Sandusky, Ottawa and Wood Counties

Sugar Creek Petition #162

Final Hearing November 4, 2026

Joint Board Rules

Please keep all questions, comments or concerns until after the Power Point Presentation. The Joint Board of Commissioners will open the floor after the presentation with the following guidelines in place.

1. Persons who wish to address the joint board must stand and state their name

2. Persons who wish to address the Joint Board of Commissioners regarding any item in this presentation may be granted the privilege of the floor for a 2 minute period unless, at the discretion of the Joint Board, circumstances dictate a longer or shorter period of time.

3. All remarks shall be addressed to the Joint Board as a body and not to any one member.

4. No person, other than a Board's member and the person having the floor shall be permitted to enter into a discussion or make comment without the permission of the Board.

5. No disruptive behavior or violations of the rules will be tolerated. The Joint Board shall have the discretion to order the end of any disruptive behavior or of rules being violated. The Board shall have the discretion to order the removal of persons who continues to disrupt meetings and/or violate the rules of conduct.

6. All electronic devices shall be set to vibrate or turned off if no vibrate setting is available.

Sugar Creek Petition #162

The petitioned section of Sugar Creek Project is approximately 10.5 miles long, draining approximately 38,600 acres of land, and involving about 3,415 parcels.

Sugar Creek was petitioned on October 31, 2016 and was signed by 16 property owners, although it only takes 1 owner to petition a project.

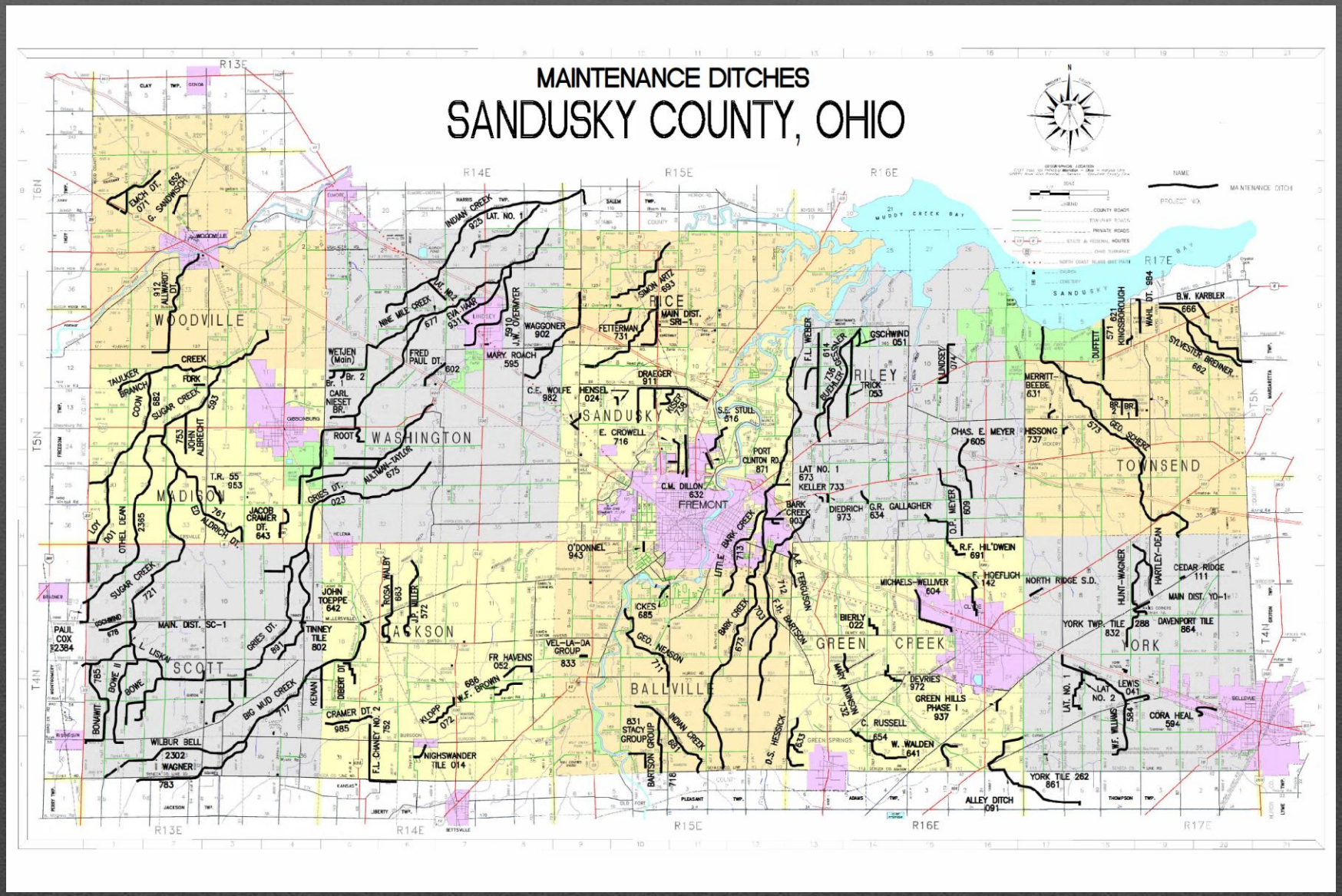
The View was held on January 24, 2017

The First Hearing was on February 14, 2017

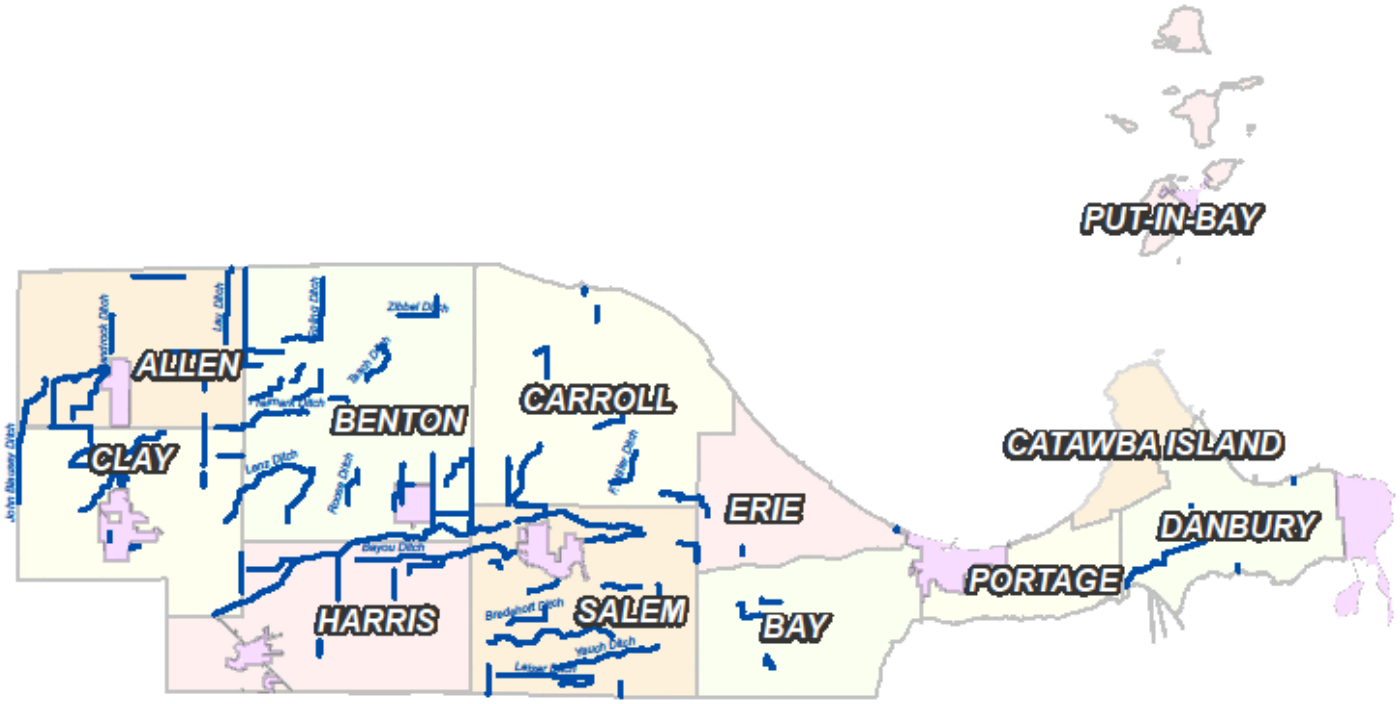
Sugar Creek #162 Ditch Petition Facts

- There are about 3,415 parcels in the Sugar Creek Watershed. Approximately 769 in Wood County, 2,269 in Sandusky County, and 376 in Ottawa County.
- The Petitioned section of Sugar Creek is approximately 10.5 miles long, with Ottawa County having around 6.5 miles and Sandusky County having around 4 miles.
- The petitioned Sugar Creek has approximately 38,600 acres in its watershed, with Wood County having about 3,440, Sandusky County having around 32,420 acres and Ottawa County having around 2,740 acres.
- There are an estimated 85 log jams in the 10.5 mile stretch that move and change daily.
- The estimated project cost is $670,000.00

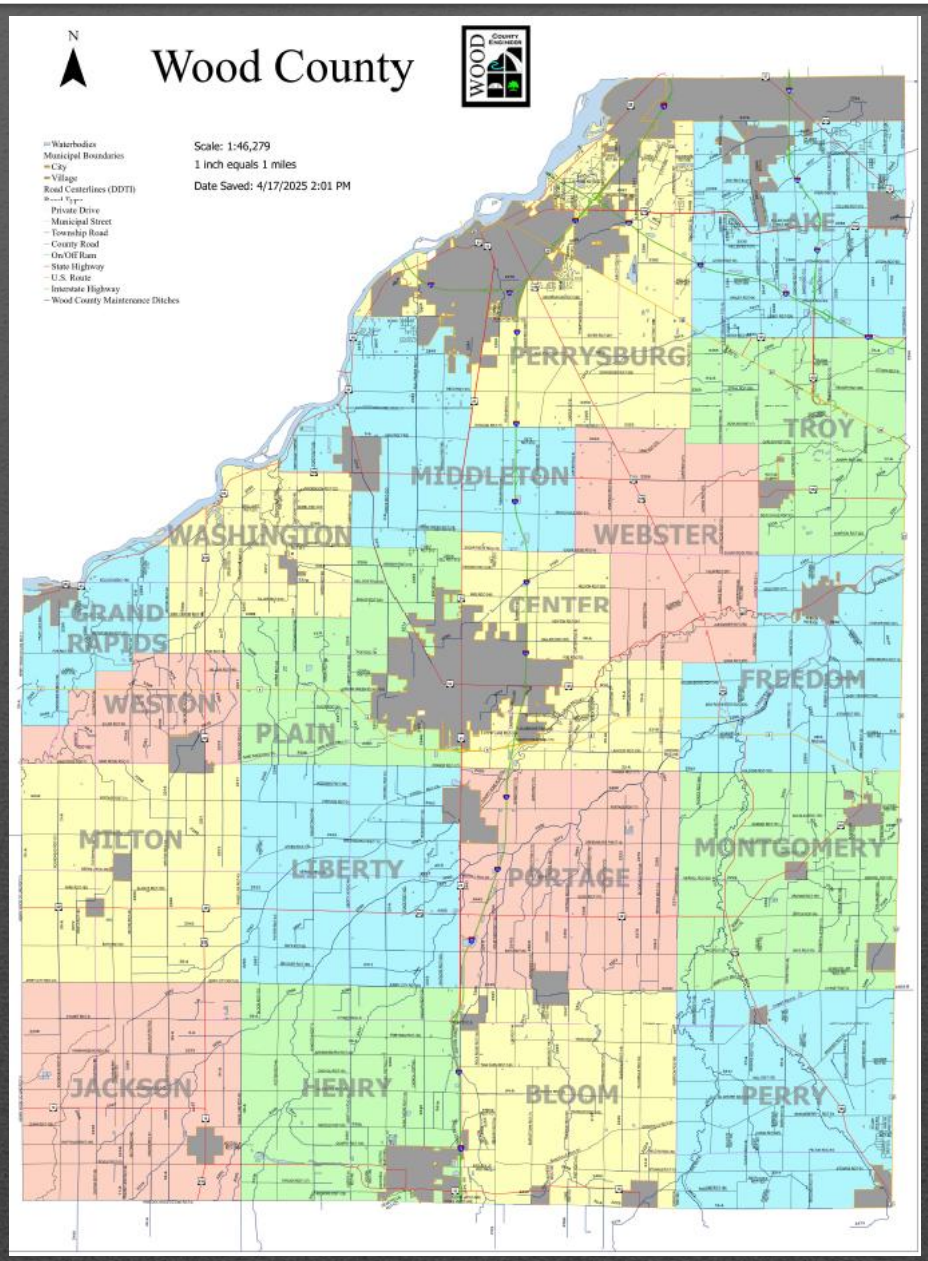
Sandusky County has approximately 250 miles of ditches on maintenance and 15 miles of enclosed on maintenance.



Ottawa County has approximately 147 miles of ditches on maintenance and 3 miles of enclosed on maintenance.



Wood County maintains more than 668 miles of county ditches and natural streams .



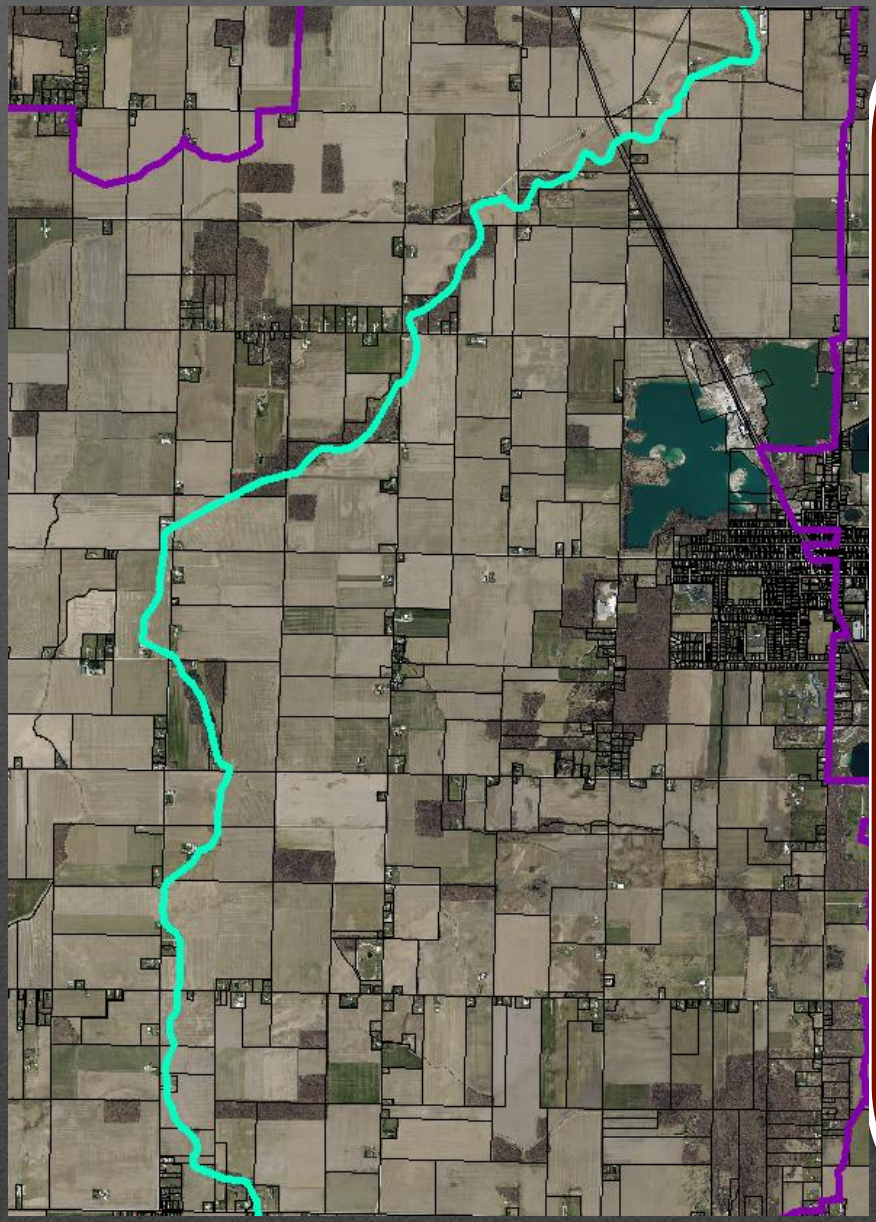
Petition Laws and the Black Swamp

This area was part of the Black Swamp and the geography of the swamp restricted major settlement up to the Civil war. The 1859 Ohio Ditch Law, a harbinger of drainage legislation nationally, created a cooperative system for individuals to petition county government to surface drain the area.

- Ohio Drainage Laws have been practically the same since 1859 with one major change and a few minor changes through the years. In 1957, the major change to the law was implemented. It stated that any ditch petitioned and approved after 1957 would be put on permanent maintenance after the project was completed.

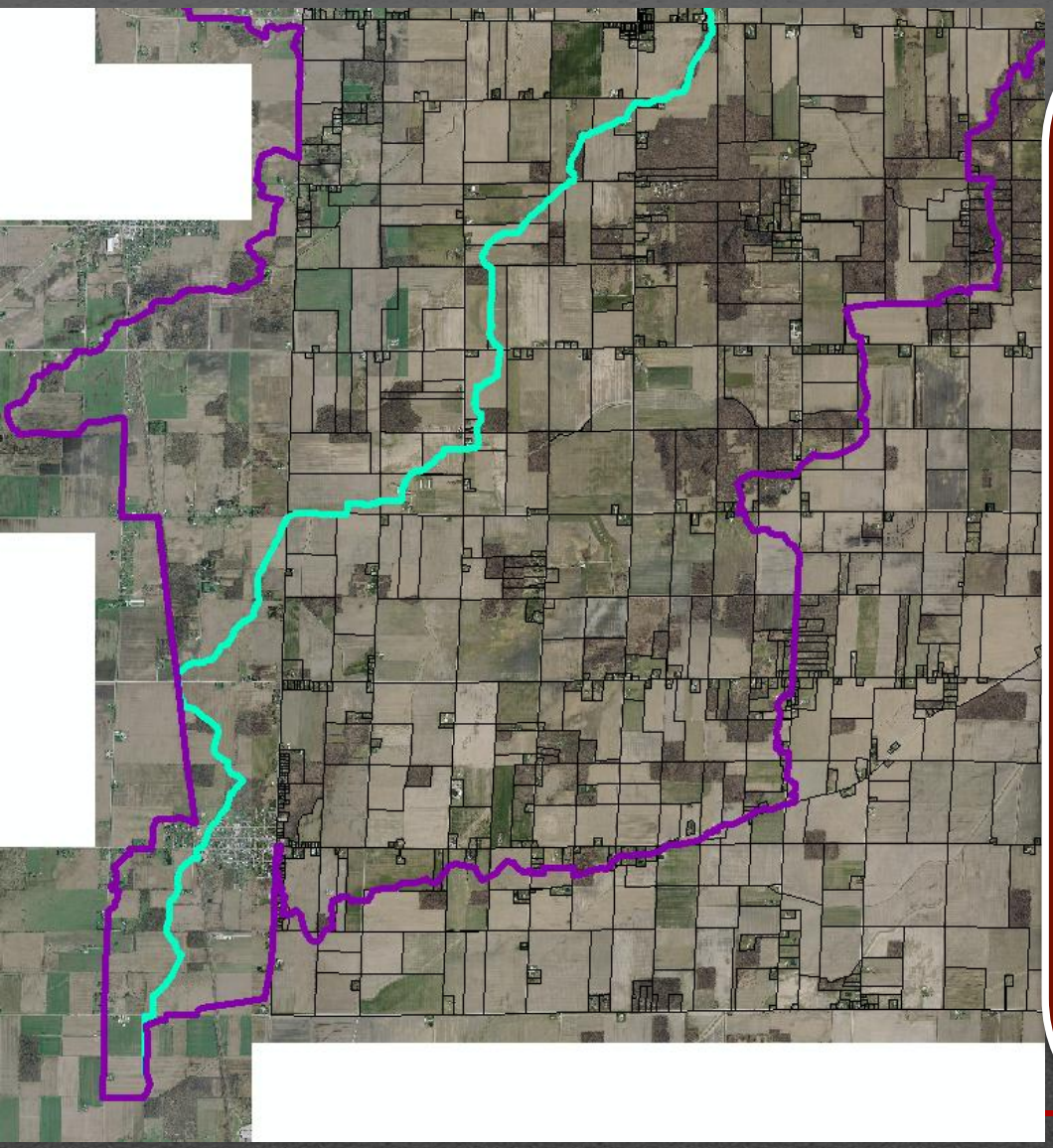
- The ORC 6131/6133 for Petitions, was updated March 24, 2021. For this petition we are using the ORC code before those changes. The petition was filed under the old law prior to March 24, 2021 and will be finished using the same version it was petitioned in.

Previous sections of Sugar Creek



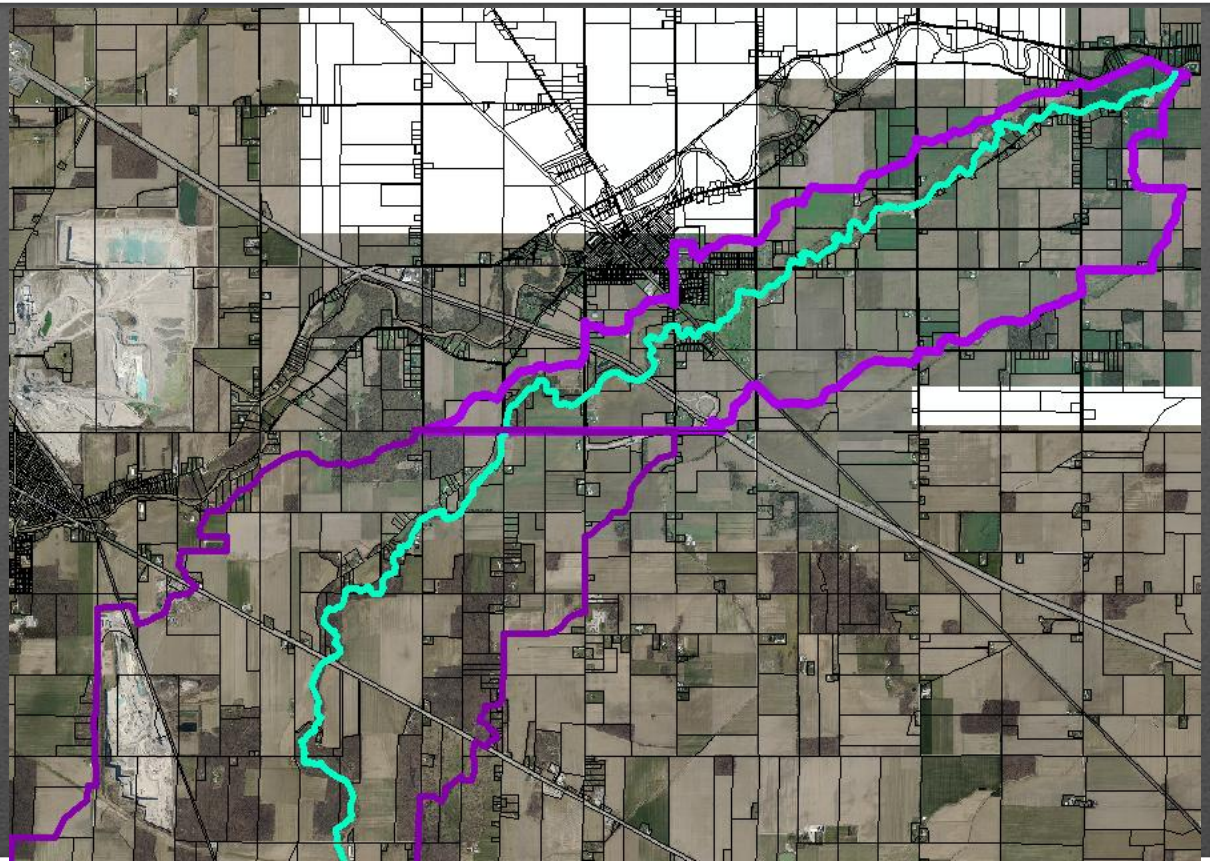
The total length of Sugar Creek from the verry upstream end in Wood County to the outlet at the Portage river is about 30 miles long. This is one continuous creek that has been petitioned in sections over the years. This map shows the first section of Sugar Creek 593 about a 9 mile section from State Route 6 heading north to Township Road 115, it was petitioned February 27, 1959. The petition was approved by the Sandusky and Wood County Commissioners in July of 1960 and appealed to the county, and then to the Ohio Supreme Court. The Ohio Supreme Court refused to review the decisions of Common Pleas Judges Robert J. Gabel, of Fremont and Floyd Coller of Bowling Green. On November 21, 1962 the Joint Board of Commissioners were given the green light to move forward with the $116,748.00 project

Previous sections of Sugar Creek



This map shows the second section of Sugar Creek that was petitioned on March 28, 1972 and is about 10 miles long. This section starts just south of Risingsun and heads north to State Route 6 where Sugar 593 started. After much discussion including a 6-month break to let property owners come up with the funds to do the work on their own, and failing to do so, the Wood and Sandusky County Commissioners approved this project on March 17, 1977.

Previous sections of Sugar Creek



This is the third section of Sugar Creek and the current petitioned section we are here about today. This section was also petitioned I believe in 1973, and is about 10.5 miles long. It was petitioned to be widened, deepened and straightened. This brought a lot of opinions on channelization at the time. At the hearing on this project the Commissioners gave the property owners 1 year to clean it themselves. The Sugar Creek Protection Society was formed in 1974 and cleaned the creek with volunteers. With evidence of the work from the Sugar Creek Protection Society the Commissioners dismissed the project and agreed to let the property owners do the work.

Sugar Creek Protection Society

Volunteers cleaning up Sugar Creek

By JON DONNAN
News-Messenger Staff Writer

ELMORE — Claude and Violet Willey farm bottomland along Sugar Creek.

They are successful farmers, who oppose channelization of Sugar Creek.

"Anybody with common, ordinary sense would know if they have bottomland, its going to flood," said Violet. "It's something that just happens and you live with it."

"We don't feel that 'environmentalists versus farmers' is a good description of the situation," said a member of the Sugar Creek Protection Society, Mrs. Betty Jo Sherman.

A tour of Sugar Creek produced several farmers like the Willeys who support the efforts to clean the creek rather than channelize it.

"We don't want channelization. We do not!", emphasized Mrs. John Renwand.

For months now volunteers from the society and other civic groups have spent hours every evening hauling limbs, tree trunks and debris from the banks and bed of Sugar Creek.

They began doing the work after officials in Sandusky, Ottawa and Wood counties agreed to a compromise, delaying proposed channelization of the stream for one year while channelization opponents tried to find another way to improve the flow and cut down on flooding.

The volunteers have been removing willows that grow horizontal to the water and clog the water way. In many areas along the creek there has been no cleaning for 50 years.

Under normal circumstances a stream can keep itself clean, said Mrs. Marlene Korn. However, the Sugar Creek area became a victim of the Dutch Elm Disease about eight years ago.

The disease felled hundreds of trees, large and small. Then in 1969 the July fourth flood swept all of the dead limbs and trunks into the waterway.

"The trees and limbs had all dried up and floated into the creek," said Mrs. Justine Magsig.

Consequently when the water saturated ground thawed this spring many farmers along the watercourse reported some of the worst flooding in years and complained.

"What they asked for was to have their stream cleaned," said Mrs. Magsig.

"What they didn't relaize they would get is channelization."

When the word channelization is mentioned some members of the society wince, painfully as if their knuckles had been scraped.

Not so for Carl Hahn, Sandusky County Deputy Engineer specializing in water drainage.

"Channelization is not a bad word," Hahn said to The News-Messenger Monday evening.

"I've walked every foot of that 10 mile creek because I knew this would be a controversial issue. Some places along that creek are so badly scoured that channelization could only help."

The term "scoured" described a burned out area of the bank where water overflow had washed away vegetation of every sort and all the top soil.

"I think that channelization is necessary. Certainly in my opinion it needs to be done," Hahn said.

He did add, however, that the manual cleaning the society is giving the creek is worthwhile.

"That group, the work they're doing is beneficial. There's only one way for it to go — betterment," Hahn said.

Hahn estimated the cost of the project would be $791,000 but said the figure was only a preliminary estimate that is usually within "shotgun range." he said that past experience indicated the time between approval of channelization and initial construction was about a year and half, excluding the appeals which the society's lawyer, Martin Hanna. Bowling Green, said would follow if approval for the channelization project was given.

"The appeals could stretch it out for years," said Hahn.

The society would first get a court injunction to stop the channelization process. They would then appeal to the Court of Appeals sitting in Toledo and then appeal to the Supreme Court of Ohio, if necessary, according to Hanna.

They wanted it cleaned right away and they won't get it for five years," said Mrs. Sherman.

They won't get it cleaned by the county anyway. Miles of Sugar Creek have already been cleaned, by local volunteers.

The Sugar Creek Protection Society has contacted property owners along the creek offering to clean the stream along their property. Many of the owners have accepted the society's help. Others have done the work themselves.

"We haven't been sitting back waiting for some lawyer to get it done for us," said Mrs. Magsig.

"We've been out there working our tails off making that creek beautiful."

The exact value of their work cannot be determined. "I have no way of putting a value on the work they have done," said Hahn, "but it's help. There are some big logjams in that stream and if they remove them, well, obviously it'll help."

"As long as it can be cleaned up, why go to such drastic measures," queried Mrs. Sherman.

There are 40 species of fish, including northern pike, rock bass, small mouth bass, yellow perch, bluegills and white sunfish. that would be driven out of the creek if channelization occured, said a release from the Division of Wildlife of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

"Stream channelization is expected to eliminate most of the aquatic habitate resulting in nearly 100 per cent loss of the larger game and panfish species present and over 90 per cent of all species present, at least for the first few years following channelization," the statement read.

Small game in the area would have no natural cover to provide shelter, as channelization requires the removal of trees and brush on either side of the ditch.

Hanna expects a balanced solution to the quarrel.

"In the old days we just marched right through and thought only of drainage. But we never encountered an area quite so beautiful. There has to be a balance between nature and the need to make a living."

Hanna said that "The public be damned theory is gone but you still have to have a pipeline, or what have you."

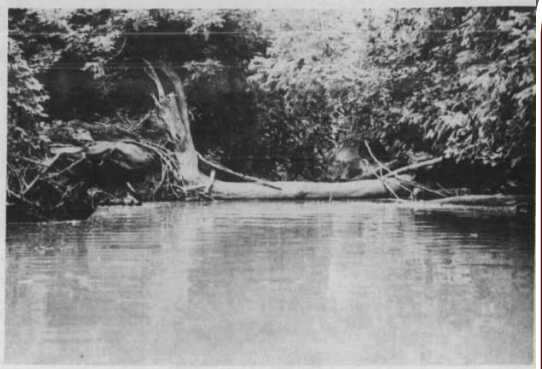
Presently the Sugar Creek situation is in a 'hold' status. The joint Board of Commissioners from Sandusky, Ottawa and Wood counties will reconsider the matter in August of next year.

Meanwhile, work continues along Sugar Creek. Provisions have been made for the future cleaning of the creek. Trustees of the society are responsible for keeping certain areas of the creek free of debris.

Members of the Sugar Creek Protection Society know they have much to do before next August. They have already done much to free the stream.

"I couldn't live with myself if I didn't work to save the creek," said a member.

This problem. . .



then this work. . .



A dead tree trunk, sprawling across Sugar Creek, posed quite a problem for the volunteers of the Sugar Creek Protection Society. After hours with a tractor, block and tackle and plenty of manual labor the log was finally removed by moonlight and cut into three sections. The photo of the log was taken from midstream when the water was backed up by the debris. The bottom photo shows the stream after the volunteers had moved on to another area. The banks are cleaned and the bed of the creek meanders along freely. The logs and debris were taken to large brush piles. Two volunteers, Mrs. Justine Magsig and Mrs. Marlene Korn (right) are pictured at one average pile.

brought this result



Petition drive's response tops local expectations

Even the sponsors of Monday's petition drive to repeal the pay raises legislators voted themselves could not believe the response they got.

State Representative Gene Damschroder (R-85, Fremont), who is spearheading his own repeal drive in conjunction with that of the group known as RIP, Repeal Increased Pay for Legislators, said that he gathered more than 1,700 signatures at Progress Field Monday. He said his original intention was to gather 997, about 400 more signatures than the number required from this county.

Damschroder had planned to open his petition headquarters between 4 p.m. and 7 p.m., but said he still was getting signatures at midnight. The unexpected turnout led to the cancellation of the planned RIP meeting set for the YMCA tonight.

"We took signatures at the rate of 10 per minute or 600 per hour," he exclaimed today. "One pilot told me the traffic was backed up from here to the Route 6 and Route 53 intersection and from here all the way into town.

"The people must have thought this was the last day of summer."

Damschroder said that besides obtaining signatures from Sandusky County, he also received names of persons from Seneca, Wood, Ottawa, and Huron counties as well. He said there were actually five separate petitions circulated in all. Each petition carries 25 signatures and that 65 were completely filled, while about 15 more are between half and three-quarters filled.

"We need, I'd say, between 100 to 125 more signatures to fill the remaining petitions," he said. He asked that persons continue to go to Progress Field on Route 53 South to fill the remaining petitions. He pointed out that if more come, more petitions are available and that none of the names "will be wasted." Members of the Fremont Junior Civic League also collected about 150 signatures. Mrs. David Francis said this morning.

Despite the numbers, Damschroder said he does not think it will lead to more support for the repeal drive among other legislators.

The freshman legislator said he had no idea where the 36 other representatives who voted against the pay increase were when their support was needed. He did, however, offer one possible explanation.

"One guy who voted against it (the increase) said, 'Vote no and take the dough,'" he said. "He wanted to get the job done (win the pay hike) but didn't want to vote for it to keep his name clean."

"They're being quiet because they've got the money spent already," he continued.

Damschroder, with help from the Junior Civic League members, said he plans to branch out in his petition drives by moving next to Seneca County. He said he hopes to be in Tiffin first, then move to Fostoria where he will try to cover all three counties in which Fostoria lies—Wood, Hancock and Seneca.

He said, "When you look at the people's faces, they're glad we're here. This is not a party issue. They all know that this damned thing should be brought back into line.

"I'd like to be sure you put down thanks to everybody for coming out."

Statewide, the repeal petitions are gathering signatures rapidly, according to Mrs. Mary Jane Logue, of Elyria, a leader in the RIP organization which is spearheading the move.

After three weeks of effort, "80,000 signatures more or less" have been collected, she said.

About three weeks remain before the Nov. 15 deadline on gathering the 191,048 necessary signatures in 44 counties.

Repeal sponsors are shooting for 200,000 signatures of registered voters. They expect a major boost if allowed to set up booths at Summit and Lucas county shopping malls this weekend as expected, according to Mrs. Logue.

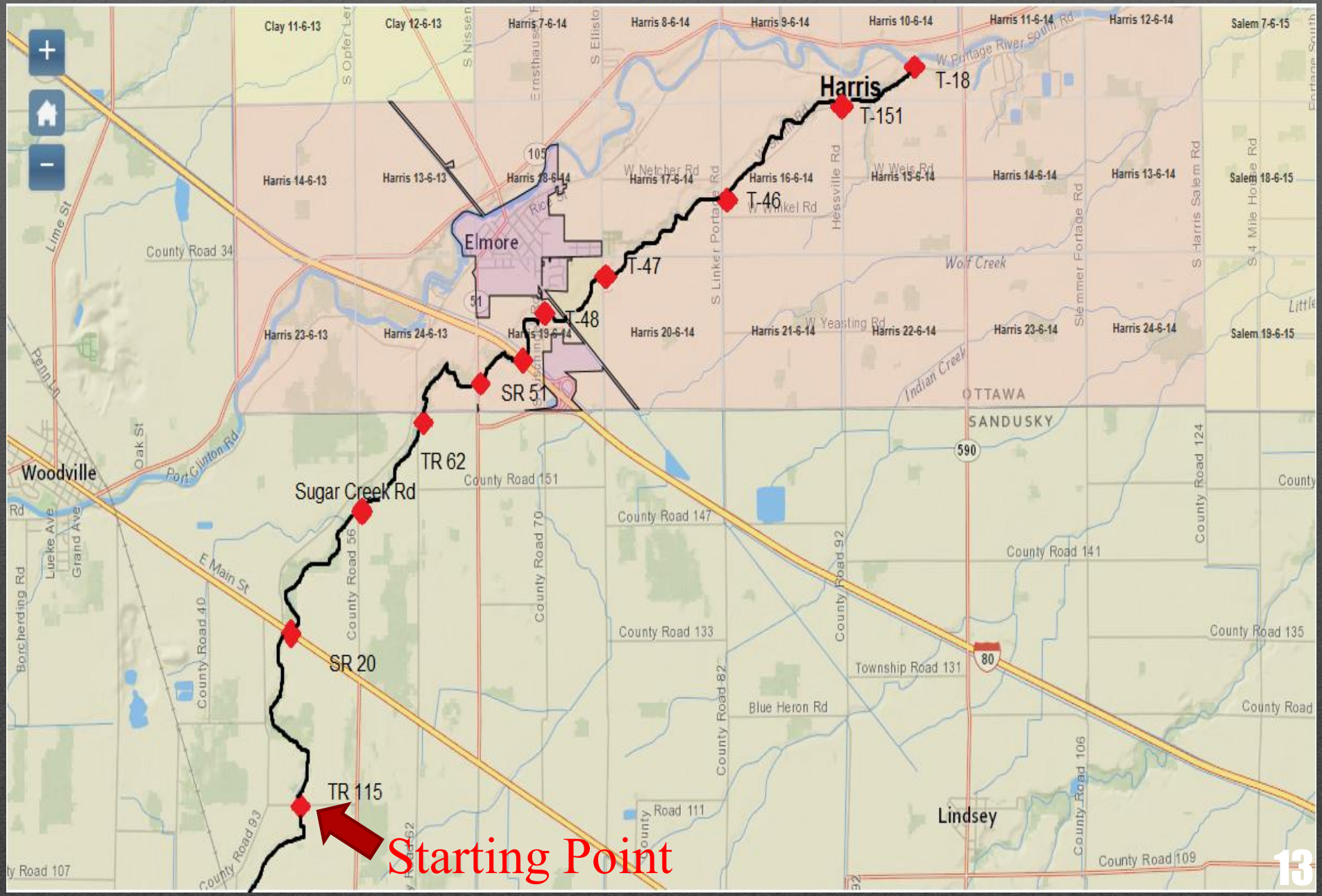
Special session opens

This is a newspaper article from October of 1975 with pictures of the Sugar Creek Protection Society work on the project. In 1985 there were still 475 members.

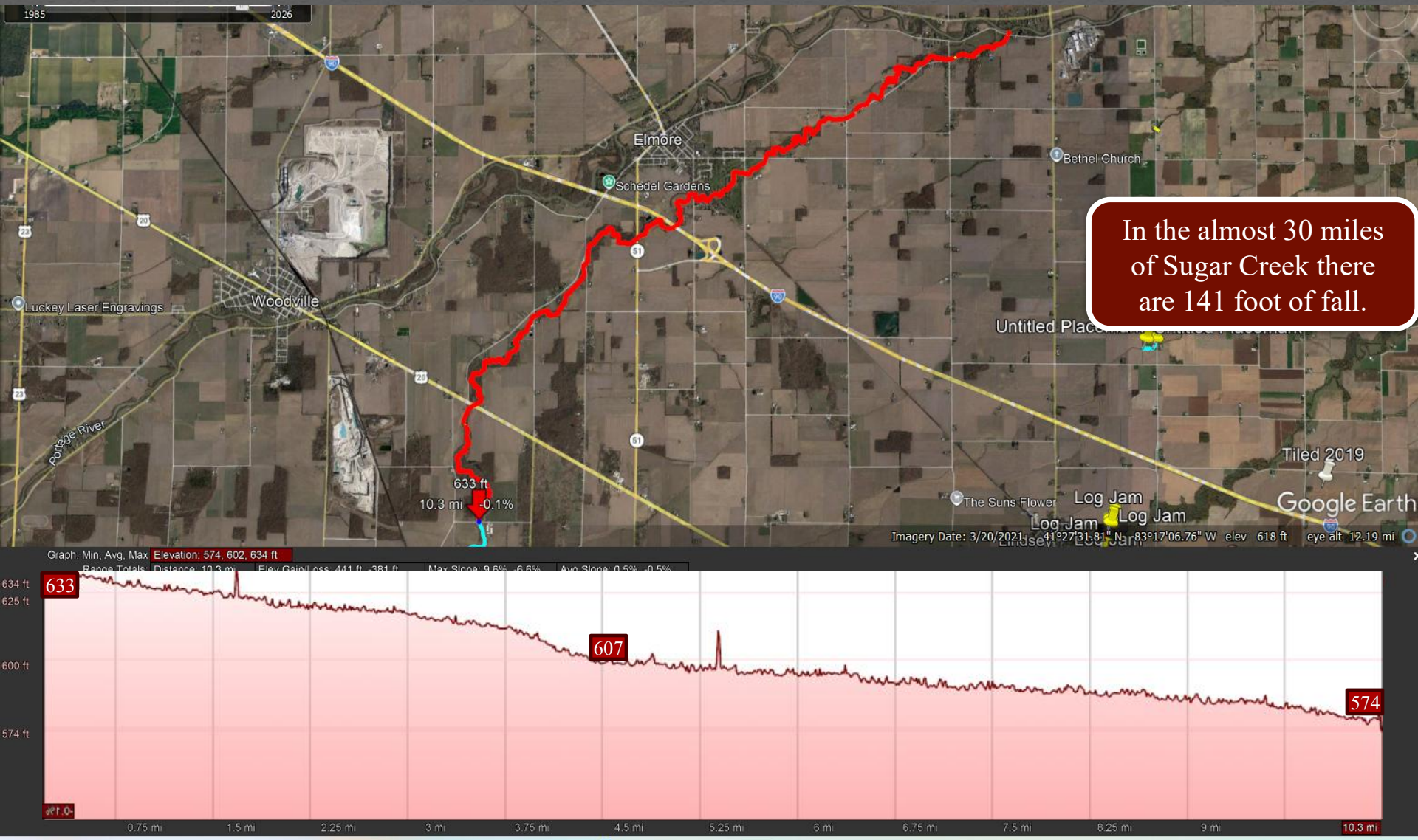
When the Sugar Creek 162 project was brought to us to be petitioned we knew about the previous work that was done and the nature of the project. The estimated project cost on 8-1-1973 was $791,000.00. Using history to guide us this is one of the main reasons this project was petitioned for Log Jam and Silt removal. The section of Ohio Revised Code 6131.01 says….

(4) The removal of obstructions such as silt bars, log jams, debris, and drift from any ditch, drain, watercourse, floodway, river, creek, or run;

Sugar Creek #162 Ditch Petition Road Crossings

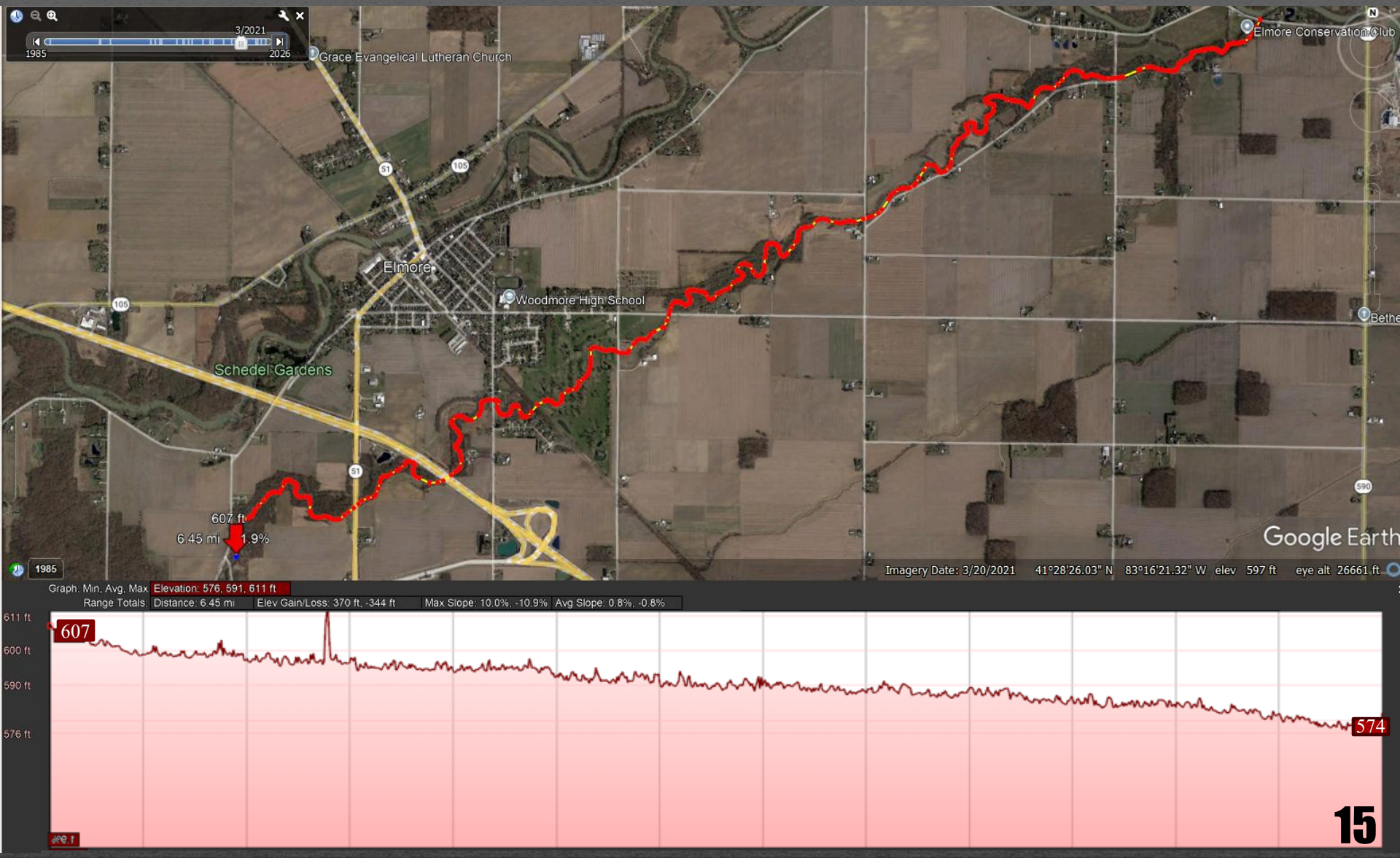


The total fall in this section of Sugar Creek from 115 to the Portage is 59 feet in 10.5 miles. The elevation from TR 115 is 633 and the elevation at the CL is 607 so in the 4 mile stretch located in Sandusky County there are 26 feet of fall.



In the almost 30 miles of Sugar Creek there are 141 foot of fall.

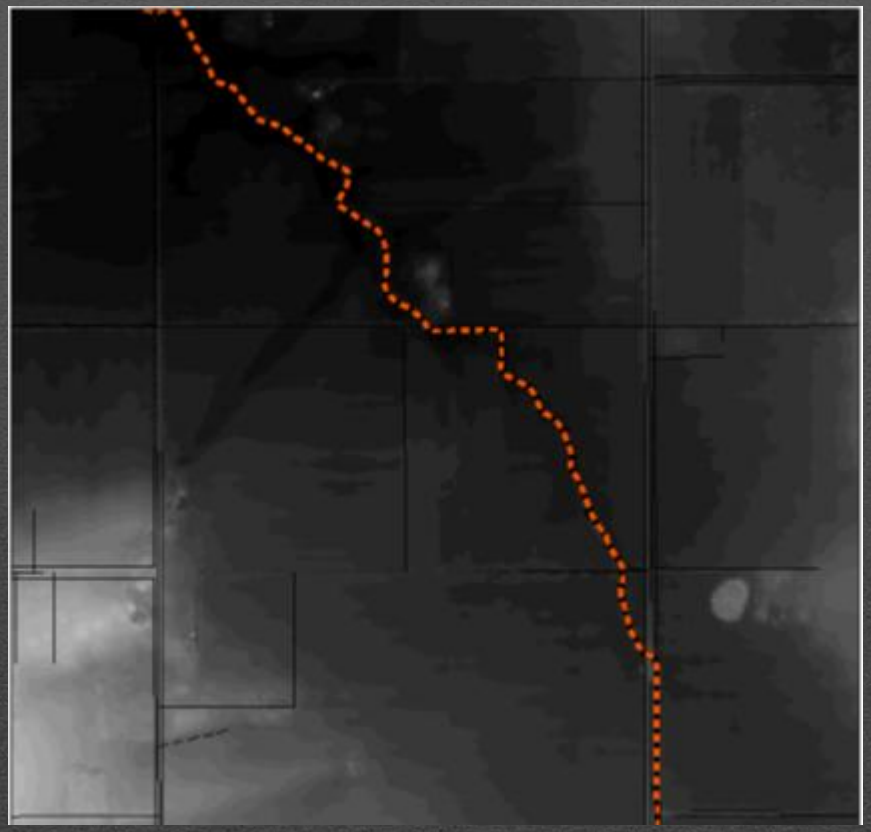
The elevation at the County Line of Sandusky and Ottawa is 607 ft and the Elevation of the Portage River where Sugar Creek dumps in is 574 ft. In the 6.5 miles located in Ottawa County there are 33 feet.

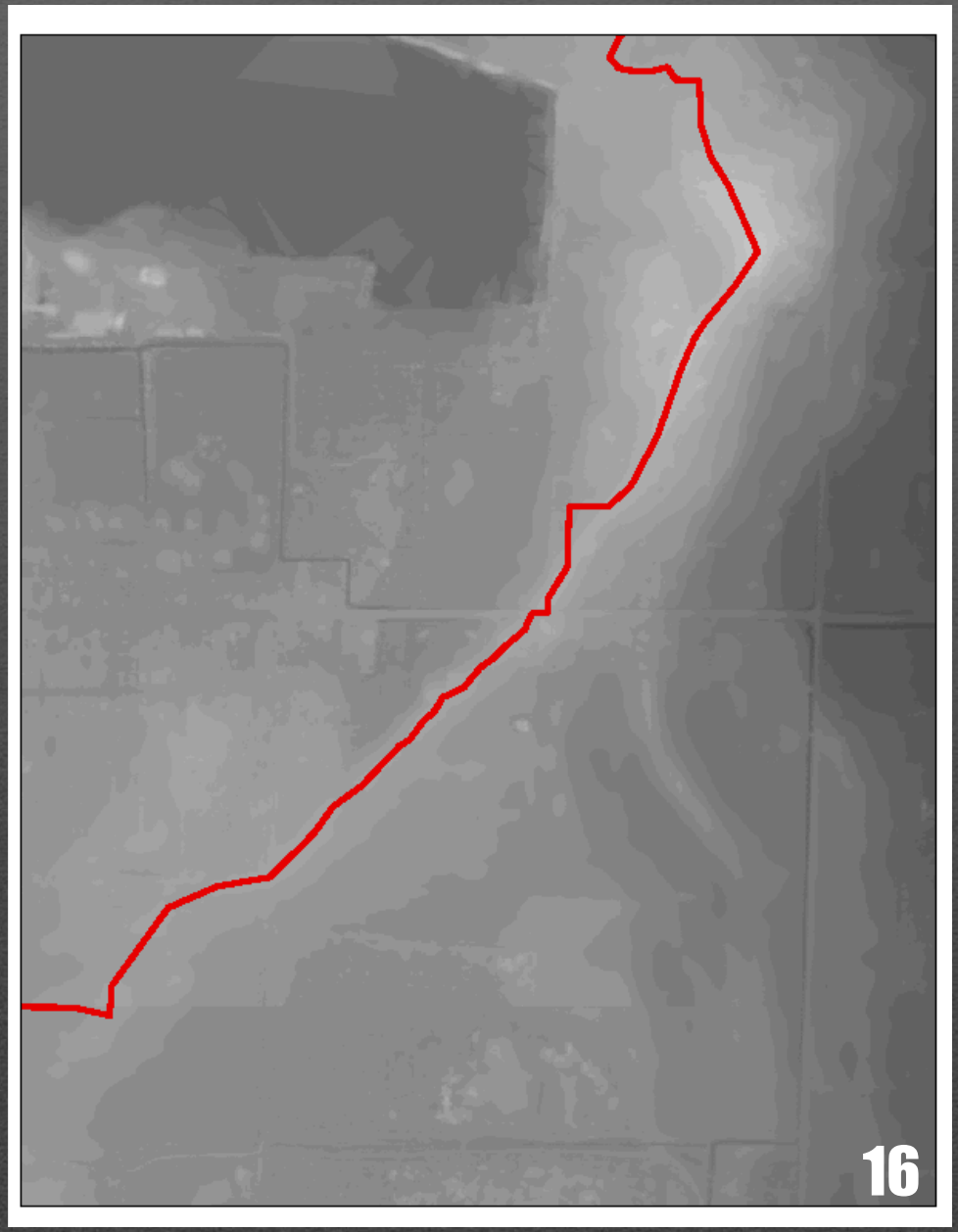


How is a Watershed Determined

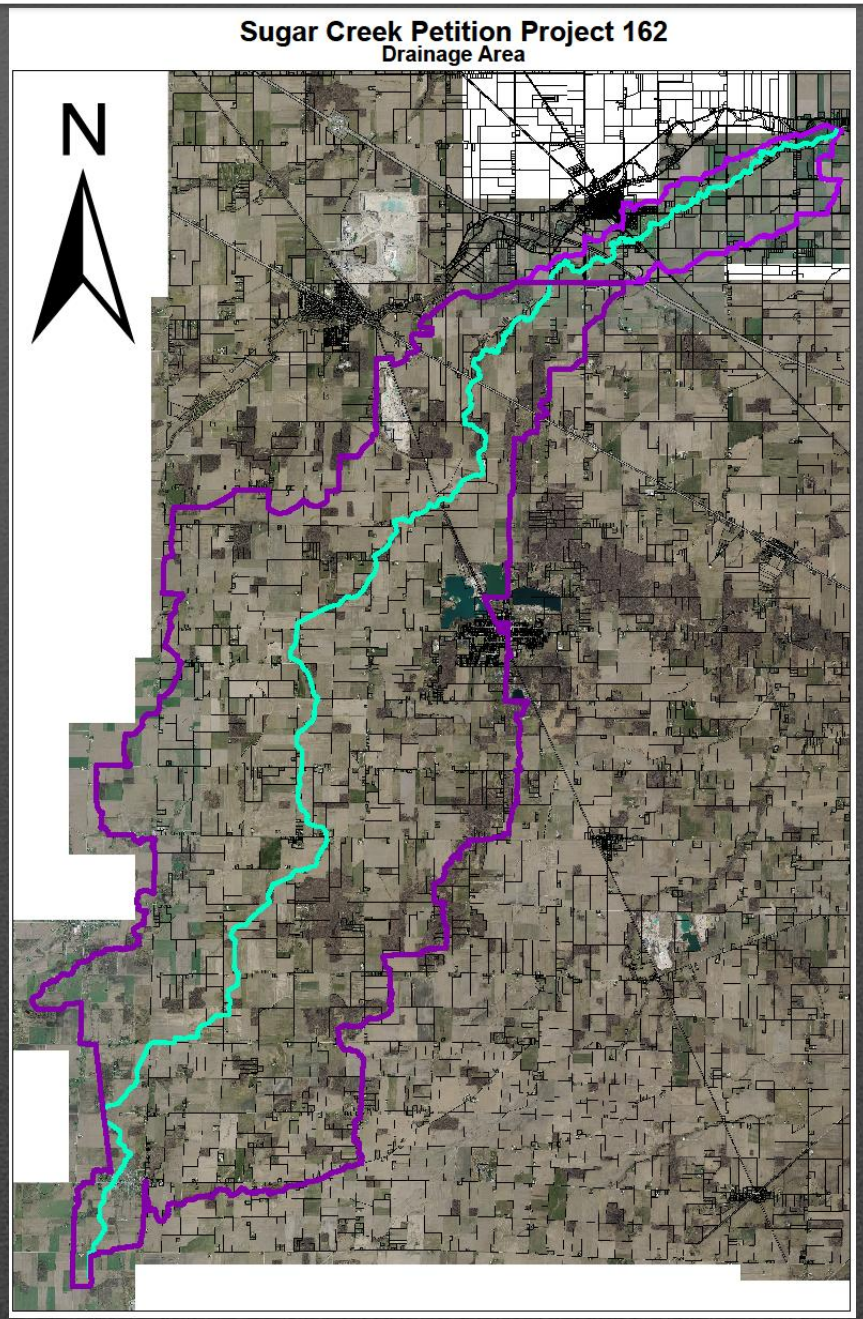
LIDAR – Light Detection and Ranging – is a remote sensing method used **to examine the surface of the Earth**.

We use the LIDAR to help determine the watershed. We also have to look at road side ditches and tiled fields to be sure of all properties involved.

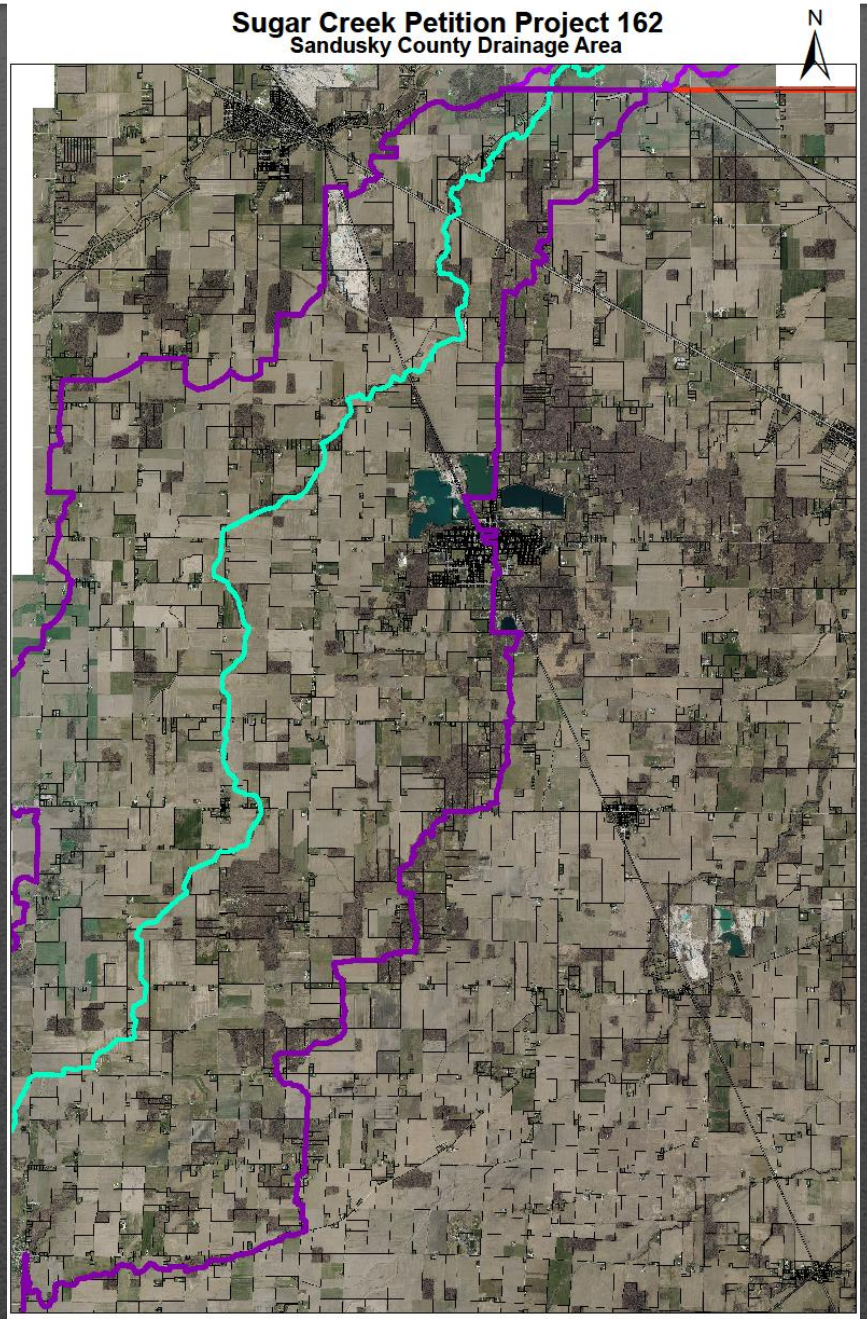




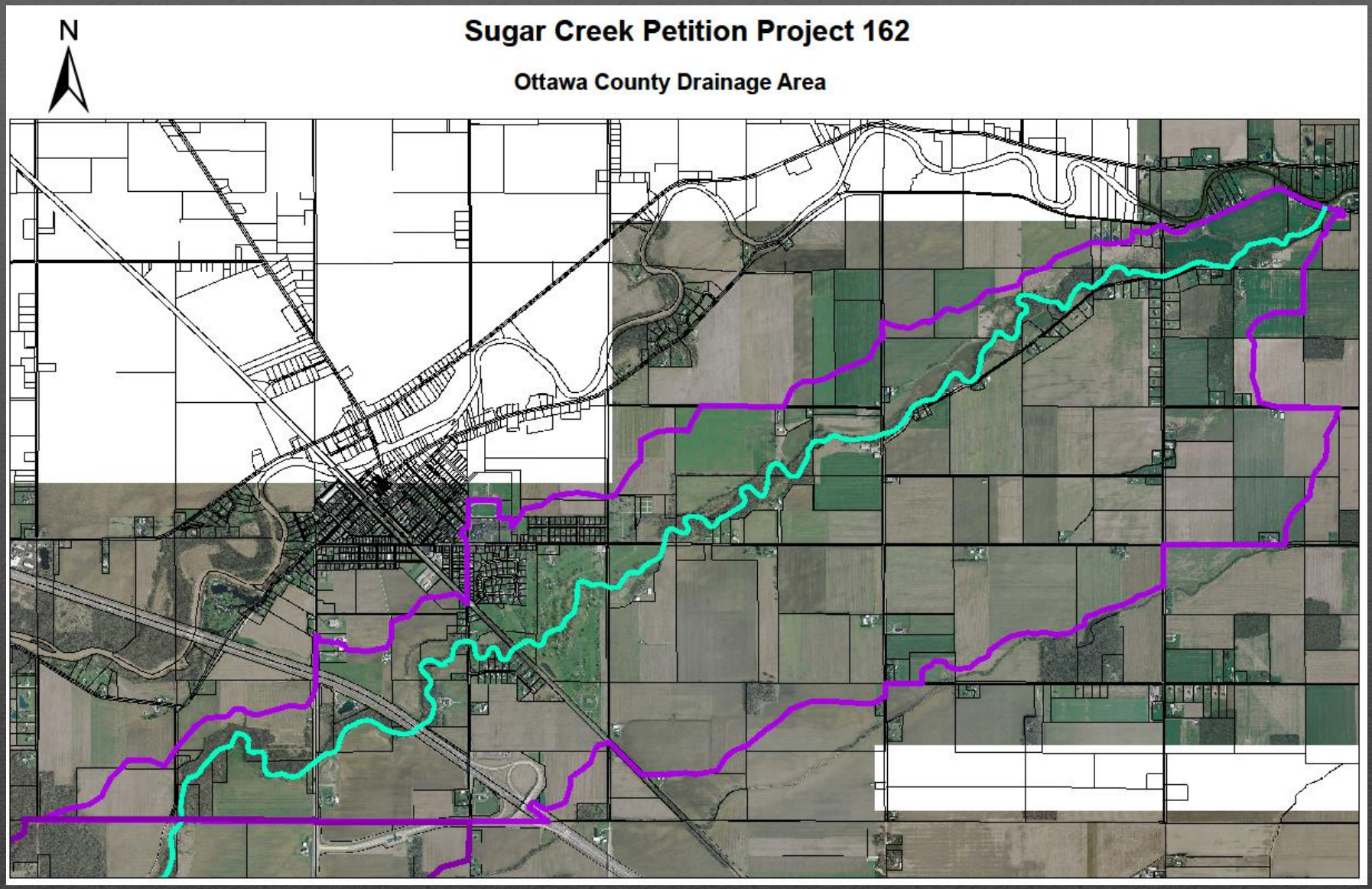
Sugar Creek 162 Entire Drainage Area



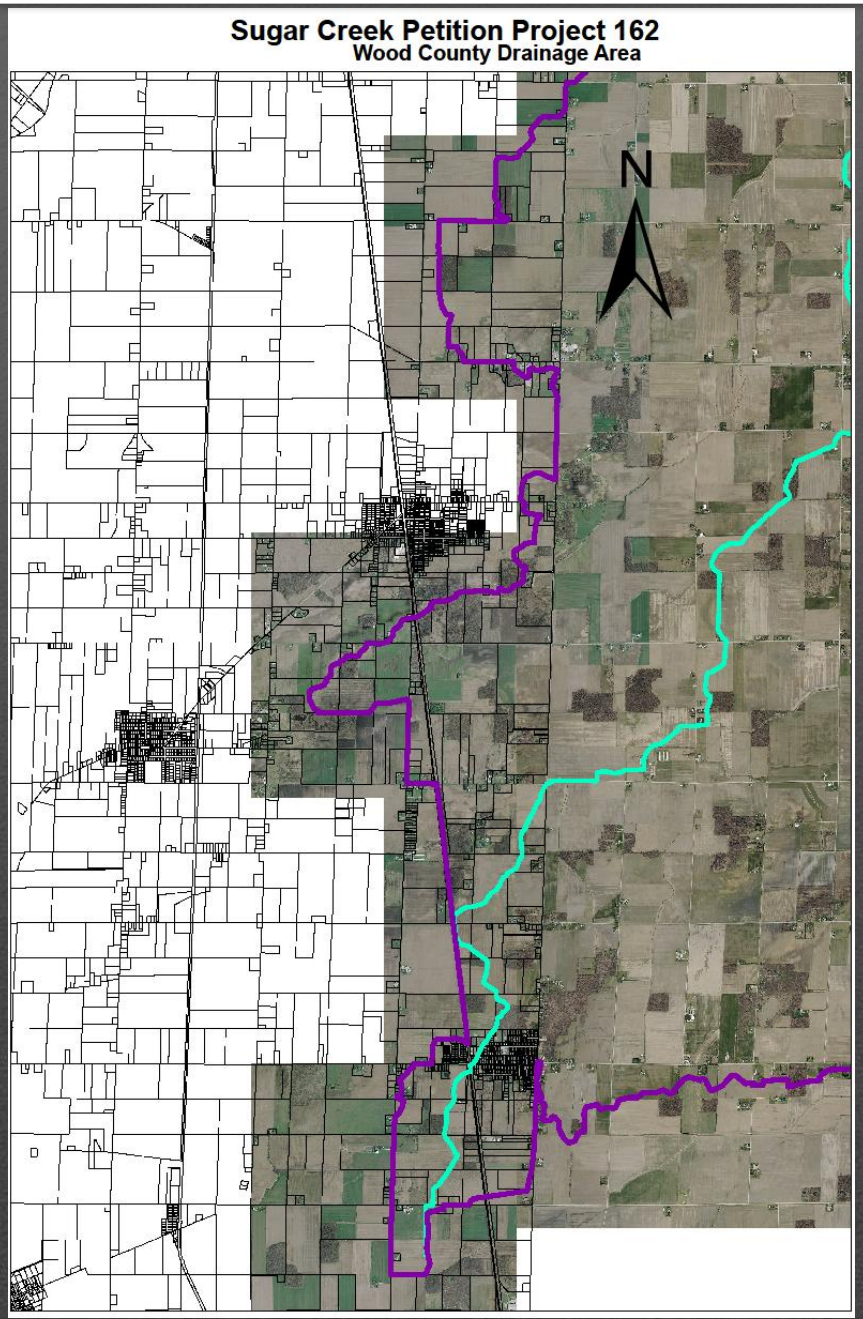
Sugar Creek - Sandusky County Watershed



Sugar Creek - Ottawa County Watershed



Sugar Creek - Wood County Watershed



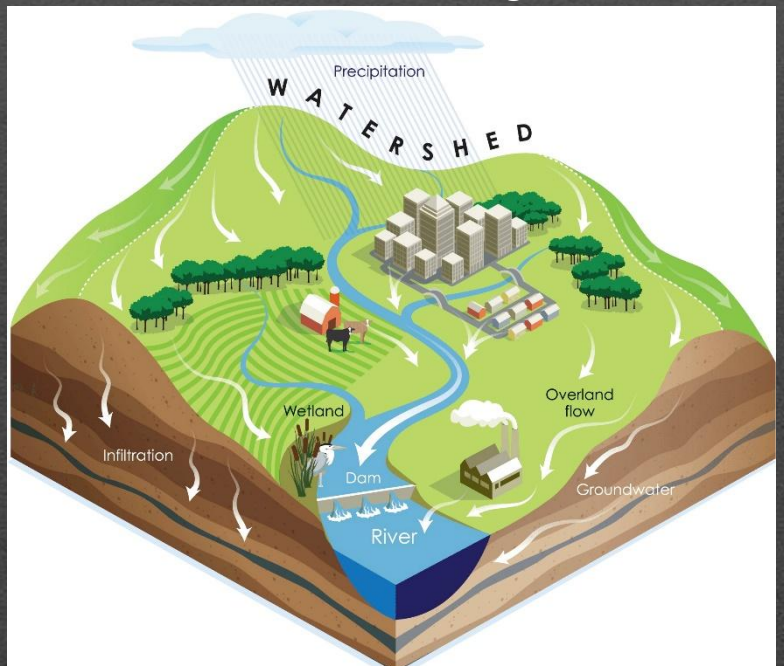
What is a Watershed

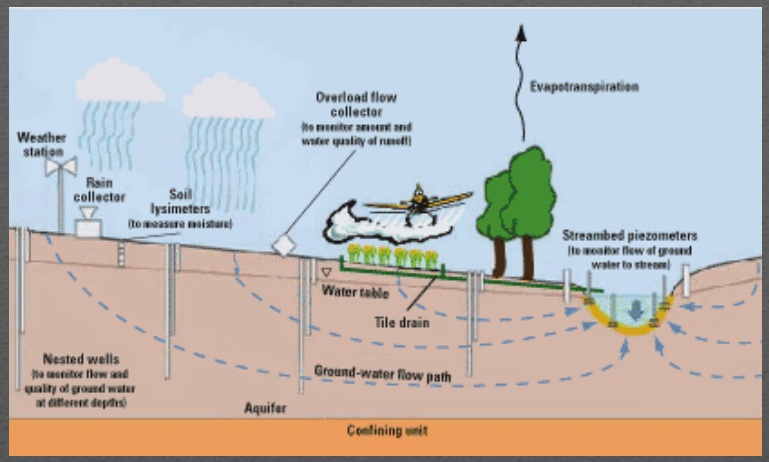
- A watershed is a defined area of land where all surface runoff drains towards a common outlet, such as a stream, river, drainage ditch, storm sewer, lake, or other receiving body of water..

- The State of Ohio is divided into 2 major watersheds (Lake Erie and Ohio River). Each of these watersheds are divided into smaller watersheds. Some of the significant ones in this area are the Portage River, the Sandusky River and the Maumee River. Each of these watersheds is divided into even smaller watersheds. The Portage River has many smaller watershed areas that feed into it. Sugar Creek is one of these. A few of the other smaller watersheds that feed into the Portage River are located along side the Sugar Creek watershed area. They are Wolf Creek, Nine Mile Creek and Gries. Both Gries and Nine Mile were previously petitioned and are on maintenance already while Wolf Creek is still in the petition process.

Why am I involved in this project?

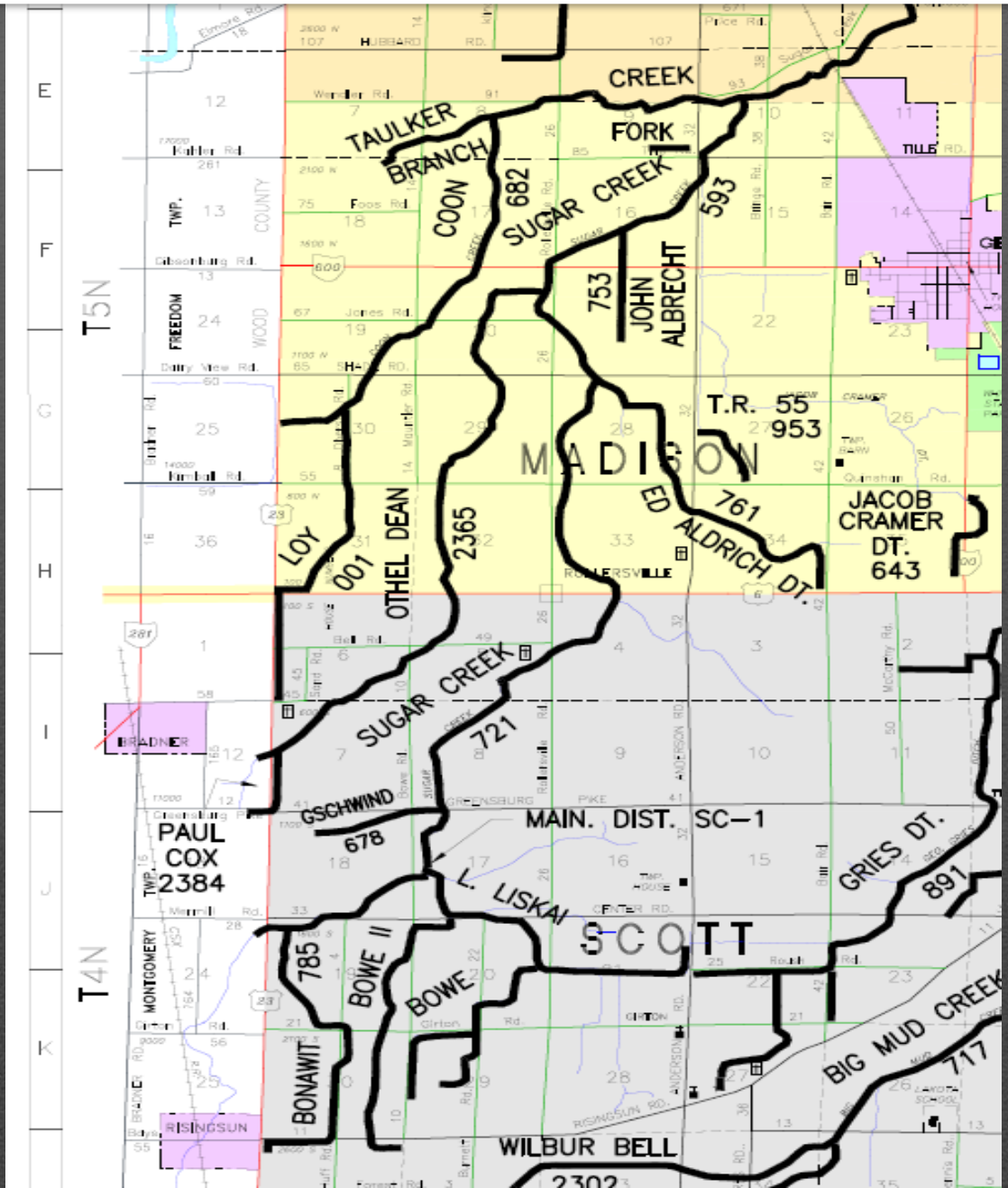
If you received a letter you are in the watershed area, your water gets to Sugar Creek (and eventually to the Portage River and Lake Erie) through many different pathways. The most visible and obvious way is through surface drainage. This includes water that drains off of yard areas, roofs, driveways, parking areas, streets, agricultural and undeveloped land areas, out of quarries and pond areas to name a few. The water travels to the project as sheet drainage across the ground, is collected into swales, ditches, catch basins and storm sewers, overflow pipes, etc. until it reaches Sugar Creek.





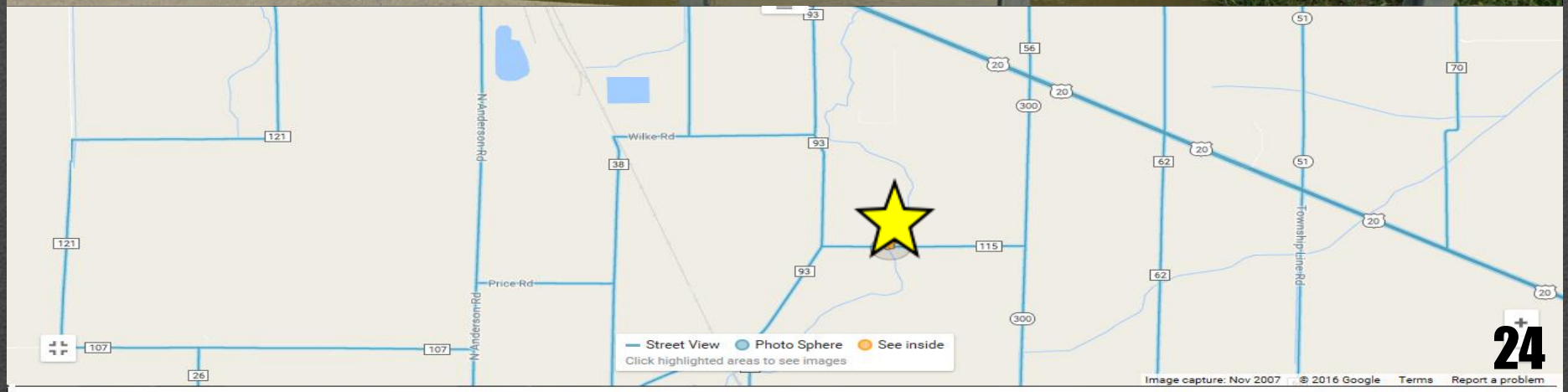
Water also travels in the watershed through underground permeable soil and rock fissures and is collected and moves underground. This water moves up and down and is the water that enters the streams or channels in the watershed through the sides and bottom of the channels. This also includes water collected by underground field tiles which aid in removing the subsurface water more efficiently. Once in the channel or drainage system, this water joins the water drained from the surface and travels to the outlet of the stream.

Current Sections of Sugar Creek On Maintenance in Sandusky County



Looking at Sugar Creek in Sandusky County From Township Road 115





Log Jam on Sugar Creek in Sandusky County
Between Township Road 115 and State Route 20



Looking at Sugar Creek in Sandusky County From State Route 20





Silt under the bridge on Sugar Creek in Sandusky County
At State Route 20 Township Road 62



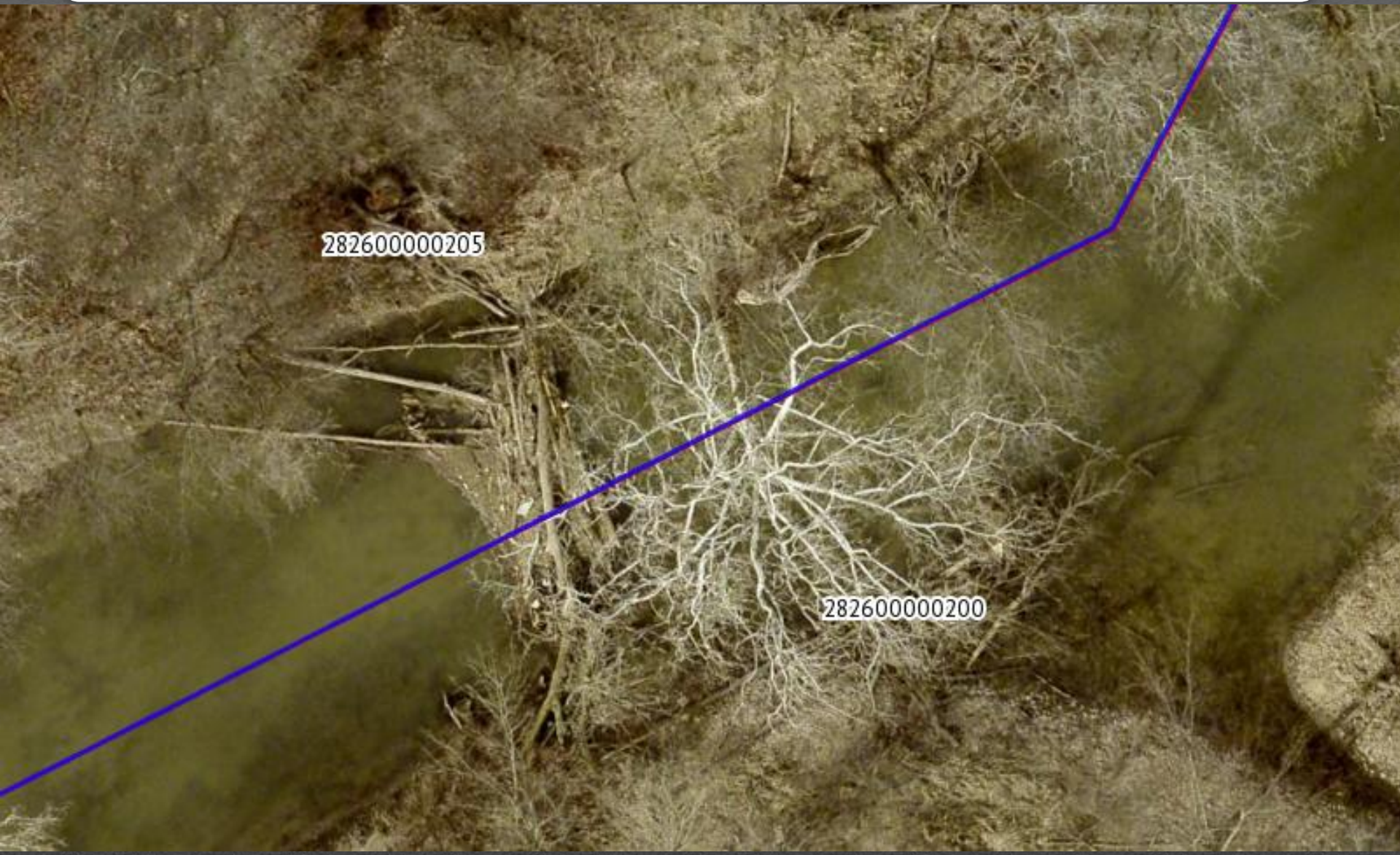
Log Jam between SR 20 and TR 56



Log Jam between SR 20 and TR 56



Log Jam between SR 20 and TR 56

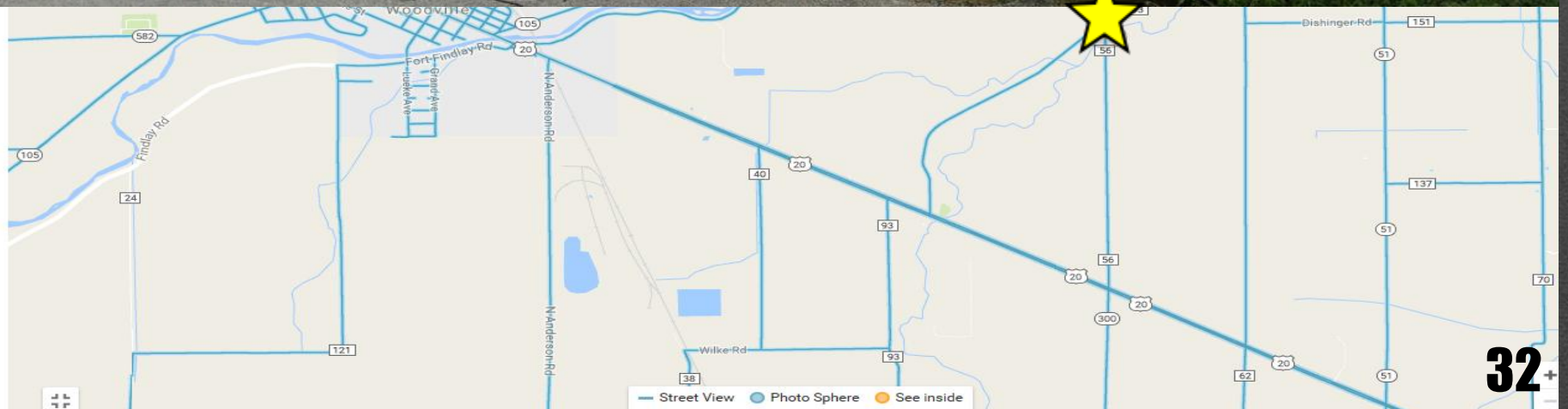


Log Jam between SR 20 and TR 56 split between 3 property owners

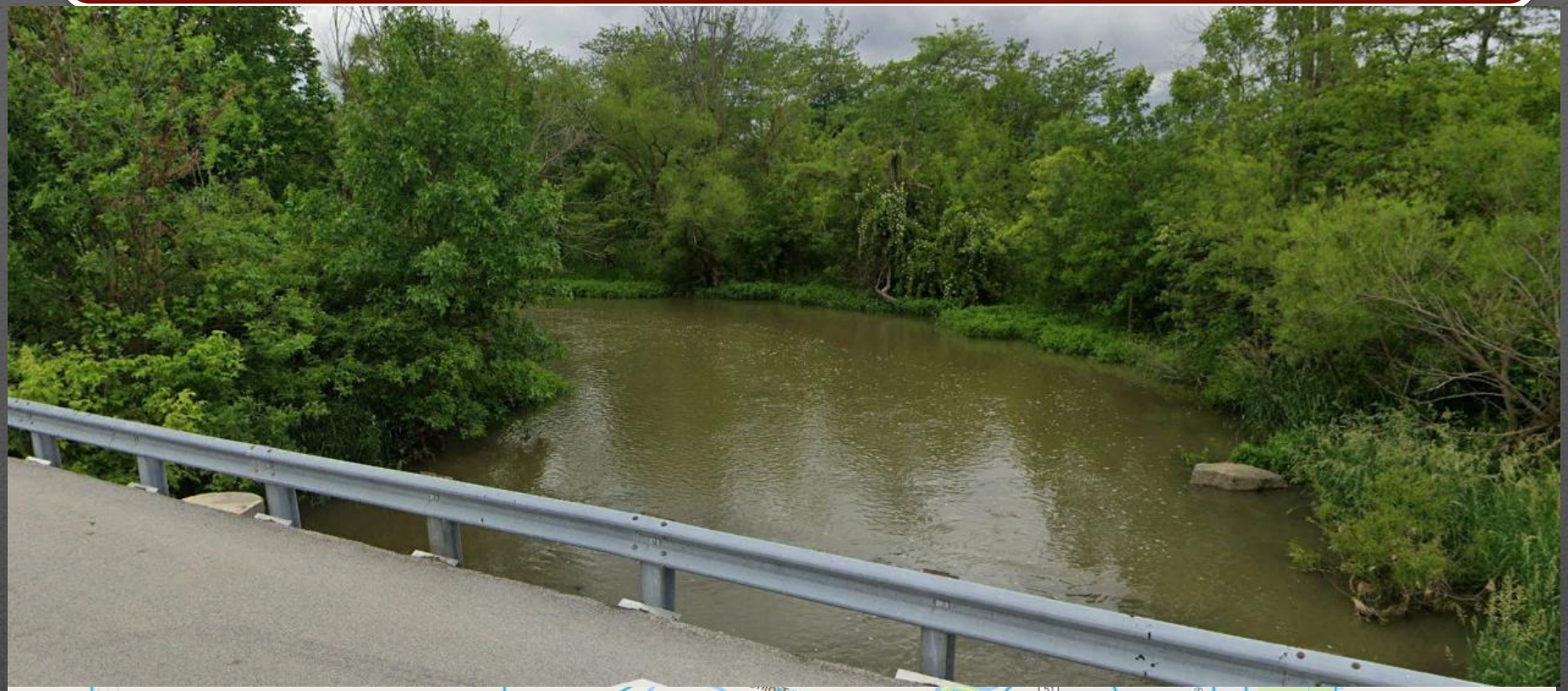


Looking at Sugar Creek in Sandusky County From Township Road 56





Looking at Sugar Creek in Sandusky County From Township Road 62



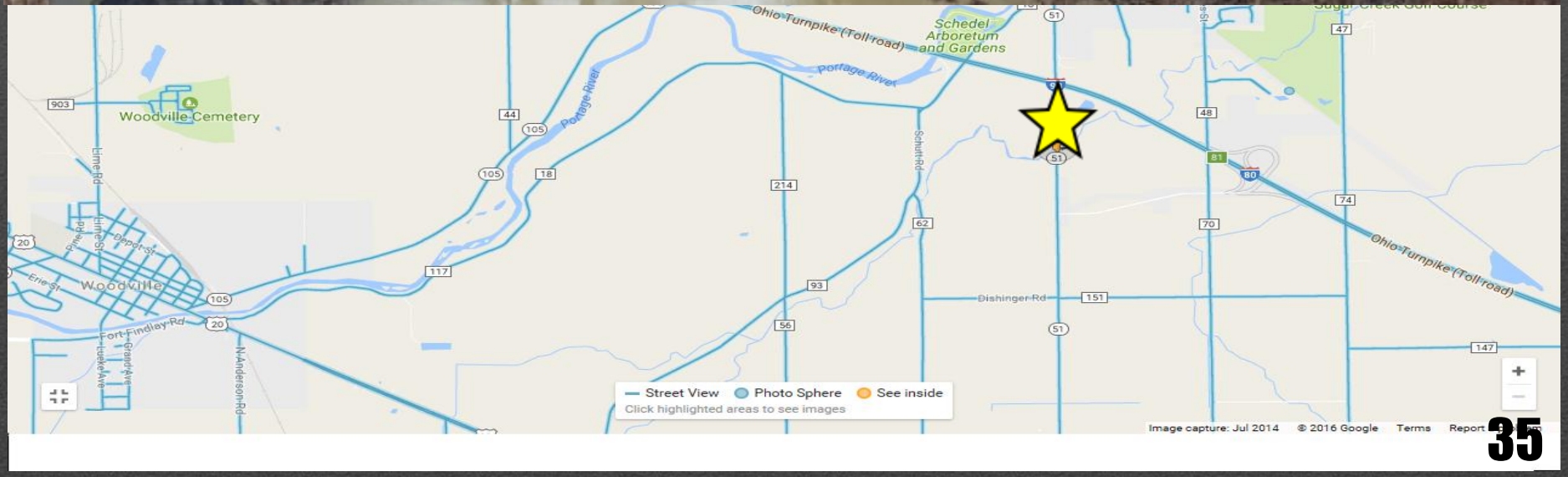


Log Jam located southwest of the Turnpike

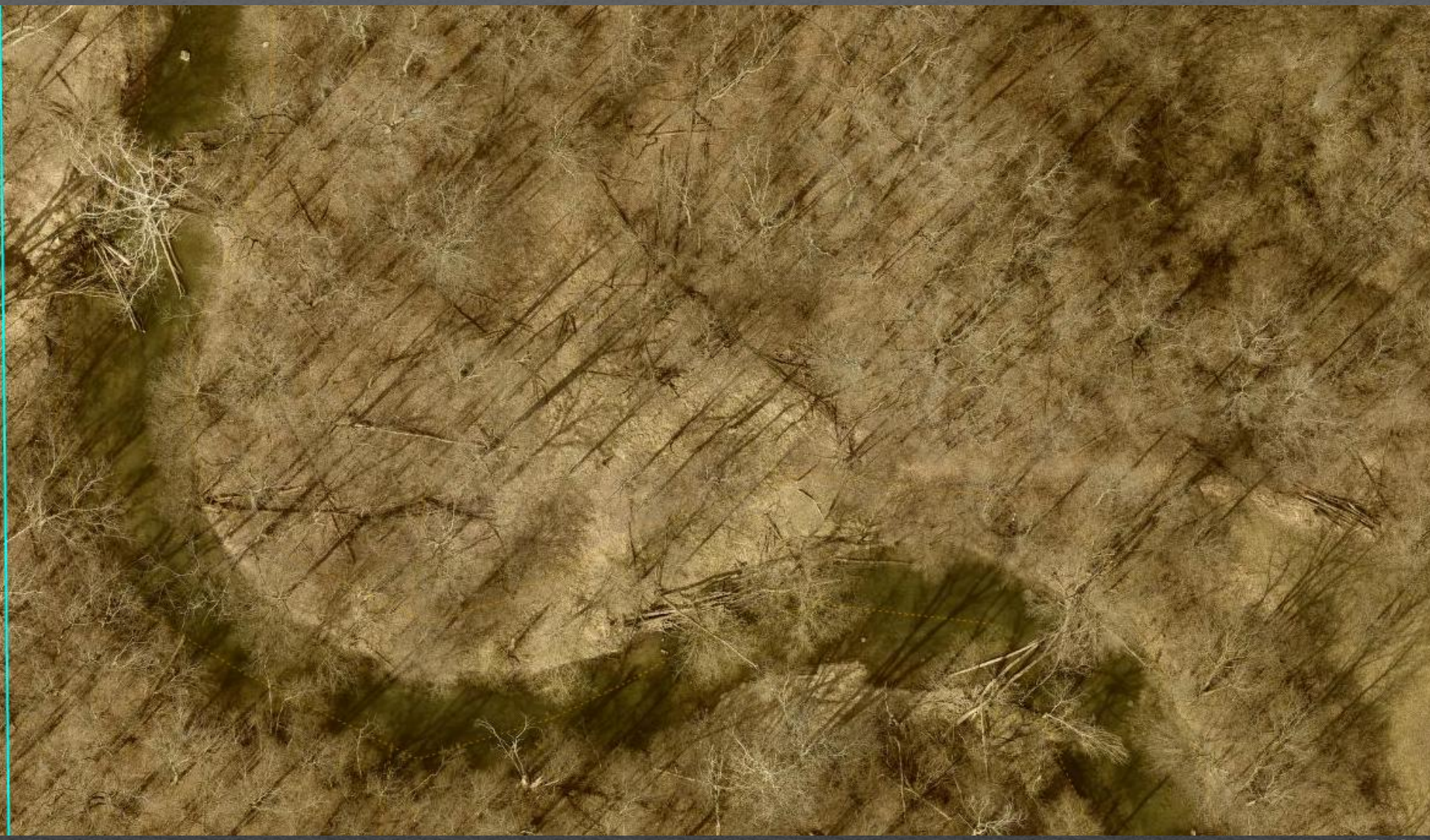


Looking at Sugar Creek in Sandusky County From State Route 51

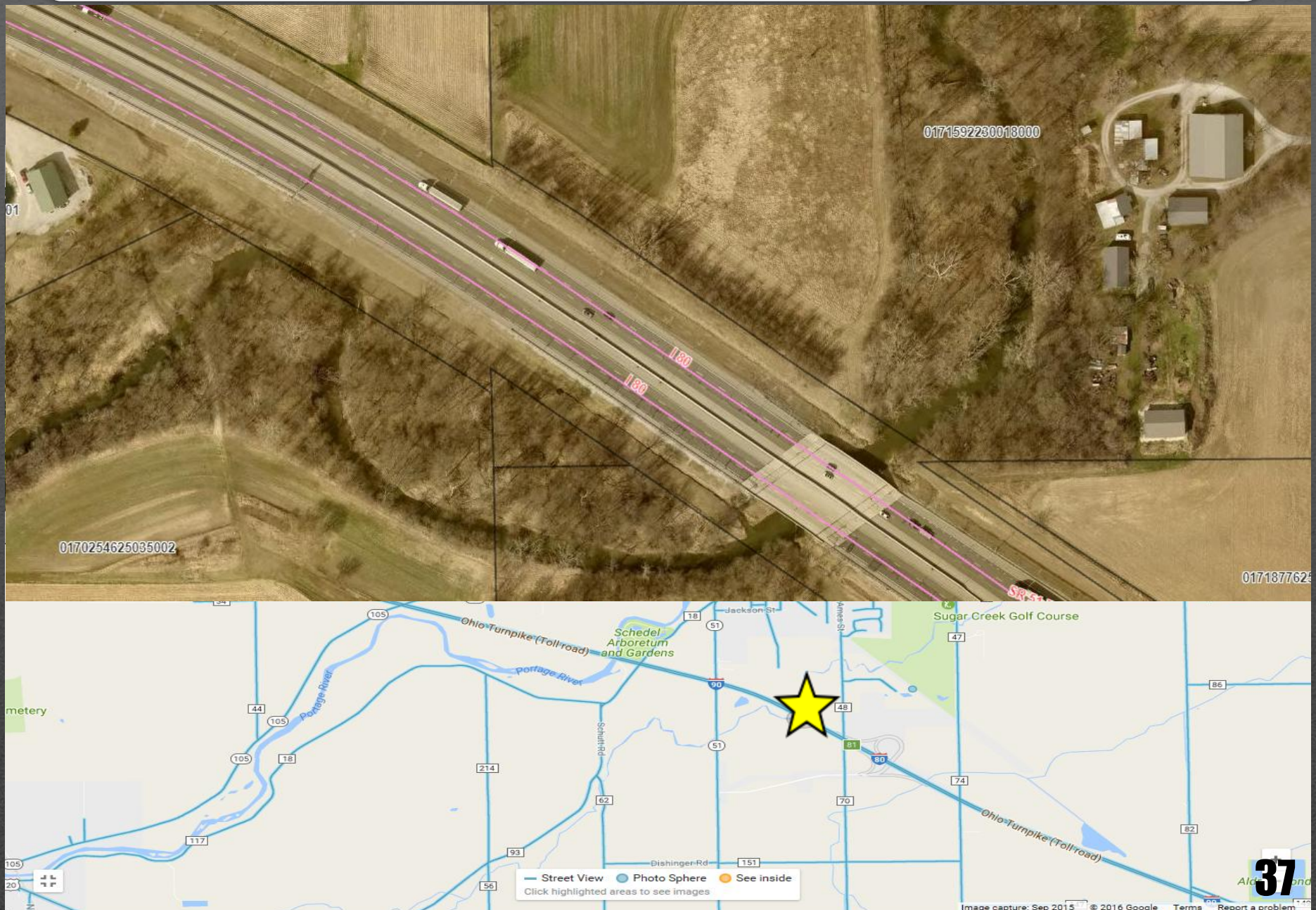




Log Jam just west of SR 51



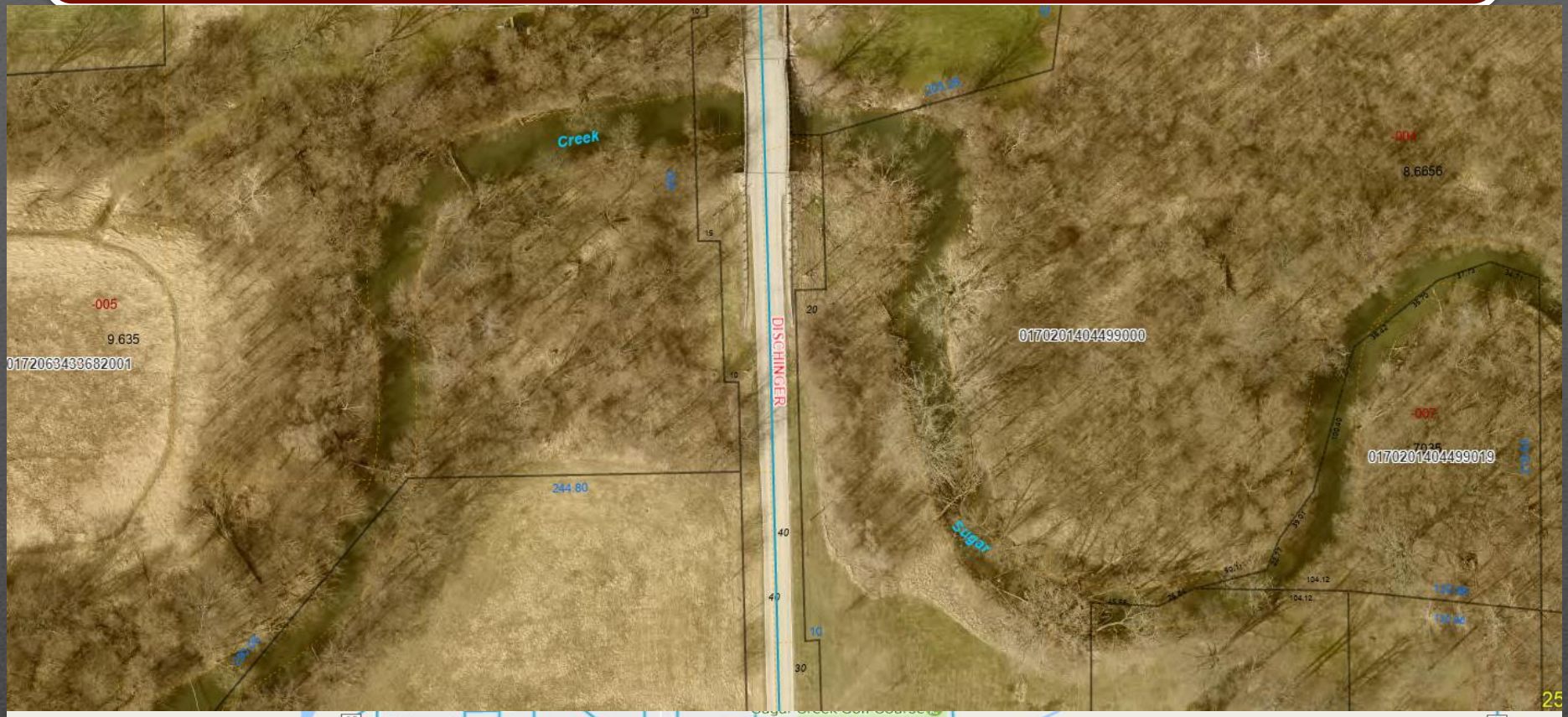
Looking at Sugar Creek in Ottawa County From Interstate Road 80

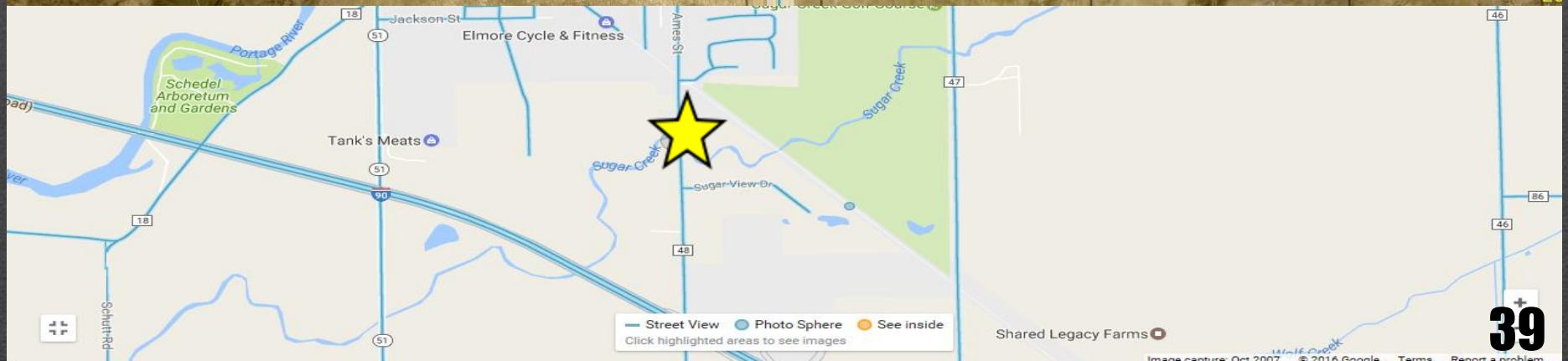


Log Jam between the Turnpike and Dischinger Road

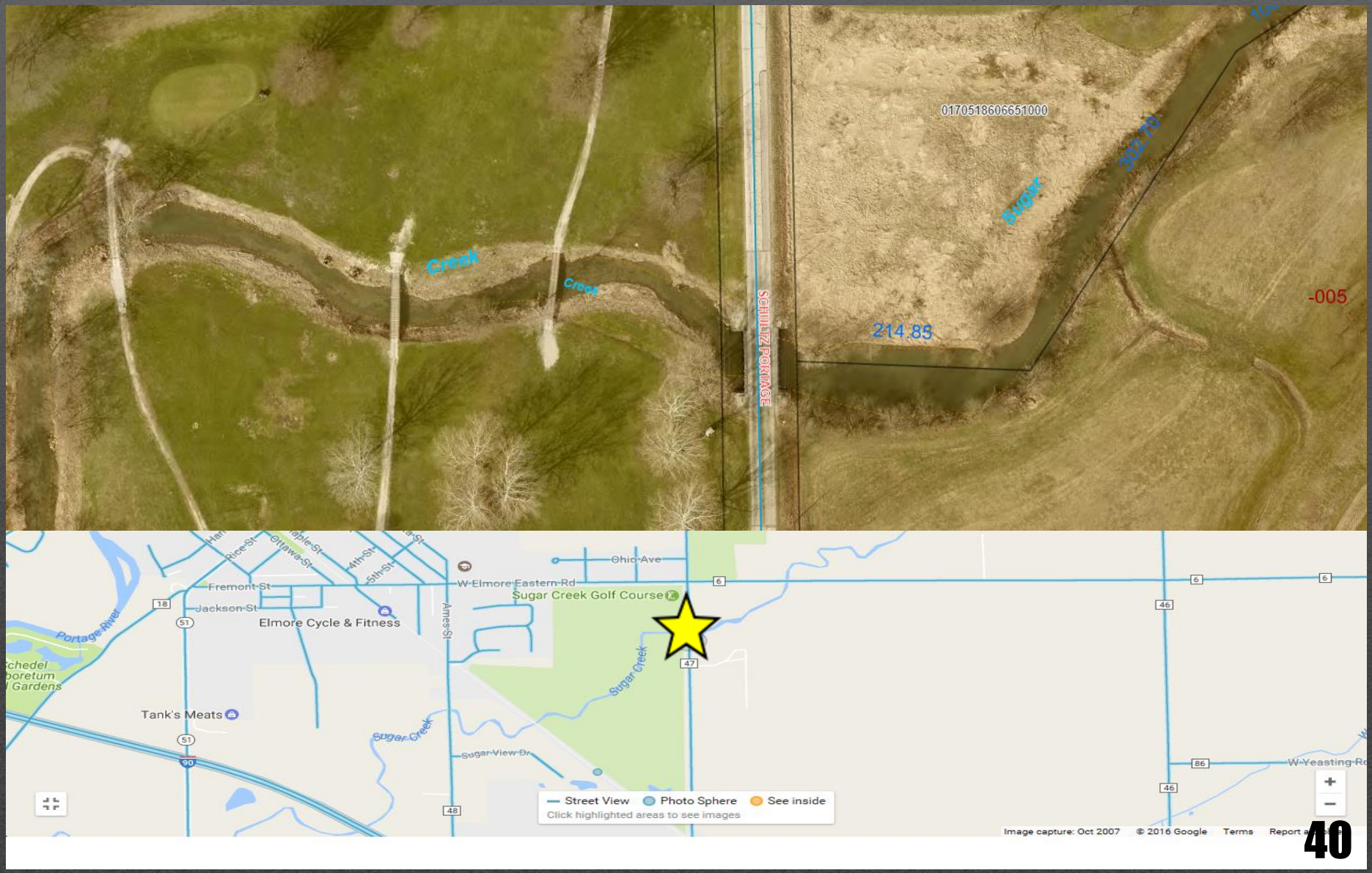


Looking at Sugar Creek in Ottawa County
From S. Dischinger Road (48)



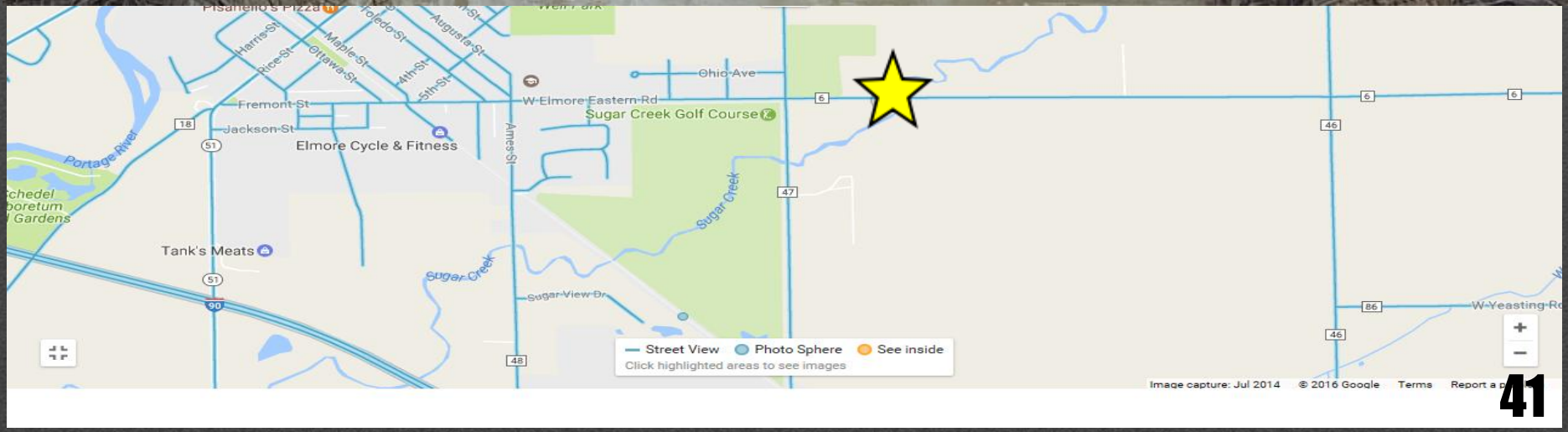


Looking at Sugar Creek in Ottawa County From Schultz Portage Road (47)



Looking at Sugar Creek in Ottawa County From Elmore Eastern Road





Log Jams between Elmore Eastern Road and Linker Portage Road

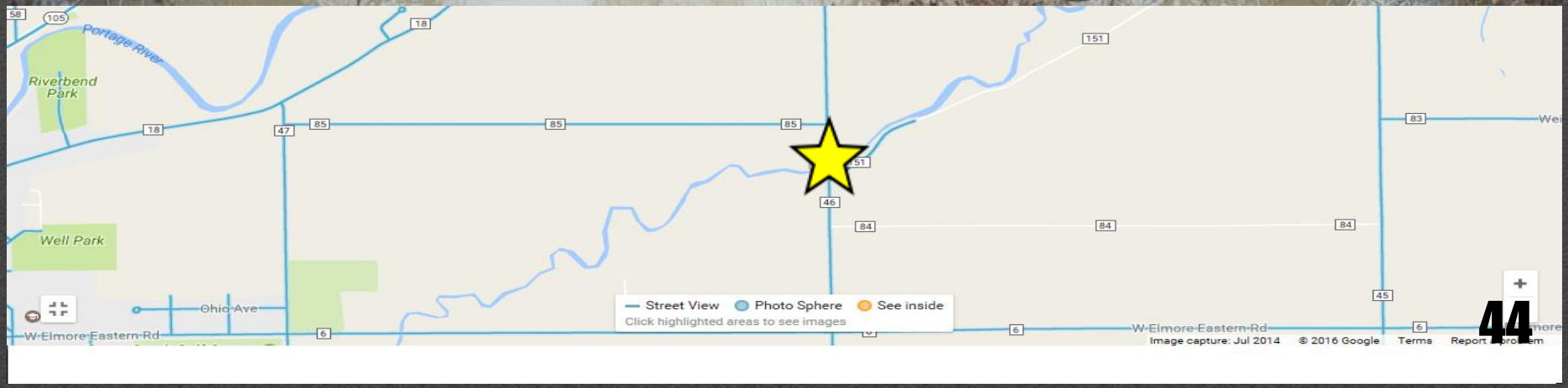


Log Jams between Elmore Eastern Road and Linker Portage Road



Looking at Sugar Creek in Ottawa County From Linker Portage Road (46)



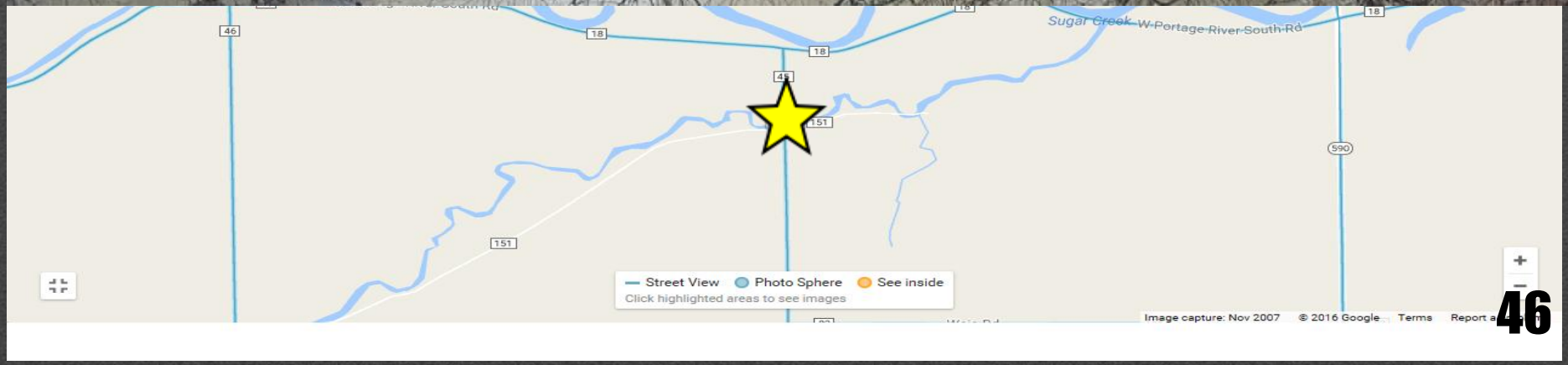


Log Jams between Linker Portage Road Hessville Road



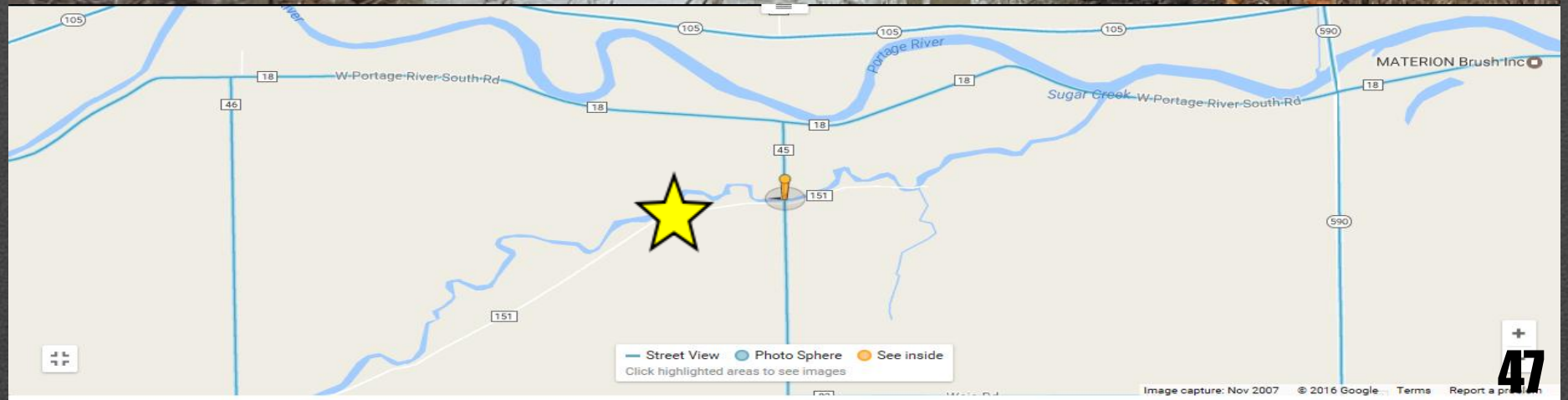
Looking at Sugar Creek in Ottawa County From Hessville Road (45)





Looking at Sugar Creek in Ottawa County From Smith Road (151)

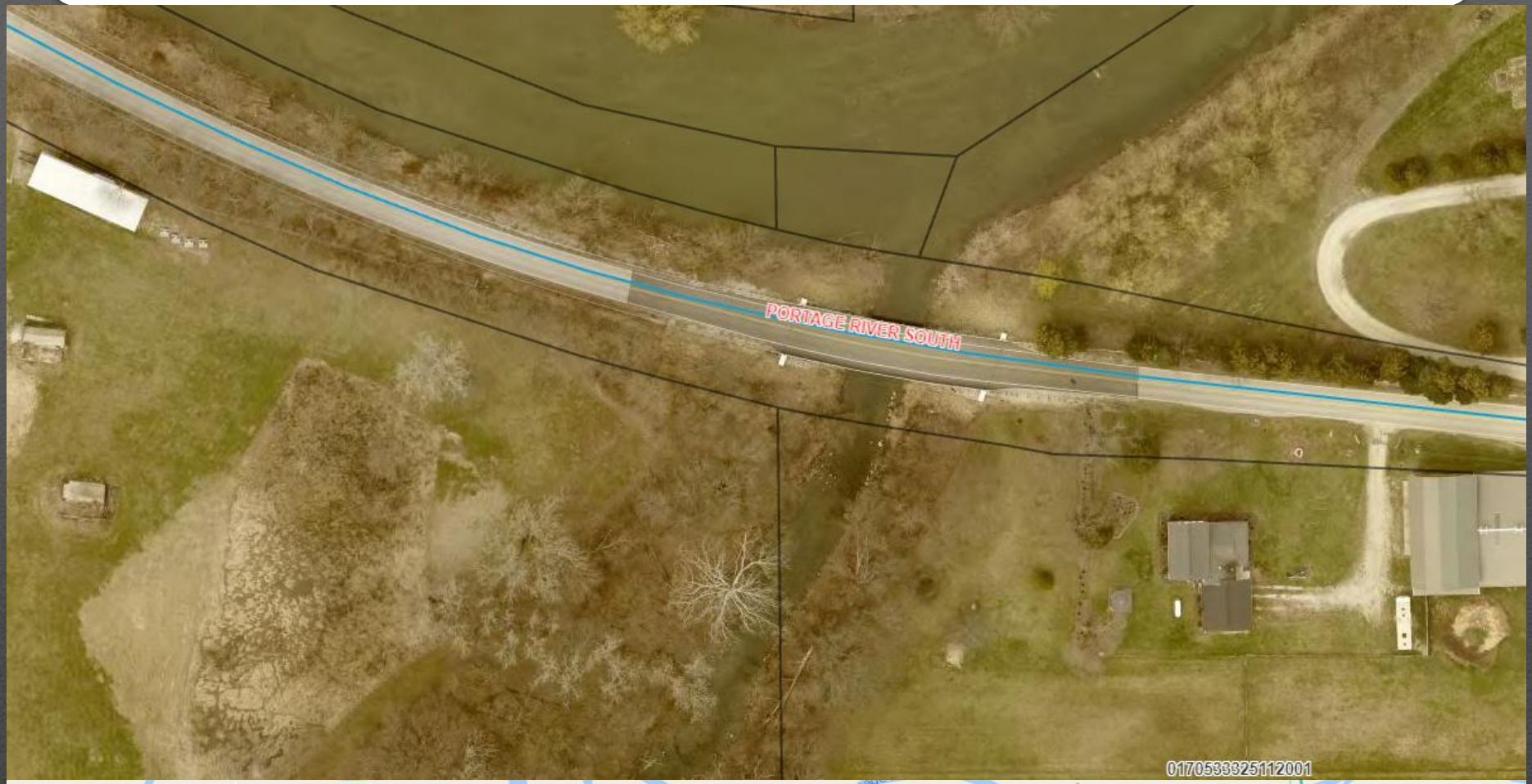


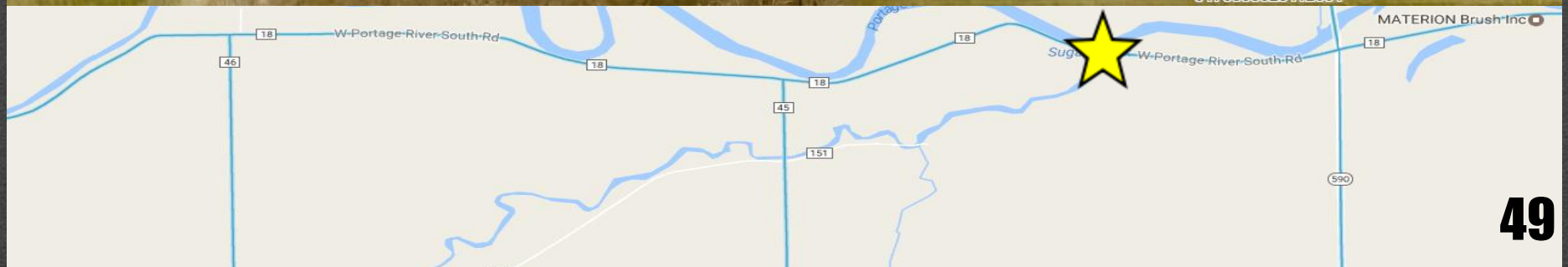


Log Jams between Hessville Road and Portage River South Road



Looking at Sugar Creek in Ottawa County From Portage River South Road





Sugar Creek log jam pictures up close



Sugar Creek log jam pictures up close



Sugar Creek log jam pictures up close



Sugar Creek log jam pictures up close



Assessment Criteria

*Acres Contributed

* Percent of Project Used

* Land Use Classification

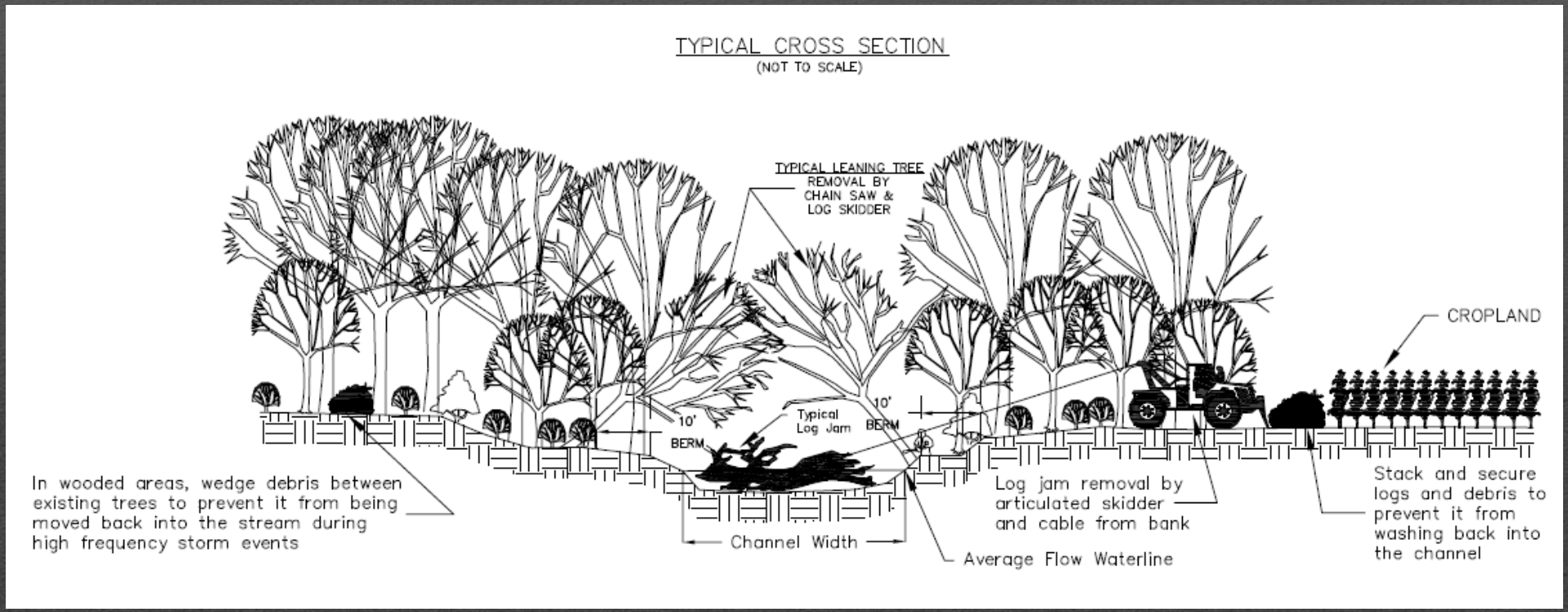
A. Land which has only surface and/or subsurface drainage to the project

B. Wooded acres, permanent pasture, stony areas not farmed, farmland tiled to another drainage project, etc.

Smaller lots, government entities, large building, and parking lots or impenetrable areas have specific ways to use the above classifications. An example would be, that roads including the right of way are charged 3 times the #1 rate, while large highways and the Turnpike is charged 4 times the #1 rate.

Log Jam and Berm Tree Removal

As we have told property owners, all the trees on the 10-foot berm do not necessarily have to go. This can be decided between the property owner and the Engineer's Office. This depends on the location of the tree and if the equipment getting through the area can perform the work needed to complete the project in a timely manner. The project consists of at least a 10-foot grass berm on both sides of the channel and a 25-foot easement for any work that will need to be done in the future for Maintenance. Sometimes the equipment needed to do the work is bigger than 10-foot and the berm along the creek will be wider. In the areas where there is a large log jam, we may need a bigger area to accomplish the work.



Sample of Construction Through a Woods on Hoeflich Ditch - 2015





Sample of Construction Through a Woods on Hoeflich Ditch - 2015





Schwochow Ditch Project - 2018



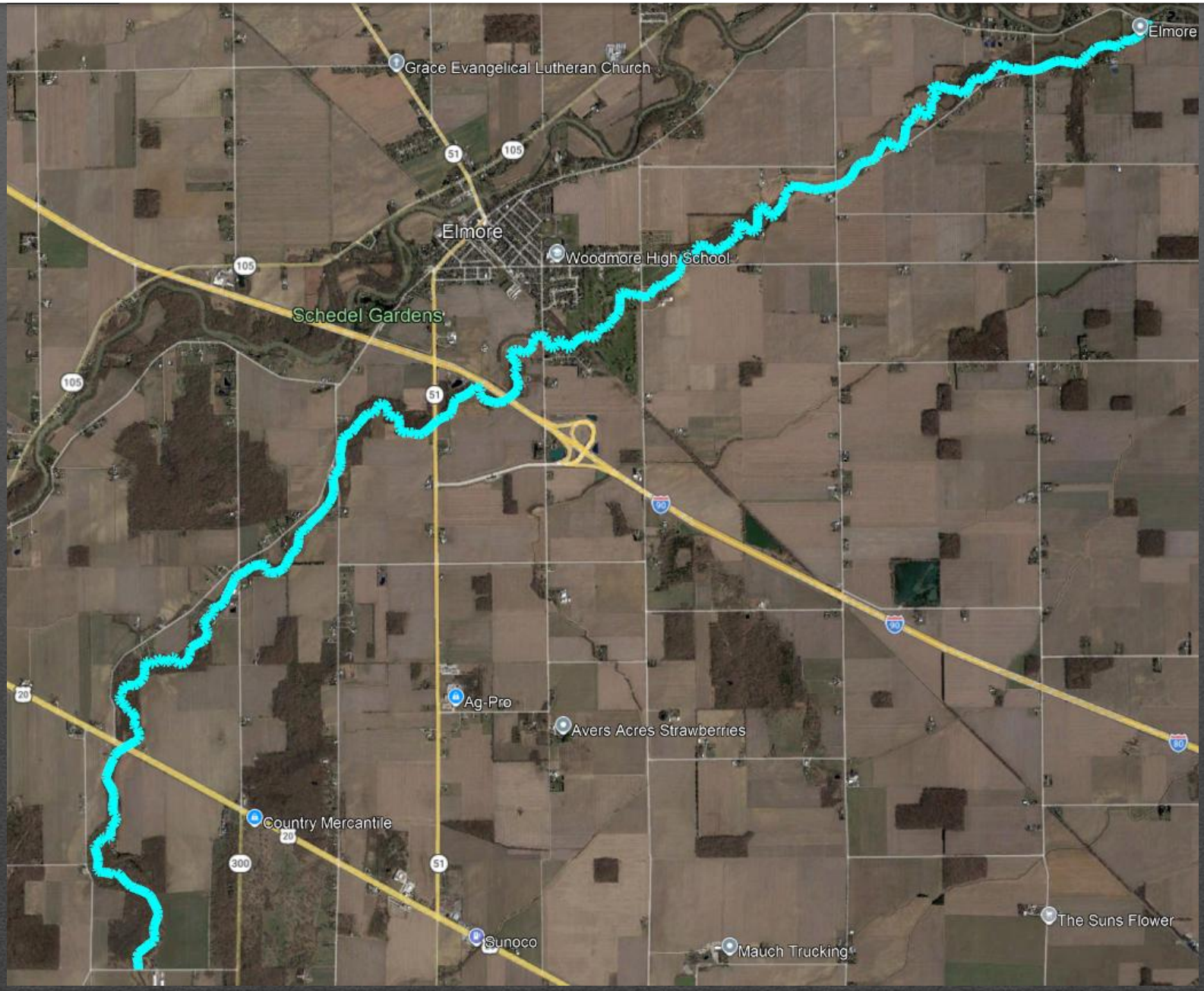


Michaels Ditch Project - 2021





Engineer Report



Final Hearing Estimate

SUGAR CREEK PETITION, PROJECT No. 162
FINAL Hearing Construction Estimate
OTTAWA, SANDUSKY, & WOOD COUNTIES, OHIO
11/6/2025

Ref.#	Item #	ITEM DESCRIPTION	QTY.	UNIT	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL
1	103.05	Premium For Contract Performance Bond	1	Lump Sum	$7,500.00	$7,500.00
2	202	Clean Through Structures	582	L.F.	$42.00	$24,444.00
3	SPECIAL	Log Jam & Debris Removal	1	Lump Sum	$215,000.00	$215,000.00
4	SPECIAL	Brush Removal and disposal - Ditch	1	Lump Sum	$50,000.00	$50,000.00
5	SPECIAL	Brush Removal and disposal - Berm	1	Lump Sum	$150,000.00	$150,000.00
6	SPECIAL	Seeding	20	Acre	$1,000.00	$20,000.00
7	601	Rock Channel Protection, Type C W/O Filter	500	Ton	$50.00	$25,000.00
8	611	Tile Oulets (4"-18" Type "E" Conduit)	250	L.F.	$50.00	$12,500.00
9	832	Erosion Control	10,000	Each	$1.00	$10,000.00
10	SPECIAL	Indiana Bat Survey (Contingency)	1	Lump Sum	$5,000.00	$5,000.00
11	SPECIAL	Silt Bar Removal (Contingency)	20,000	C.Y.	$2.50	$50,000.00

$569,444.00

Incidental Expenses

Contingency Fund	$35,056.00
Commissioner's Expense	$10,000.00
1st Year's Maintenance	$20,000.00
Engineering Cost	$35,500.00

Engineer's Estimate **$670,000.00**

Prepared by: CAB

Benefit / Cost Analysis

The cost/benefit ratio was calculated utilizing only agricultural acres that both surface drain, and are either currently tiled, and/or have the potential to be tiled into Sugar Creek. There are many other factors that could be analyzed in the calculation, but these are supported by various studies performed by the Ohio State University

Agricultural Benefits

- Based on 10 year project life
- The Ohio State University Study, 1983
  * Improved Drainage Monetary Benefit=$160 per Acre

2009 Analysis from The Ohio State University – Wood County Data

*Corn – Increased Production Benefit

~25 Bushel/Ac. X $6.50/Bushel = $162.50/Ac. per year

*Soybeans – Increased Production Benefit

~11 Bushel/Ac. X $14.00/Bushel = $154.00/Ac. per year

Using $160/Ac. per year Benefit

*Depreciate yearly Benefit 10% per year over 10 year project life

~Monetary Benefit Realized over Life of Project = $880/Ac.

Total Agricultural Benefit over life of Project = $880/Ac. X 4,320 Ac. = $3,801,600.00

Benefit: 5.70:1

It is the opinion of the Engineer that the proposed project…..

- Is Feasible
- Is conducive to public welfare
- There is a good and sufficient outlet
- The benefits are greater than the cost

Back to the Commissioners

Questions / Comments

Please State Your Name
And County