

Educational Corner—Submitted by Mindy Koch

Aggregate Mining in Michigan

Who regulates aggregate mining in Michigan? Or is the real question who should? There are no statewide regulations directly related to aggregate mining; however some local units of government have enacted regulations primarily to address nuisance and environmental concerns. The patchwork regulations have created an inconsistent regulatory framework for the aggregate industry and the public. Unpredictable local regulations, difficulty in siting new mining operations and the current emphasis on fixing the “damn” roads have created a significant statewide controversy.

The aggregate mining industry is concerned with the lack of consistency in local regulations and enforcement. Communities are concerned with negative nuisance issues and environmental impacts. Everyone is concerned with the potential environmental degradation, such as habitat destruction, air and water pollution, increased sedimentation, and depletion of groundwater supplies from aggregate mining.

The response to these concerns House Bills 4526, 4527 and 4528 of 2023 were introduced to solve some of industries issues. The Bills address some of the environmental issues, preempt local government from regulating aggregate mines and create state authorities for issuing and enforcing mining permits. The Bills are currently stalled in the House of Representatives in part due to local governments’ concern regarding the loss of their regulatory authority and oversight related to mining operations.

Aggregate mining in Michigan continues to play a critical role in the state’s construction industry by providing essential raw materials for infrastructure development. The state has abundant reserves of high-quality aggregates including sand, gravel, and crushed stone, which are used to produce concrete, asphalt, and other building materials. Aggregate makes up approximately 95% of every ton of asphaltic concrete placed on Michigan roads and 80% of each cubic yard of Portland cement concrete used.

Oxford Township, Oakland County was once known as “The Gravel Capital of the World,” shipping 5 million tons of gravel a year. There are approximately 325 aggregate mines in Michigan. Michigan continues to be one of the leading producers of aggregate in the Nation.