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Commissioners Highlight Potential Impacts of Projected High Water

Saginaw County Public Works Commissioner Brian Wendling as well as Bay and Tuscola County Drain Commissioners Joseph Rivet & Bob Mantey today unveiled a map of the area projecting the potential impact of elevated water levels on Bay, Saginaw and Tuscola Counties. The map, developed by Spicer Group, Inc. at the request of the Commissioners, demonstrates the reach high water levels could have on the Community based on elevations. The Commissioners are hoping to create awareness of the possible flooding scenarios the water levels may produce.

The United States Army Corps of Engineers is projecting Saginaw Bay and water levels will rise up to another eleven (11) inches this summer. The model created by Spicer Group uses elevation data collected by the counties over the last several years using LiDAR technology. Although it does not account for berms or other flood prevention structures, the map shows the land areas of the Counties where the elevations will be lower than the predicted Saginaw Bay and River levels - depending on conditions.

“High water levels will not only affect the shoreline,” Commissioner Wendling said. “There are many square miles of land area throughout the Counties at lower elevations that will see the impact as water seeks its own level.” “As the map clearly demonstrates significant areas of Saginaw County near the Saginaw River will feel the effects” he added.

The Commissioners are most concerned about a storm event bringing several inches of rain when a strong northeast wind is present. “We know water levels in the Saginaw River and Bay can rise a couple feet with a northeast wind” Rivet said. “When you start with historic water levels then add a couple feet of storm surge, there will be no real outlet for our drains. People who have never experienced flooding may this year.”

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“Drains are designed to move storm water to the rivers and ultimately the Bay based on the ordinary high water mark” Mantey suggested. “Simply put, if the water in the Bay is higher than the land, the land won’t drain, and we will be very limited in what we can do during a major storm”.

Although hopeful there will be no damaging storm events, the Commissioners urge residents to be prepared for the possibility. “Whether it is elevating belongings in basements, making sure sump pumps are functioning or moving items out of low-lying areas of their properties, people should think about how they might address the possibility of flooding on their land.” Wendling said.

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