



CASS BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT DRAWS COOPERATIVE ACCLAIM

By Pat Moody | Posted January 16, 2020 |

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In a day and age when “governmental cooperation” is sometimes considered an oxymoron, especially at the national level, the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission continues to search out exemplary collaboration in Michigan’s *Great Southwest* through their annual Graham Woodhouse Intergovernmental Effort Award.

Last month when they conducted their most recent commission meeting to wrap up the year, the commission presented the award to the Sink Road Bridge Replacement Project in Pokagon Township of Cass County.

The Award is presented annually for projects that exemplify cooperation between and among governments, non-profits, and private entities. It was established to recognize and reward the partners who execute complex, regional problem solving that optimizes the use of limited resources. That sort of problem-solving is often much more difficult than traditional methods, however the rewards tend to be greater and more far-reaching. The partners involved were deemed deserving for their resourcefulness, dedication, and persistence.

The Sink Road Bridge project featured the design and installation of a new structure that replaced an existing, structurally deficient bridge over the Dowagiac River. The bridge has an

80-foot span and total road project length of 583 feet. It was adjacent to a wetland, federal trust land, existing utilities, and thus required extensive design considerations.

Due to a necessary road realignment, an existing Michigan DNR canoe ramp had to be relocated. Other components included safety improvements, a ten-vehicle parking lot, restroom facilities, and a path to the new launch ramp that eliminated the need for users to cross the busy two-lane roadway. The relocation of the canoe launch was a collective effort between the DNR and the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi.

A diverse partnership made the entire vision a reality. Leadership across federal, state, and local government coupled with the non-profit and private sector talent and resources made it possible for the project to be a success.

The 2019 Graham Woodhouse award was given to the following partners in the project:

- Pokagon Township
- Cass County Road Commission
- Michigan Department of Transportation
- The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources
- US Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Wightman of Benton Harbor