



MEMORANDUM

Mayor and Council –

TO: VICTOR CARDENAS, CITY MANAGER
FROM: MEGAN MIKUS, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS
SUBJECT: WALLED LAKE LAKE LEVEL CONCERNS
DATE: JANUARY 29, 2026

Due to the public comment received by City Council at your January 10th meeting, the following memo outlines the process to change the level of Walled Lake.

- Victor

There were requests by some public commenters at the January 10, 2026, City Council Meeting to review the legal lake level of Walled Lake that was established in 1984 because they believe it should be higher.

The Walled and Shawood Lakes level district was established in the early 1980s. The Walled Lake-Shawood Lake level study was completed in 1984, and the lake level structure was built thereafter. The lake level control structure is located at the southwest corner of Walled Lake. The Water Resources Commissioner's Office (WRC) maintains the structure and the lake level through operation of the control structure. The Cities pay annual assessments for maintenance and operations, based on a 1983 agreement between Cities of Novi and Walled Lake. Novi is responsible for 88% of the costs, while Walled Lake is responsible for 12%.

General information about the lake level maintenance can be found on the WRC's page: <https://www.oakgov.com/government/water-resources-commissioner/stormwater/lakes-watersheds/lake-level-information>

To request a new lake level study would require a petition of two-thirds of the lakefront property owners. Should the petition be successful, the WRC would hire experts to gather data and to conduct a new lake level study. The Cities would be 100% responsible for the study costs; a high-level cost estimate is approximately \$100K. After completing the study, a hearing date is set in circuit court to review the lake-level study and its recommendations. A new study could recommend a lower, the same, or a higher lake level. The legal proceedings and additional investigations that may be required during the process could cost several hundreds of thousands of dollars. In addition to the base study, a new Flood Insurance Map (FIS) would need to be created. This FIS would be an additional cost of around \$100K. The WRC does not recommend this process due to the high costs and unknown outcomes.

Further details on how a legal lake level is established can be found here:

<https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/egle/Documents/Programs/WRD/Dam-Safety/legal-lake-levels.pdf?rev=721b3fa3422e405c8d8ce359e0502268>

In summary, if enough property owners were to petition for a new lake level study, it would be several years and several hundreds of thousands of dollars to have the lake level re-

evaluated. The desired outcome of the commenters is not guaranteed (a higher lake level). While a higher lake level during the summer may have recreational boating benefits, it may have negative impacts to property (flooding) or to the ecosystem (covering habitats for wildlife or destruction of wetlands).

In the fall, the WRC installed new sensors at the lake level structure, which allows the maintenance staff to remotely check the levels. These sensors provide WRC staff with data to be more responsive to changes in the lake level. If anyone has concerns about the lake level structure or the lake level, they can contact the WRC Construction Drain Maintenance Unit at 248-858-1105.