

## **BLLB 2027+ Assessment Boundaries**

The purpose of this document is to review areas to potentially add to the assessment boundaries due to various factors including the changes in the lake due to the Bear Lake Hydrologic Reconnection and Wetland Restoration project, and which properties have been/will be benefiting by the expense and work of the BLLB.

### **Bear Lake/Bear Creek Changes**

As background, the area at the inlet to Bear Lake in the northeast corner drastically changed from the time the original assessment was in the works to today, due to the \$7.9 M Bear Lake Hydrologic Reconnection and Wetland Restoration project, which restored 36 acres of wetlands and returned things to the lake's original state and removed dykes that created celery farmland. The images below show this area in 2015 and 2025. You will observe this resulted in the farmland becoming part of the lake, and the delineation of Bear Creek and Bear Lake moving further upstream.

**2015**



**2025**



Area: **East Side of Witham Bridge**

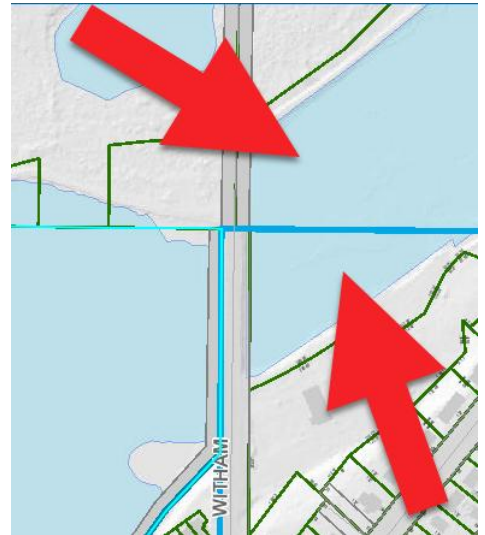
Number of parcels: Apx 2 (both County Owned)

Included in 2017 Assessment? **No**

2017 Rationale: This was

Treatment History: We have not been treated past the Witham bridge.

2027 Comments: The physical Witham bridge appears to be a good boundary on the inlet side of the bridge, and leaving out parcels east of this bridge continues to make sense.



Area: **W Ridge Drive/Witham**

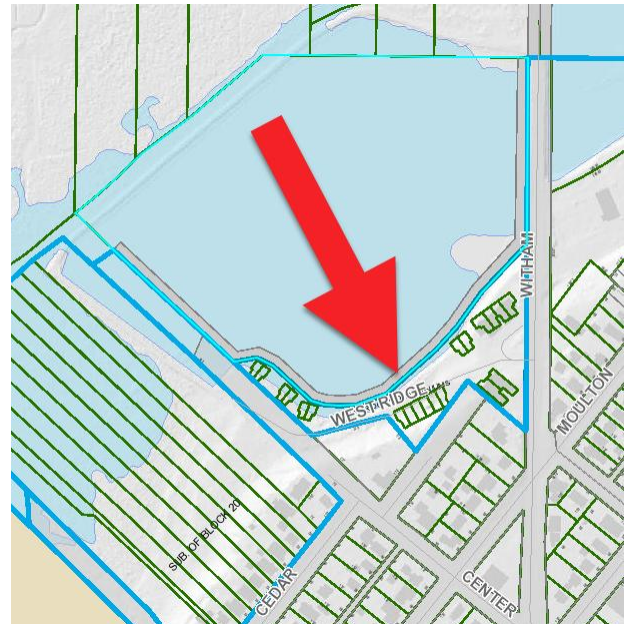
Number of Parcels: Apx 20

Included in 2017 Assessment? **No**

2017 Rationale: ?

Treatment History: The area opened up by the restoration project has been treated by the BLLB for 9 years.

2027 Comments: From review of GIS data, it appears the condos in this area do not have actual frontage on the lake. The county purchased this land and appears to own the actual shoreline. Should we request a county gift for treatment, like we are doing from city and township?



**Area: Dykstra / Former Bear Creek**

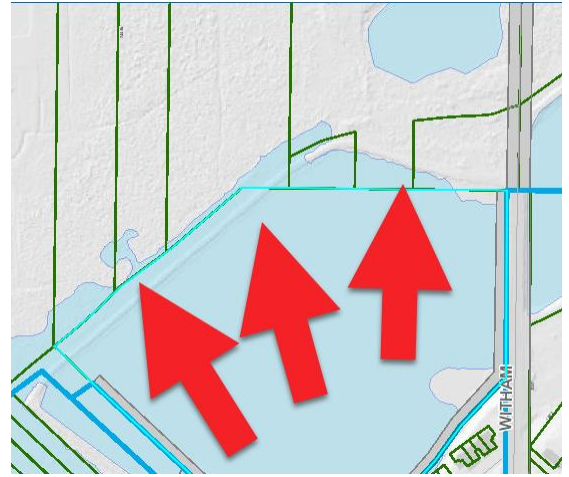
**Number of parcels:** Apx 5 (1 commercial)

**Included in 2017 Assessment?** No

**2017 Rationale:** Since their tax descriptions stated they ran to “Bear Creek” the original board agreed to remove them.

**Treatment History:** The area opened up by the restoration project has been regularly treated by the BLLB for 9 years.

**2027 Comments:** From research, lake boards are not limited to only the lake. If upstream or downstream properties receive benefit from the project, they can be included. These areas can now have docks, and these areas have benefited from BLLB projects.



**Area: Cedar / Center**

**Number of parcels:** Apx 11

**Included in 2017 Assessment?** No

**2017 Rationale:** 10/26/2017 Public hearing minutes indicate that Kim Arter and Sam Janson felt these properties “do not have Bear Lake frontage” and would realize no benefit from the project and were removed from the proposed district. The BLLB attorney, Ron Bultje also stated “if there is no view and no access, there is no additional value”. It did note that things could change at the next assessment if things improved in that area.

**Treatment History:** This area has been regularly treated by the BLLB for 9 years and has seen improvements.

**2027 Comments:** This area has been treated by the BLLB and the properties have received the benefit of improved shoreline. There are even some docks in this area. Tax/deed information state the properties go to the center of Bear Creek (essentially extending through Bear Lake).



Area: **Andree Rd/Whispering Oaks**

Number of parcels: Apx 5

Included in 2017 Assessment? No

**2017 Rationale:** 10/26/2017 Public hearing minutes indicate that there were “rumors” that residents in Whispering Oaks had access Bear Lake frontage. It was determined they had no legal access, but some may have been leasing dock space from actual lakefront owners.

**Treatment History:** We have not been treated past the Witham bridge.

**2027 Comments:** This lots don't have legal access, so they should not be included.



Area: **Channel Pointe Condos**

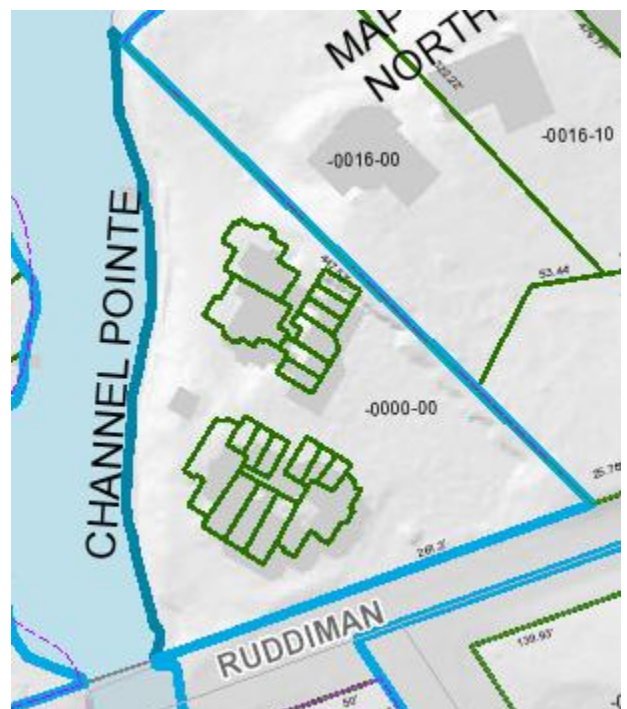
Number of parcels: Apx 19

Included in 2017 Assessment? Yes

**2017 Rationale:** There was no question on this area being included, only around how they were charged, which will be discussed in assessment methodology discussions.

**Treatment History:** This area has been treated by the BLLB over the last 9 years.

**2027 Comments:** I don't think there is any question on if they should be assessed. The how of the assessment will be determined through our assessment method.



**Area: Past Ruddiman Bridge**

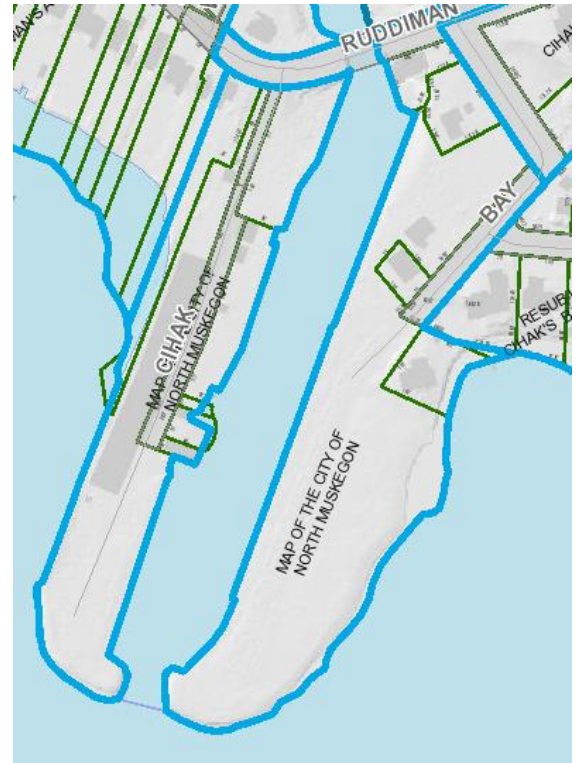
**Number of parcels:** Apx 8

**Included in 2017 Assessment?** No

**2017 Rationale:** 10/26/2017 Public hearing minutes indicate this area was removed from the proposed district. Sam Janson stated the City Assessor “has them charged for Muskegon Lake frontage, not Bear Lake frontage and the bridge is considered the dividing line between the lakes.”

**Treatment History:** No BLLB treatment in this area.

**2027 Comments:** Given this area has not been receiving treatment from the BLLB and the detail. PLM also agreed they felt the Bear Lake proper ended at this bridge.



**Recommendation**

Based on the topography changes associated with the Bear Lake Hydrologic Reconnection and Wetland Restoration project, along with where the BLLB has been treating and improving the shoreline, and the associated benefit property owners receive from this, it is my recommendation that the BLLB assessment district map be amended for the next assessment to include all waterfront parcels from the Witham Rd bridge in the northeast inflow side of the lake, to the Ruddiman bridge on the southeast outflow side of the lake.

This will more fairly assess property owners who are receiving benefits from the BLLB projects and will also help lower per-parcel assessments by adding more parcels. This will need to be reviewed by our attorney, but his initial recommendation is “We recommend including all parcels that benefit from the lake improvement. In our experience, “benefit” generally includes any parcel with private legal access to the lake. We have not considered lake view alone to be a determining factor for inclusion in a special assessment district. Rather, because these properties are located on the lake and therefore receive a direct benefit from the improvement (e.g., can access the water and benefit from weed treatment), we recommend that they be included in the district.”