



# FENNER'S DITCH OIL SEEP PROJECT

**LAKETON TOWNSHIP, MUSKEGON COUNTY, MICHIGAN  
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**FOR ADDITIONAL  
INFORMATION  
PLEASE CONTACT:**

**Michigan Department of  
Environmental Quality  
Remediation and  
Redevelopment Division**

**DAVID BANDLOW**  
DEQ Project Manager  
[BandlowD@michigan.gov](mailto:BandlowD@michigan.gov)  
616-745-5337

Grand Rapids District Office  
350 Ottawa Ave NW Unit 10  
Grand Rapids MI 49503

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have partnered to address an oil seep that has been observed discharging to a canal known as Fenner's Ditch, a 0.34 mile long canal on the north side of Bear Lake in Laketon Township. Oil sheens and slicks have been observed on Fenner's Ditch for many years. Oil containment booms have been used to control the venting oil; however, this is not considered to be an adequate long-term strategy. The purpose of the project is to conduct an investigation to better define the nature and extent of the oil seep, and then to select, design, and implement a remedy to control the venting oil. This work will be conducted by the DEQ and their approved consultants and contractors. Costs for the work will be administered by the EPA from a funding source made available from the Oil Pollution Act.

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

Previous investigations have concluded that the likely source of the oil seep is an improperly abandoned oil well that was drilled and "plugged" around 1930. It is possible that crude oil is migrating up the old borehole and venting to the surface water. Attempts to locate the borehole have been unsuccessful, in part because the upper portion of steel casing used during well construction was removed when the well was abandoned. In 2015-2016, a feasibility study was conducted to identify the best investigation options and potential solutions to address the venting oil. This project will be focused on implementing the findings of that study.



*Map depicting the general location of the oil seep at Fenner's Ditch*

## OIL SEEP INVESTIGATION

The first phase of work will involve investigating the oil seep through a series of soil borings and sediment cores. Field work is scheduled to begin October 31, 2016 and last through November 18, 2016. The soil borings and sediment cores will be drilled in the canal and on land at the magenta-colored locations shown on the map below.



## PROJECT CONSIDERATIONS

Some of this work will involve the use of a small barge in the canal so that sediment cores from the canal bottom can be collected. While this work is occurring, oil containment booms will be deployed in the canal to intercept oil slicks that may be generated as a result of the work. Boat traffic will be allowed to pass through the canal on the outside of the containment booms while work is occurring. On land, soil borings will only be conducted at properties where DEQ has been granted written access by the property owner.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

The oil seep is preventing home owners and other users from enjoying the natural resources of the canal. There is potential that the oil is accumulating on vegetation and in sediments, which could have adverse effects on the local ecosystem. Contact with oil slicks on the water surface should be avoided. No petroleum constituents were detected in residential drinking water wells that were previously sampled in the area of the oil seep.

## FUTURE WORK

Information from the investigation will be used in the development of a long-term strategy for the site. It is expected that data from the investigation will be processed during the winter of 2016-2017 and an additional phase of work will be initiated in the spring/summer of 2017. The next phase of work may involve additional investigation or implementation of a remedy designed to contain the venting oil.