

# ‘Protecting homes’

Officials celebrate \$3.5 million drainage, flood control project in Wauconda



Stream bank retaining walls on the south side of Main Street in downtown Wauconda are among the features in a \$3.5 million drainage/flood prevention project. (Mick Zawislak/mzawislak@dailyherald.com)



Kurt Woolford, executive director of the Lake County Stormwater Management Commission, was among the speakers Monday marking completion of the \$3.5 million Bangs Lake Outfall project in Wauconda. (Mick Zawislak/mzawislak@dailyherald.com)



The last of the heavy equipment will be removed as a \$3.5 million drainage/flood prevention project at Phil's Beach in Wauconda is complete. (Mick Zawislak/mzawislak@dailyherald.com)



Local, county and state officials gathered Monday at Phil's Beach in Wauconda to mark the completion of the \$3.5 million Bangs Lake Outfall project. (Mick Zawislak/mzawislak@dailyherald.com)

State, county and village officials gathered Monday at historic Phil's Beach in Wauconda to mark the completion of the \$3.5 million Bangs Lake Outfall drainage and flood control project.

The milestone community project was announced at the same location last June, with officials noting the importance of ongoing efforts of its type throughout Lake County.

Flooding can be hard on residents, communities and first responders, said Kurt Woolford, executive director of the Lake County Stormwater Management Commission.

"That type of impact reaffirms how important managing stormwater is and the vitalness of these types of projects," he said.

Wauconda's wide-ranging project was envisioned four years ago after the village was notified of potential grant funding through a \$122 million allocation from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

Different projects were discussed, but after being advised to “think big,” a proposal to create proper drainage for Bangs Lake and reduce flooding to more than 70 properties and eight roads was submitted, said Wauconda Mayor Jeff Sode.

The stormwater commission awarded a \$2.73 million grant for the work.

“Quite simply, without this grant funding, a project of this size and importance would likely have (been) delayed indefinitely,” Sode said.

The project consists of 6,450 feet of storm sewer from a new outfall control structure near the famous slide on Phil's Beach and leading to Route 176.

Excess water that flows into the lake from a surrounding 3,000-acre area travels through ditches, culverts and storm sewers to Route 176 and eventually the Fox River.

Other work included almost 4,000 feet of stream-bank improvements, stabilization and retaining walls; a three-sided bridge structure; new storm sewer and culverts; and replacing dead or undesirable trees and vegetation with improved plantings to better control water flow and improve wetland quality downstream.

“It's not just a project, it's an investment,” said Lake County Board member, Adam Schlick, who previously served on the Wauconda village and park district boards.

To date, dozens of projects throughout Lake County have been funded in two separate, \$30 million grant allocations. The Wauconda Outfall was one of 16 and the first to start in Stage 2 of the process. The rest are expected to be completed this year.

“Projects like this are about protecting homes, infrastructure and reducing the stress and uncertainty of flooding,” said county board Chair Sandy Hart.

Fifteen projects have been identified for Stage 3, with an announcement of grant recipients expected soon, according to the stormwater management commission.