shortly after taking the helm at OCRC.

"I started doing an annual 5-year Strategic Improvement Plan in 2008," he said. "Our county commissioners and township officials really like the information. It includes all our financial data and sums up what we plan to do in the coming five years."

"We have the data to show how Ottawa uses a 'mix of fixes' to manage our road system assets," Laughlin says.

OCRC's Strategic Improvement Plan will help the road commission meet the new statute requiring every county to not only abide by asset management planning, but to have such a written plan on the shelf starting in 2020.

"Having a good plan helps us make good decisions, but we are still limited by dollars," Laughlin said. "We can be using a good asset management strategy but the road system may still decline – and we shouldn't be penalized for that. We have goals ... but the only way we may achieve them is with an increased and sustainable road funding package."

Working with the community

The Strategic Improvement Plan also helps OCRC work well with Ottawa's 17 townships.

Every summer Laughlin solicits township input before updating the plan, which has added photos and grown in scope over

JUST THE

Facts:

Ottawa County Road Commission

Office headquarters: Grand Haven

Staff: 107 full time

No. of commissioners: 5 (appointed)

Miles of paved roads: Total: 1,389 Primary: 427 Local: 962

Miles of unpaved roads: Total: 315 Primary: 0 Local: 315

MDOT contract: Yes (521 lane miles)

No. of bridges: 136

Annual budget: \$27,800,000 MTF (FY 2019)
\$4,725,000 Federal/State Grand (FY 2019)

Local revenue: \$5,000,000 Township Contributions (FY 2019)
\$4,000,000 Countywide Road Millage (FY 2019)

Annual snowfall: 80 inches

OCRC established: 1911

No. of garages: 4

Office built: 1988

FUN FACT:

Ottawa is home to the first hot-dipped galvanized steel bridge in the US. It was built in 1966 to replace a 62-year-old sunken log structure. In 2017, 51 years later, the bridge was reported to be in excellent shape with no signs of rusting or staining. In fact, at that point it was expected to be good until 2087! #GotTheir\$Worth galvanizeit.org/project-gallery/stearns-bayou-bridge

the last decade. The current book is 73 pages, with appendices for PASER rating maps by township, five years of planned projects funded with Ottawa's 2015 countywide road millage (½ mil), and a table of planned road improvements from 2019-2023.

"For us this plan is what it's all about: It helps coordinate with our local partners so we don't duplicate our efforts, and have minimal disruption for the travelling public," Laughlin said. "If we were to tear up a road after we just paved it to accommodate a drain improvement or another facility – it just looks bad and is inefficient."

"By having a future plan, we're able to coordinate with utilities and other

projects impacting the roadway," Laughlin said. "It may take longer to finish the job, but drivers do not experience double disruption."

OCRC encourages townships to contribute 100 percent of the cost for resurfacing or other improvements to subdivision roads.

"After providing winter maintenance and patching potholes, there is no more Act 51 revenue left to improve the more than 436 miles of subdivision roads. In Ottawa, our arrangement with the townships for subdivision improvements and funding for dust control on gravel roads helps stretch our Act 51 revenues," Laughlin said.

Seven townships have local road millages and one has a dust control millage. The countywide road millage is divided between the municipalities and the county.



#WeMadelt! The Undertaker

One of the worst enemies of roads is water, and when it can't readily drain away from the roadbed, trouble ensues. Particularly beneath guardrails, assorted debris and decaying plant material "berm up" and prevent water drainage.

Enter the OCRC mechanic team, who said, "We can make that." And thus, "The Undertaker" was born, a one-of-a-kind shoulder grooming tool.

The Undertaker is a Bobcat with an attachment arm that extends under the guardrail and pushes back the trash and debris. You can find the video of "The Undertaker" in action at https://youtu.be/AX_clfwD8I.

Efficiencies adopted

Like every road agency, necessity was the mother of invention at OCRC. To do more with a smaller budget, Laughlin and the commissioners have invested in:

- **Satellite surveying equipment** – Allows one person to do the job that once required 3-4 people.
- **Multi-county chip sealing** – Ottawa and Muskegon road commissions have partnered in this road-strengthening upgrade utilizing their own workers. "It is very cost-effective and our guys take great pride in it," Laughlin said. In 2019, OCRC chip sealed 49 miles of road.
- **Wing plows** – Allow 1.5 lanes (road + shoulder) to be plowed in one pass, saving fuel and staff time, and clearing the road faster.

- **In-house truck fabrication** – With its 91-truck-fleet (single axle) averaging 15 years old, OCRC employs 12 mechanics. When not repairing trucks, mechanics build out truck chassis with customized stainless equipment. OCRC's goal is a truck fleet averaging seven years old.

"We know what our niche is and what we do best," Laughlin said. "We do excellent concrete joint replacements, removal and replacement of road culverts, and perform chip seal surface treatments, just to name a few."

"At the same time, we have sold our paver because we did not use it as much as we thought. When we have to start renting equipment to do a job, we explore contracting that work out," Laughlin said.

In addition to the road commission, Laughlin and his road commissioners also oversee the county's Public Utilities

Department. This helps coordinate project work and brings additional skills to the road commission team.

Thriving on social media

When some new road commissioners arrived on the OCRC board in 2010, the board began to focus on doing more to educate the public about roads.

"In 2017 we created a position that was part-time communications/public relations," Laughlin said. "We soon realized that this needed to be full time, which it is now."

The communications administrator created a Facebook page, which now has about 4,000 followers. "Social media is where we get our traction, get our messages out," Laughlin commented.

The administrator talks daily to OCRC foremen, project engineers and superintendents, and then makes updates

to Facebook, Twitter and Instagram throughout the day. The position also monitors social media pages, shoots video and creates a monthly newsletter.

Facing the future

Laughlin's biggest concerns looking at the next decade in Ottawa County include the work pool and contractor availability.

Not enough young people are going into the fields of heavy equipment mechanics and CDL drivers, Laughlin said. "It's hard to have a good pool to hire from," and legalized marijuana is expected to make that even more of a challenge.

The shortage of contractors and their work stoppages over the last two years are also a serious concern. OCRC's communication staffer, **Alex Doty**, is serving on CRA's working group to identify strategies for recruiting new road agency workers. ---

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When the rubber really meets the road...

Dickinson County Road Commission is testing the use of recycled tires in a colder climate

Ask the average lay person how road agencies can reduce road construction and increase pavement longevity and you'll get a laundry list! Perhaps one of the most common fix-all the public talks about is using all those recycled tires in asphalt. **The Dickinson County Road Commission (DCRC)** has been experimenting with this, one of the first to do so in a very northern climate.

Laying some rubber

The history of using recycled tires in roads, or engineered crumb rubber (ECR), is relatively short. Warmer southern states, including California, Florida, South Carolina and Arizona, have been using ECR in asphalt since the early 2000s.

While limited testing has been performed in cooler climates, DCRC claims to be the northernmost agency in Michigan to experiment with ECR.

"Dickinson has a culture that is open to exploring new ways to do things," said Lance Malburg, PE, DCRC county highway engineer.

In the past, DCRC has partnered to test hot-in-place recycling in a cold climate, prefabricated chip seal and fiberized asphalt.

The newest project on DCRC's horizon is the experimental ECR – hot mix asphalt (HMA) project on County Road 607, north of Iron Mountain. It's a partnership between DCRC and Michigan Technological University, Michigan Department of Energy Great Lakes and the Environment, and the Dickinson County Bike Path Committee.



+ Bags of powdered rubber ready mix.

ECR Asphalt Research Goals:

1. Demonstrate dry ECR + HMA are more easily controlled than "wet" liquid rubber road binder;
2. Compare ECR HMA to traditional HMA in a cold climate; and
3. Investigate cold weather cracking resistance of ECR HMA.

"Being so close to Michigan Tech, we try to take advantage of working with the University on new ideas," Malburg said. That includes funding.

"This particular project came about because it was something a professor at Michigan Tech had been researching and wanted to study in the real environment. Dickinson put in \$250,000, we received a \$300,00 grant and Michigan Tech contributed \$100,000. That's relatively unheard of for the University," Malburg said.



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+ DCRC lays down the first patch of “dry mix” ECR-HMA in their half-mile test on CR 607.

Bouncing into the details

The ECR-HMA project has three sections just over a half-mile long. Two segments are different percentages of “dry mix” ECR, and the third is the traditional asphalt control.

Dry mix ECR is unique in that it’s crumbled and mixed into asphalt on-site rather than melted into the asphalt and then transported to the job site.

“There was a slight learning curve in application, but we figured it out,” Malburg said.

Malburg hopes the project will demonstrate “dry mix” ECR-HMA is not only smoother, quieter and longer lasting than traditional asphalt, but also more economical and flexible in formula, allowing compositional changes on-site.

How’s it look?

The test project on CR 607 was completed this past June, so it will be many months until DCRC knows how effective ECR-enhanced HMA works. But early reports are good.

“Michigan Tech did early audio tests and the road is definitely quieter,” said Malburg.

And it’s not just the engineering that’s panning out positively. “With the process being more efficient, county residents can get out and enjoy improved roads more quickly than with traditional methods,” Malburg said. ---



+ A completed look at ECR-enhanced HMA on CR 607.



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LEGISLATOR PROFILE



STATE REPRESENTATIVE JACK O'MALLEY

Serving his first term in the Michigan House of Representatives, Michigan State Representative Jack O'Malley comes to the Legislature with almost 40 years of television and radio broadcasting experience.

Rep. O'Malley serves as chair of the Michigan House Transportation Committee and as a member of the Tax Policy Committee, Education Committee and Energy Committee. He currently represents the "Fighting101st District," which includes Leelanau, Benzie, Manistee and Mason counties.

CRA's deputy director **Ed Noyola** and *Crossroads* sat down with Rep. O'Malley to discuss his transportation experience and his approach to chairing the House Transportation Committee.

Michigan residents. With the budget done, what role do you imagine playing in the continuing discussion about future increased transportation revenue?

REP. O'MALLEY: I hope that as chair of the House Transportation Committee, I can help bring some clarity and balance to the conversation. In a recent poll, Michigan residents have made it clear they do not want a 45-cent gas tax increase. How do we move forward from that?

I believe it isn't always about the amount of money, it's about sustainability, a realistic timeframe to get the job done and, this is the part I think "Lansing" forgets all the time, how you spend that money is vitally important.

If we hear the road funding need is \$2 billion, and we want to look at how we can take \$1.5 billion and make it spend like \$2 billion, we believe that's a good middle ground everyone can meet on.

One of the questions I frequently ask people is whether, "it's the state's responsibility to pay for the fix and repair of every single road in Michigan?" Everywhere I go, the answer is always "no." So how do we pay for the roads? We've got to provide locals with ways to raise money. Right now, the only way we really have is a road millage or special assessment. Are we giving everyone options? ▶

CRA: Rep. O'Malley, you began your tenure as chair of House Transportation Committee with an ambitious goal of learning everything you could about transportation with twice-a-week committee meetings where CRA often presented. Can you tell us about how that started?

REP. O'MALLEY: I asked to be on the Transportation Committee and was excited when I found out I would be chair. I knew a little bit about roads, but I needed to know more. And with my background in interviews and asking questions, it only made sense to ask more questions.

I made it a point to seek out those in policy roles. I knew they had been around for some time and wanted use policy staff as a guide for how we move forward. The more questions we asked, and the more answers we received, it became clear there is a lot of noise about roads. Once we put that noise aside, it's amazing how clear things can become and that's what happened.

Something I learned is Michigan has a massively complicated transportation

system, and what's in the headlines isn't necessarily what's happening on the ground. Road funding proposals that focus mostly on interstate or state roads grabbed a lot of headlines. But most of the roads we drive on are local roads and streets, and they're the ones in the worst condition.

CRA: How has your view of county road agencies changed or what have you learned about county road agencies after those few months of committee meetings?

REP. O'MALLEY: They [road agencies] are opinionated! And that opinion from the north to the south differs, sometimes greatly. I respect the fact that everybody is focused on their county or municipality.

Our job is to look at all 83 counties and 530-plus cities and villages.

Something I thought coming in and now I believe is that we as a legislative body tend to write urban rules. Sometimes we forget about the medium guys and the little guys. We need options that fit all sizes of counties. One size does not fit all.

CRA: Transportation funding continues to be the number-one topic among



In the past we made it a point to focus on what we could do to give locals more options in workflow and funding so they can best manage their communities. I think that's what our 2019 transportation efficiency package of bills does and something we will continue to do.

CRA: Where do you see the future priorities of the House Transportation Committee?

REP. O'MALLEY: I was just chatting about this with someone today. Where are we headed with electric vehicles? We're not to the point where we can give an exact answer to that question, but we need to be looking at how we are going to charge for this, how are we going to tax this, how are you going to pull into the gas station and plug in? I think we need to take a real look at the next 30 years moving forward with road funding.

Another thing I think we need to discuss is public transportation. Talk about a one-size-fits-all system! We've gotta look at a realistic approach to public transportation that is better suited to the diversity of areas in Michigan.

CRA: On a lighter note, can you talk to us about your 40 years in broadcasting business?

REP. O'MALLEY: What I loved best about being on the air was that I could communicate with people. I didn't get into radio because I was a rock lover or a country lover, I got into it because I love the communication aspect of it.



+ Representative O'Malley shoveling snow outside WTCM in Traverse City.

To communicate with people, provide them comfort in times of tragedy or to be the one announcing school closings when snow's up past your knees – you were doing something.

That's what I loved about broadcasting, and I felt that I could bring that same passion to the Legislature – so here I am! --



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MiWB in action

From Lake Superior road damage to paving gravel roads in Washtenaw County local road agencies benefit from new statewide wetland mitigation program.

What does a 5-mile road project in Washtenaw County have in common with a cedar swamp and a Lake Superior-ravaged road at the tip of the Keweenaw Peninsula? The answer is a new statewide collaboration among local road agencies to mitigate wetland impacts resulting from road projects.

This summer, the Michigan Wetland Board (MiWB) released the program's first wetland mitigation site sponsored by the Keweenaw County Road Commission (KCRC), which is located in Mohawk on the Upper Peninsula's Keweenaw Peninsula.

MiWB was established by state law in 2017 to assist city, village and county road agencies in meeting statutory requirements that they set aside and preserve wetland acreage to compensate for impacts to other wetlands that were impacted by a road project. These are called wetland pre-mitigation sites or wetland preservation sites.

MiWB uses state funds to purchase and preserve acres of forested wetland. The resulting mitigation credits are available free of charge to local road agencies needing mitigation credits to comply with state environmental laws, so that the road project may continue. Depending on the extent of mitigation needed, the credits may or may not need to be in the same watershed, according to state environmental laws.

While Michigan has several commercial, private-sector wetland sites, the credits are costly and further drive up the price of local road projects. A few counties and municipalities have their own wetland sites; however, the expertise and cost required to set them up is significant.

That's why one of the first MiWB sites selected was 80 acres in Keweenaw's Bete Grise Preserve, about 10 miles southwest of Copper Harbor. The credits are urgently needed by the **Keweenaw County Road Commission**, which must relocate Gay Lac La Belle, a primary road, inland to avoid further erosion by the historic high-water levels of Lake Superior.

"I contacted the Keweenaw Community Forest Company, which manages the Bete Grise Preserve on behalf of



Michigan Wetland Board
for Local Transportation Agencies

These wetlands have been created, restored or preserved by the Michigan Wetland Board for Local Transportation Agencies (PA 246, 2016).

Wetland mitigation sites allow county road agencies, cities and villages to complete important road projects that impact Michigan wetlands.

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the Houghton Keweenaw Conservation District," said Jeff Silagy, MiWB wetland manager. "The land MiWB funded for Keweenaw was private land within the boundaries of the Bete Grise Preserve."

"Most county road agencies don't have the expertise to manage a wetland, so it was a perfect alliance between the Keweenaw County Road Commission, the Houghton-Keweenaw Conservation District and the Keweenaw Community Forest Company," Silagy said. "State funds through MiWB will allow a half-mile of Gay Lac La Belle Road to be relocated in 2020 or 2021."

Deciding how much wetland is needed

The amount of wetland to be mitigated depends on the scope and type of impact a road project has on an existing wetland. A road agency must preserve or create a wetland in its watershed if the project will impact one-third acre or more. If less than one-third acre, the agency can tap a mitigation site anywhere in Michigan.

Although KCRC will need 2-3 acres of mitigation credits to complete Gay Lac La Belle Road project, the Bete Grise Preserve site has additional credits that can be shared with other Michigan county road agencies.

A local advisory panel with representatives from KCRC, the **Baraga County Road Commission** and **Houghton County Road Commission** approved a mitigation credit request from the **Washtenaw County Road Commission (WCRC)**.

WCRC was granted 0.35 acre from the Keweenaw County site, allowing it to pave two gravel roads in Salem Township: Five Mile Road and Chubb Road.



"While we were planning the projects, we researched how to mitigate the impact on the adjacent wetland. We looked at buying wetland credits for sites in the community," said **Matt MacDonell**, PE, WCRC director of engineering.

"It was going to be about \$40,000 to secure the necessary credit. But thanks to the Keweenaw County MiWB site, we were able to use the credits with no cost. It was one more expense we didn't have to incur on a very expensive project," MacDonell said.

The five-member Michigan Wetland Advisory Board (MiWB) is statutorily charged with utilizing the state funds, which are off-the-top Michigan Transportation Funds, to establish sites, facilitate multi-party land agreements and create local MiWB advisory panels across the state for the purpose of making road projects quicker and less costly.

MiWB can create wetland bank sites, wetland pre-mitigation sites or wetland preservation sites. The Keweenaw site is the first and several more are in progress. The program is a unique collaboration across many organizations coming together in win-win agreements to satisfy environmental concerns while also advancing road projects in a cost-effective manner. ---



+ Wetland site in Keweenaw County.



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HOUGHTON COUNTY'S ROAD TO RECOVERY

PROGRESS REPORT: 18 MONTHS AFTER THE 1,000-YEAR STORM

Michigan is well-known for its unpredictable weather. From the polar vortex last winter to 80-degree days this October, longtime residents have become used to unusual weather. Yet when a "1,000-year storm" hit the Upper Peninsula on father's day weekend 2018, the rain did more damage than anyone could have expected.

More than seven inches of rain was dumped over Houghton County in three hours on June 15-17, 2018, devastating county and state roads and bridges. When the water receded, it left behind \$30 million in damages to the Houghton County road system, including 60 sinkholes, 150 road washouts (including 15 considered massive) and another 150 damaged roads.

Then-Gov. Snyder declared a state of disaster for Houghton and Menominee counties.

Kevin Harju, PE, engineer-manager **Houghton County Road Commission**, was one of many shocked by the devastation. "Of course, everyone was in disbelief when they saw it," Harju said. "There was really no warning; the forecast wasn't calling for such a severe storm to come through."

Some roads were closed for days, cutting off access to residents' homes. Large landslides, boulders and debris had rolled into local neighborhoods, making roads impassable.

Progress since the storm

In a county with 846 miles of roads, damages to the local and city roads totaled over \$71 million. Following federal aid protocol, HCRC immediately started working with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Michigan



⊕ Houghton Canal Road at Oscar Bay before repairs.



⊕ Houghton Canal Road at Oscar Bay after repairs.

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Department of Transportation (MDOT) to address needed repairs. HCRC worked with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to address the repairs to HCRC's local system. With over 150 roads affected to varying degrees, acquiring funding was vital to recovery.

Now 18 months since the event, restoration is three-quarters completed.

"We had approximately \$22.5 million in damage on our federal aid system. We've got probably 60-70% of that completed and we still have some jobs we plan to finish before winter," Harju said just before press time. "On our local system with FEMA, we have about \$5 million of work completed, so that's far less than the \$16 million of needed repairs on the local system."

HCRC had the support of the local community throughout. Residents who had heavy equipment, such as tractors, helped HCRC get others to safety the day of the disaster.

The general attitude of the public has remained positive.

"They weren't asking 'what can you do for us?', they were asking 'what can we do for you?'" Harju said. "Of course, we're a long way from recovered from the flood, but we've been working on it. The funding has been an issue, but everyone understands that it's going to take a few years to recover from such a big event." HCRC has been working with Legislators to try and secure \$4.5 million to provide the 20% match requirement on the FHWA repairs. ►

BEFORE



+ Paradise Road before repairs.

AFTER



+ Paradise Road during repairs.

Check out HCRC's pavement restoration policy at micountyroads.org/HoughtonPavementRestorationPolicy.



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Be prepared

Disasters like this come out of nowhere, and there is little that can be done to prevent damage. However, Harju provided some tips for counties facing such a natural disaster.

"The big thing is to document everything. It's real critical when the flood has just happened...before any repairs are made, start to document it as best you can. Video it, film it, make sure you have GPS coordinates on it," said Harju.

"In Houghton County, we have a pavement restoration policy in place... which is going to mean millions more in aid for our repairs than if we did not have that policy in place. You have to have a pavement policy in place prior to the storm event for it to qualify...it could mean many millions of dollars of more assistance for the road commission if a big storm drops by." ---



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Recycled plastic bags ~~on~~ in the road



Maybe there is something new under the sun.

One Michigan road commission is taking another run at including recyclable plastic bags and food-grade foam into its hot mix asphalt (HMA) roads.

It has been tried before, but a new additive by the Dow Chemical Company® is being added to the melted plastic/foam and then incorporated in the HMA as the polymer. Polymers are used to extend pavement life.

In a partnership between Dow®, Larkin Township and the **Midland County Road Commission (MCRC)**, the road agency

has paved the first public road in the US utilizing the recycled plastics and additive, along with pavement fabric in an asphalt road.

This approach to roads was tested in India, Indonesia and on a private road in Texas, before being brought to MCRC's attention by Larkin Township.

Discussions ensued between all parties including the asphalt contractor, and then **Terry Palmer**, PE, MCRC managing director decided to test out the new product. "I'm always up for something new," he said.



+ Midland County crews work to turn plastic bags into asphalt.

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So, this summer, MCRC paved segments of four different roads with recycled material: One was an ultrathin HMA overlay, and three were 1.5"-2" thick HMA overlays because the roads were in worse condition.

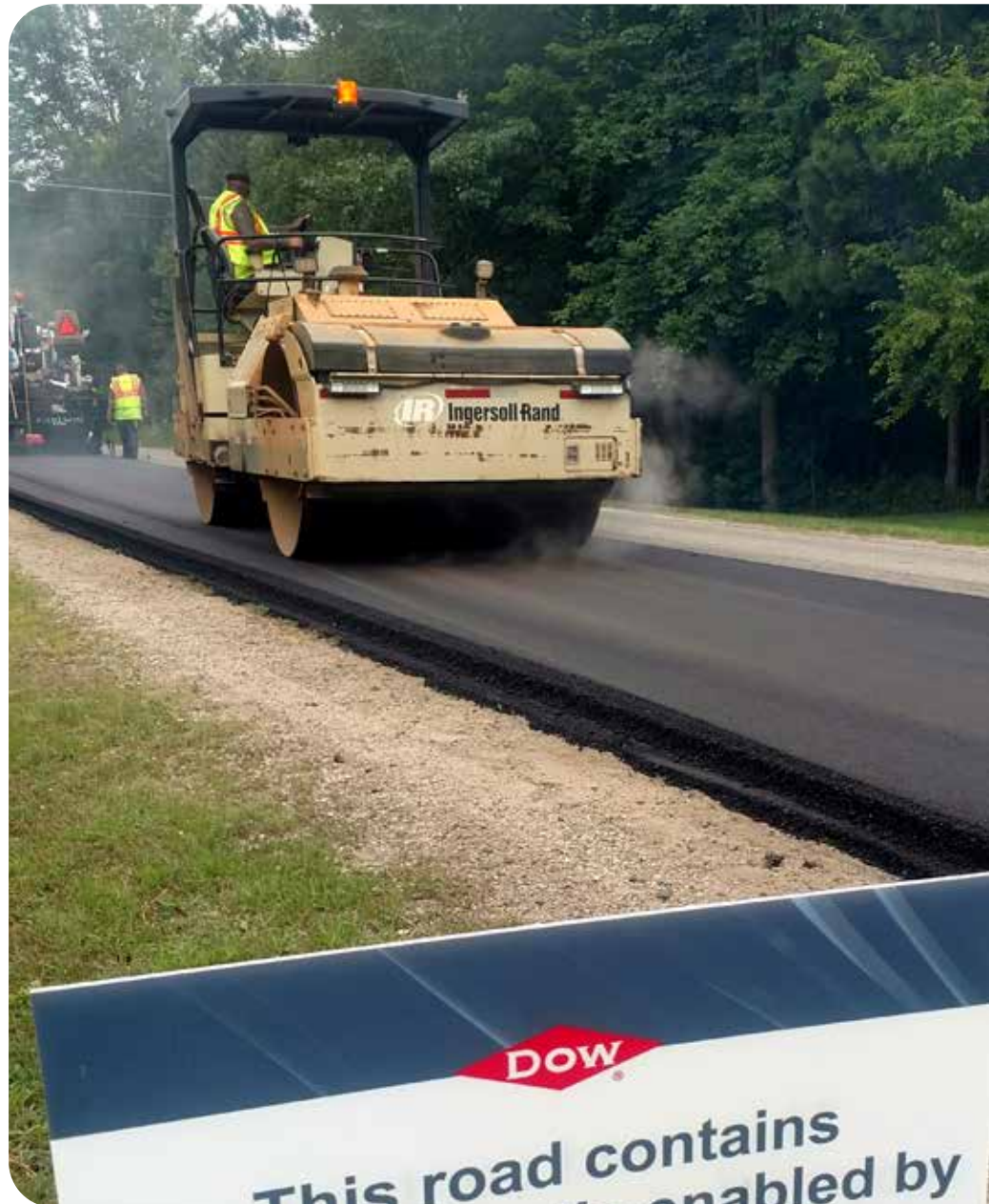
"The day I was running over to one of the job sites to check on a paving project, I was following a garbage truck that had some of these plastic bags billowing out from it and I thought 'Huh, we might be able to take care of that problem'," Palmer said.

"They tell us this process uses the equivalent of 117,000 plastic bags per mile of paving, so in essence we gave the equivalent of 300,000 plastic bags new life in these road projects this summer," Palmer said.

The recycled plastic was added to the liquid asphalt along with the donated Dow product. K-Tech blended the materials together with the liquid asphalt, then shipped it to Central Asphalt, the contractor.

Central purged its liquid delivery system in the plant before (and after) producing this up-cycled HMA batch, then shipped and placed the asphalt in the traditional manner. No differences nor difficulties were noted in the placement process, Palmer said.

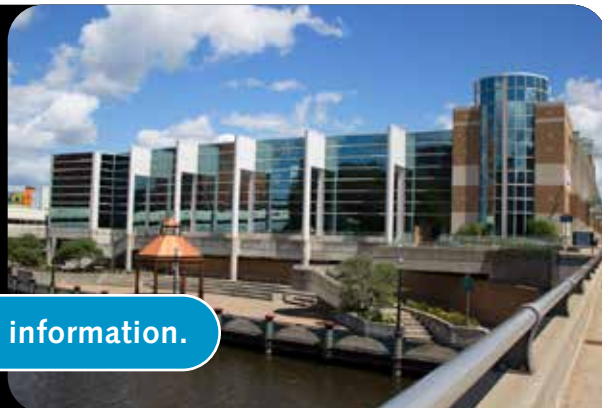
The road segments will be evaluated and compared with other roads paved in summer 2019 in the coming years. 🚗



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+ SAM President David Greaves, superintendent, Gladwin County Road Commission, kicks off the 2019 Superintendents Seminar.

Ask SAM:

Reporting back from the SAM Superintendents Seminar

Q: As a road professional, what was your favorite part of the summer?

A dark gray sky and full-on rain couldn't keep the summer memories from peeking out at the 2019 Superintendents Association of Michigan (SAM) Superintendents Seminar in October. Crossroads was on the scene asking road professionals for their favorite work-related memories from the 2019 construction season.

A: WATCHING NEW HIRES BLOOM INTO PROFESSIONALS

Ken Harris,
superintendent of maintenance,
Washtenaw County Road Commission



Many county road agencies bring on new staff when the warm weather hits. As new funds are ramping up, more hands are needed to get everything done during Michigan's limited construction season.

While hiring trends tend to wax and wane seasonally and year-to-year, Harris said this year was particularly good for Washtenaw.

"This summer we were blessed to see a lot of new hires come through our road commission program," said **Ken Harris**, superintendent of maintenance, **Washtenaw County Road Commission**. "Seeing their growth throughout the summer has been exciting as a professional."

A: GETTING AN EARLY START ON WINTER PREPARATIONS

Randy Dellaposta,
director of operations,
Genesee County Road Commission



Many of us wish the hot days and warm summer nights wouldn't end, but superintendents are always looking ahead and making preparations for what's next.

Genesee County Road Commission's (GCRC) director of operations, **Randy Dellaposta**, said his favorite summer memory was GCRC's investment in a new anti-icing system.

"We bought a brand new Brine Maker® from Cargill and invested in four 10,000 double-wall tanks," Dellaposta said. "We have two at our Flint location and two at our Elk garages, as well as two more that will be purchased with this upcoming budget."

"That will give us the versatility to take care of any winter-related issue that comes up across Genesee County and help us provide quality service to the motoring public," he said.



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A: 100 PERCENT COUNTY-FUNDED ROAD CONSTRUCTION

Troy Howes,
superintendent,
Shiawassee County Road Commission



Nothing's better than the feeling of accomplishment from seeing progress occur in a short period of time. **Troy Howes**, superintendent, **Shiawassee County Road Commission (SCRC)**, said his favorite memory from the 2019 construction season was just that.

"Everybody knows Michigan has such a short window of opportunity to do road construction with early winters, wet spring and wet falls. My favorite memory is seeing the roads get improved, whether it's gravelling, paving, ditching or anything else that helps out the general public," Howes said.

As for how that progress was made, SCRC prioritized and put new road funding to good use.

"Using our new gas tax money, the Shiawassee County Road Commission decided it wasn't going to do any wage increases or buy any new equipment, it's going all into roads," Howes said.

"This year, we paved close to 24 miles of road with a scratch-course chip seal, 100 percent funded by county money," he said.

A: JACKSON'S CONTINUED SUCCESS WITH RECYCLING

Bob Griffis,
director of operations,
Jackson County Department of Transportation



Last summer, *Crossroads* covered the **Jackson County Department of Transportation's (JCDOT)** cold-in-place recycling machine.

This year, JCDOT used the equipment to accomplish a significant amount of work across Jackson County, said **Bob Griffis**, director of operations for JCDOT.

"We're pushing close to 40 miles of road this year," Griffis said. "We did well in 2018, and we knew with a little experience we could go further - but this year was a significant improvement."

It isn't just Griffis and county residents who are enjoying their smooth rides down the road. JCDOT employees are enthusiastic about using the new machinery, and learning a new process as well.

"From the engineering to the lab process, our people are really excited to continue to learn and expand their knowledge," Griffis said. ---

+ 2019 scratch course paving / chip seal in Shiawassee County.




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“Best Practices” for posting seasonal weight restrictions



Communicating with the local community and business partners is a key role of county road agencies. Many residents look to their road agencies for first-hand road information.

Posting seasonal weight restrictions on road agency websites is one example of road agencies keeping the businesses informed. But what are some ways to keep this material highly accessible and most useful?

That's what CRA's Permit Subcommittee set out to identify last summer. The results are “best practices” for posting seasonal weight restrictions, a standard many counties are now considering.

Crossroads reached out to **Keweenaw County Road Commission (KCRC)** to see how it is implementing these best practices into communicating seasonal weight restrictions.

Giving partners a “heads up”

Gregg Patrick, PE, KCRC engineer-manager, knows how important the timber industry is to Keweenaw, and how log haulers are affected by seasonal weight restrictions. So, he makes personal calls and texts to local timber businesses as soon as the road commission decides to implement restrictions.

“The industry has requested that. ‘Hey, can you give us as many days’ or hours’ notice as you possibly can?’” Patrick said. “So, we always strive to do that. If we make a decision and it's 48 hours out, we let them know so they can start hauling extra loads or pre-hauling to an all-season road staging area. Generally, we give them three days’ notice, or four if we can.”

The advance notice not only helps KCRC avoid some conflicts, but it keeps timber businesses running smoothly.

“They can have fewer interruptions in their businesses as well, so they can keep moving, whether it's moving to an all-season road system or shutting down for their normal spring break period.” Patrick said.

Counties should consider this member-developed model and send a “group text” to the most common permit-pullers, including loggers, aggregate crushers or road construction companies, once the agency knows seasonal weight restrictions are imminent. This best practice demonstrates good customer relations with local businesses.



What are some other best practices?

Other recommended best practices have to do with posting seasonal weight restrictions on websites:

- Use a “hot button” on your home page for quick navigation.
- Link to a map or list all-season roads on the weight restrictions page, as this is what customers want.
- Link to restricted roads, as required by law.
- When you make a change, date it so permit-seekers know the information is up-to-date.
- Provide permit application instructions or links to them, whether handled by Oxcart, online PDFs or other methods.
- Link to CRA's seasonal weight restrictions web map of all 83 counties.
- Update your listing on CRA's statewide map as seasonal restrictions are removed.

CRA is working to make seasonal restriction information more accessible to heavy haulers via a seasonal weight restrictions app that can be accessed via phone or mobile device. Companies could also “subscribe” to certain counties and be automatically notified when that county's weight restriction information changes on the CRA web page. CRA is presently in the fundraising mode. ➡

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CROSSROADS EVENT Calendar

DEC. 3 (morning)

5th annual Legal Issues Symposium

Right-of-way acquisition, road abandonment and ROW challenges caused by broadband/wireless communication expansion are all on tap at the 5th Annual Legal Issues Symposium. Comfort Inn & Suites, Mt. Pleasant.

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DEC. 3 (afternoon)

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REGISTRATION LIVE!

FEB. 4-6

County Engineers Workshop

The engineering extravaganza of the year! This CRA conference organized by LTAP will have the latest, greatest ideas for road engineers. Continuing education units available. Little River Casino Resort, Manistee.

To register and for details on all CRA events, visit www.micountyroads.org/events.



Key transitions at...

...Road Commissions and Departments

Jeff Loeser is now superintendent for the **Mason County Road Commission**

Steve Wasylik, PE, is now managing director at the **Livingston County Road Commission**

...CRA

Gabby Cushman has started as PR intern for **CRA**.

Charley Hays has started as event intern for **CRA**.

...Mile Marker

Patrick Malone, commissioner, has retired from the **Kent County Road Commission** after 12 years of service.

Diane Martin, executive secretary has retired from the **Kent County Road Commission** after 43 years of service.

Jim Johnson, PE, engineer, has retired from the **Leelanau County Road Commission** after 21 years of service.

Eric Moody, superintendent, has retired from the **Mason County Road Commission** after 34 years of service.

Sam SanMiguel, superintendent, has retired from the **Midland County Road Commission** after 32 years of service.

Do you have a manager-level staff member you want recognized in *Crossroads*?
Call Dustin Earley at 517.482.1189, or email dearley@micountyroads.org.

EDITOR'S NOTE



Celebrate the accomplishment and innovations of 2019

This issue of *Crossroads* is devoted to the innovations and new projects that county road agencies completed in the 2019 construction season.

I'm always amazed at the innovations county road agencies come up with!

Some say: What new things can you really do with concrete or asphalt? From new equipment that was either created in-house or purchased to stretch the staffs' abilities, to additives and seals that may stretch another few years out of pavement – many tests are being performed at the local level.

Some agencies have implemented a public/private partnership, new labor contract, multi-agency collaboration, asset management plan, new information technology or completed a new bridge.

Take a few moments this fall to stop and celebrate the new things done this year. While it's challenging to please all your local partners, take a moment to reflect on how rewarding it is, at the same time.

At the Association, we're also innovating!

For our Associate Members, this is the first year we've adopted online trade show booth selections for our 2020 Highway Conference.

With our road agency members, CRA celebrates MDOT getting the local bridge bundling initiative off the ground with \$23 million of unexpected federal funds. Twenty-nine additional local bridges will be fixed in 2020! And Michigan gets the chance to test efficiencies in the bundling process.

The Association itself has signed a lease and completed plans to move to 101 S. Washington Square in late March. This exciting move will better integrate us into downtown Lansing dialogue.

So, while we're all rushing into winter snowplowing and conference planning, take a minute to celebrate the innovations of 2019.

Speaking of celebrations, the staff and the board of CRA wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Here's hoping a snowstorm doesn't pull you away from the holiday table – again this year.

Denise Donohue

Denise Donohue, CAE, APR
CRA Director | ddonohue@micountyroads.org

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