

**Tuscarora Township
Indian River, MI
Sewer Project Target Area Photos
Sample Photos of Port-a-Johns in use**



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Citizen's Comments**
(Last names redacted due to privacy concerns)

This drainage cited in a 1984 DNR report as problematic due to a mix of artesian and sewage overflow. It's still going.



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“Below photos were taken in late July of 2019 in and around our docks located on Indian River. While not pictures of an outhouse/porta potty, they certainly are **proof of the failure of existing septic systems in the surrounding area. Pretty damn gross if you happen to be swimming nearby.**”

- Robert [REDACTED]



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“Our drain field is over 37 years old. It is running slow and near failure, causing us to pump the septic tank every six months rather than 3-5 years. Because by code standard I don't have enough land to house a new drain field, I can not meet code. I will have to get a variance and go to additional expense of building a raised drain field. I could have spent this on a sewer system if we had one” – Nancy [REDACTED]

“Our Septic tank is over 60 years old. We have to now have it pumped annually. The person that services it says that it is barely hanging in there. He's projecting one more year, if we're lucky. So not only are we staring at the extra expense, but we also are limited to where we would place a new tank. Needless to say, our current property would lose a lot of utility with a raised drain field by our lakefront lot. We really need sewers ASAP.” – Brian [REDACTED]

“I've lived in my home on South Ave for 42 years - I assume my septic and drain field has been here since the home was built. I had my septic pumped in December due to standing stinky water. Here we are less than 6 months later with standing water after a very small load of wash. I am a single 70 year old woman. I would say my demand on the system is very gentle. My neighbors to the west already have a raised drain field. I'm afraid I'm heading in that direction as well.” – Kris [REDACTED]



Sewage
Seepage

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“Our raised septic field was first built in the 60’s. It was serviced and rebuilt in 1991 because it was non-functioning (full of roots and leaking). It is 30 years old and failing. Sometimes there is effluent (leakage) around the mound. My understanding is that the cost to replace would be very expensive.” – Mary [REDACTED]

“We live in a house on Burt Lake. Our septic system is 55 years old. The tank and drain field are about 30-40 feet from Burt Lake. The septic system was placed there when our house was built 55 years ago. We recently had a new well drilled and the health department told us that if the septic system failed we would need to have a new one installed on the far side of the house, away from the lake. It would be just about 50 feet from the well and would be about 30-40 feet from a canal that connects to the lake. It would not meet code, but that would be the best we could do given our lot size and placement.” – Ted [REDACTED]

“...when I bought my house on the Sturgeon River the previous owner had her washer hoses draining in the back yard and her sink drained into a old tank that just went into the ground. Now I have a very small drain field and septic with grinder motor. I am just saying that my house was probably not the only one like this.” Jeff [REDACTED]

“I have a 50-gallon septic tank! I am at the bottom of a sloped street and 1 block from the river. My drain field gets saturated and simply cannot work any time we have a good rain. I do not have space for even a raised drain field, it would have to be within 2 feet from my house. I often rent a porta-potty or pay to drain my tank. Last summer it was drained four times at \$240. each drain.” - Rhoda [REDACTED]



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“We're not certain how old our septic field is but we've been having it pumped annually the past few years because like so many village residents we don't have enough space on our lot to install a new one that would comply with the current regulations. Therefore, to replace our drain field we'd need a variance and even with that we would be challenged to locate sufficient land.” Bill [REDACTED]

“I purchased this cottage 25 years ago but it was built in 1941. We have always been very careful with the septic system due to its age. I do very little laundry at the cottage and use the laundromat for times when I need to do multiple loads. I made due with this situation when it was a summer place but now I live here year round and realize I am on borrowed time. Because by today's code I don't have enough land to house a new drain field. I will have to get a variance and go to additional expense of building a raised drain field” – Vicki [REDACTED]

Our property in the village of Indian River has a very old septic system, perhaps dating back as old as 1955, when the home was built. The biggest problem is that there is not a large drainage field, nor is there an engineered field. Our drainage field does not currently meet code. The septic system also has a distribution box that is accessible by simply lifting a metal lid that is not permanently attached to the box.

Every time the pump runs to push the effluent into the drain field, you can smell the odor throughout the entire property (and our neighbors can smell it as well). Unfortunately, when the ground is wet after some heavy rains, the field cannot drain the effluent properly and the effluent overflows the distribution box and spills out into the top of the lawn.

- Shawn [REDACTED]



Tuscarora Township Indian River, MI Sewer Project Target Area Citizen's Comments

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“We purchased the house in 2008 and the septic system was showing signs of failing the year after we moved in. I don't know when it was put in but the raised bed is not very high and very small. **Effluent leaks around the edges of the raised leach field.** Honestly we need a replacement system but are waiting on a more viable solution like central sewers. We have the septic tank pumped frequently to help with the leaking. We have never had an inspection by the health department so we can go on with a failing system indefinitely or so it seems. The **water table is only down about 30 inches.** We have limited room for a replacement system”
– Curt [REDACTED]

We have lived year-round on the Indian River for the past 14 years. We have two properties near us that have seasonal rental cabins. The cabins on both properties sit quite close to the river, while the owners' residences are located closer to the road. In both cases, the owners are full time residents and in one case, the owners have an additional renter in their home. **We've observed one of the owners needing to get their septic tank pumped at least every six months. On the other property, we've never seen a septic truck in the 14 years that we have been here. There is also a business on the river where the owner lives in an apartment above. He has no septic system and has often been seen walking to the nearby public restroom or the bar / restaurant next door to use the facilities. As you know, most of the homes and cottages along and near the river were built decades ago and, in many cases, are still using the original small cedar post septic tanks. We desperately need a sewer system in the area and especially along the Indian and Sturgeon rivers where the homes and cottages are concentrated. This beautiful natural resource, "The Inland Waterway" is what attracted my wife and I as well as so many others to this area. If we don't protect this treasure sure, property values will plummet and there will be no reason to continue living here.** -Henry [REDACTED]



An old mound drain field system, overgrown with trees and roots

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“We have owned our place for 20 years and the last five years or so have realized that our drain field may be failing. As I talk to both full time and seasonal residents I realize it is not just our property. It is apparent that this township has to do something not only so people can utilize their property and preserve its value but to protect our most precious resources: Burt Lake and the Indian River. Right now there are countless property owners who are uncertain if they should put money into drain field and septic systems (if they even have sufficient space to do so under current code!) or if they should wait for the sewers we have been talking about for decades. The time is NOW to take care of our environment and add “healthy” to this beautiful community we live in. ”

- Margaret [REDACTED]