

September 23, 2008  
For immediate release

Contact: [Chuck Hersey](#) or [Sue Stetler](#)  
(313) 324-3346 or (313) 324-3428

**Southeast Michigan invests \$2.4 billion in combined sewer overflows;  
SEMCOG report outlines achievements, details next steps**

Southeast Michigan has invested \$2.4 billion in projects designed to reduce combined sewer overflow (CSO) pollutant discharges, resulting in an 85 percent reduction in untreated CSO discharges. These efforts continue to improve water quality and quality of life in the region, according to a new report released today by SEMCOG, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments.

The report, *Investment in Reducing Combined Sewer Overflows Pays Dividends*, also notes that the resulting improved water quality in the region has produced other benefits:

- A dramatic increase in the amount of oxygen available in various parts of the Rouge River leading to improved fish habitat.
- Birds of prey (bald eagles, red-shouldered hawks, turkey vultures, peregrine falcons, and osprey) are more abundant in the Detroit River and the western basin of Lake Erie.

Other benefits are less visible but also important. CSO projects have required significant collaboration among local governments in Southeast Michigan. These efforts have resulted in Michigan being viewed as a national leader in CSO control.

A combined sewer overflow, or CSO, is a sewer system that carries sanitary wastewater and untreated stormwater runoff in a single pipe. Like many Midwestern states, Michigan's older communities were developed using this single pipe sewer system.

Federal and state funding for these much-needed CSO projects are limited. Increasingly, local governments must fund these projects. That means that residents are paying for these projects through higher sewer rates.

To address overall water quality objectives, continued improvements are needed in areas besides CSOs — such as preventative stormwater management techniques, invasive plant management, and increased monitoring of water quality.

The report was created jointly through a cooperative effort with the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD) and several of its customers. As a principal provider of wastewater and stormwater collection services for Detroit and 76 other communities in the tri-county area, and the largest discharger to the Great Lakes, the DWSD is making significant additional investments to

further reduce CSOs and improve water quality.

The complete report, *Investment in Reducing Combined Sewer Overflows Pays Dividends*, is available in PDF on SEMCOG's Web site. Visit [www.semcog.org](http://www.semcog.org) and look under Reports on the home page. Hard copies are available from the SEMCOG Information Center (313-324-3362).

SEMCOG is a regional planning partnership of local governmental units serving 4.9 million people in the seven-county region of Southeast Michigan striving to enhance the region's quality of life.

- ### -

*SEMCOG . . . Equipping local government leaders for the future*

535 Griswold, Suite 300 • Detroit, MI 48226-3602 • (313) 961-4266 • fax (313) 961-4869