



West Region

DEQ LEADS EFFORT TO STOP VENTING OIL IN MUSKEGON COUNTY

For years, the Fenner's Ditch canal in Laketon Township, Muskegon County, has been plagued with oil sheens and slicks. This has led to environmental concerns and has prevented the public from fully enjoying the natural resources of the canal. Due to the efforts of the DEQ, in partnership with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and others, a system has been designed and installed to address the oil sheens and slicks, bringing the canal back to safe and productive use.

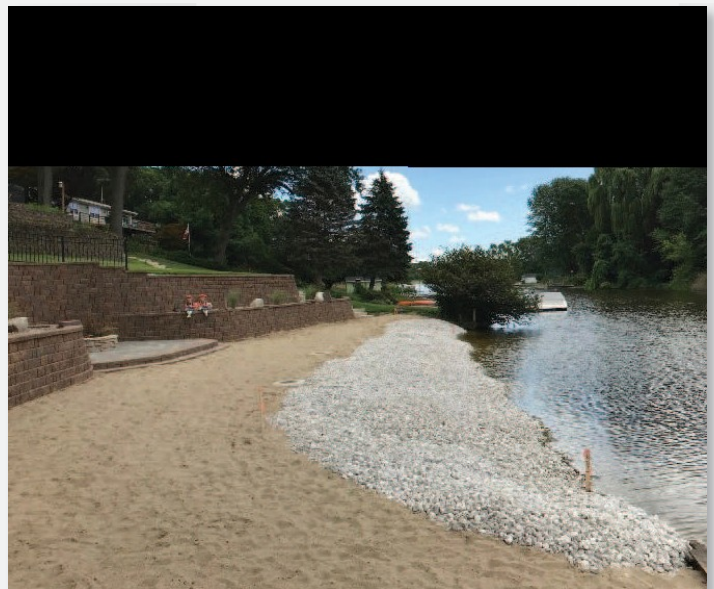
Fenner's Ditch is a 1/3 mile-long canal that drains surface water into the north side of Bear Lake. An oil seep on the east side of the canal has impacted the surface water and caused Fenner's Ditch to be listed as a Beneficial Use Impairment for Aesthetics in the Muskegon Lake Area of Concern. Previous investigations concluded that the oil seep was likely from a historic oil production well that was drilled in the 1920s and subsequently plugged and abandoned in the 1930s. Records indicate that the upper steel casing of the well was removed and, consequently, the specific location could not be found, despite multiple attempts.

Following substantial efforts by multiple divisions of the DEQ, including the Water Resources Division, the Oil, Gas, and Minerals Division, and the Remediation and Redevelopment Division as well as the USEPA, federal dollars were leveraged to perform response activities at the site. These included a \$41,400 feasibility study grant from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and \$947,700 of Pollution Removal Funding Authorization from the federal Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund.

The DEQ worked with the USEPA and others to design and construct the oil cap-and-trap system, which collects the venting oil and prevents it from entering the surface water. The oil is contained in the structure until it naturally biodegrades or is manually removed and disposed of. The cap was installed at the same elevation as the current base of the canal, so boat access and recreational use is not impacted. Construction commenced in June 2018 and also included the removal of contaminated sediment from the area. The capping system was completed in August 2018 and has shown to be effective at keeping oil out of the canal. The shoreline at Fenner's Ditch has now been restored, and the community can once again enjoy this valuable natural resource. ♦



BEFORE: Oil contained in boat slip, before remediation work began



AFTER: Shoreline restored after the Oil Cap-and-Trap system was completed