

Introduction

The public participation plan for this watershed management plan was created in early 2008 and can be found on the ARC website. A number of factors were considered when developing the process. *We didn't want to reinvent the wheel.* A determination was made about what activities were successful during the watershed management planning process from 1998-2000 and incorporated into the current public participation process. *We had to accomplish a lot in a short period of time.* During the original watershed management planning process, the communities had up to two years to educate the public about the planning process and the goals and objectives of the plan. However, the current process had less than a year to accomplish the same outcome.

The Rouge River Watershed communities have long realized that the public must be engaged in order that Rouge River restoration activities are successful. Public involvement and education has long been the foundation of Rouge River restoration activities since the inception of the Rouge River National Wet Weather Demonstration Project in 1992.

In 1992, a survey was completed that targeted seven audiences that must be educated if restoration efforts were to be effective. Public education and involvement activities were developed to educate a wide range of audiences. Through the years, with the inception of the Rouge River Watershed's seven subwatershed management advisory groups and later the Alliance of Rouge Communities (ARC), the communities and their partners have engaged the public through workshops, hands-on river stewardship activities, newsletters, public service announcements and focused initiatives such as fertilizer reduction campaigns and grow zone projects.

This plan was created by the ARC Public Involvement and Education (PIE) Committee, a group of communities, citizens, counties, non-profit organizations and stewardship groups that meet quarterly to implement and review public education activities in the Rouge River Watershed. The plan was distributed for review and comment to the PIE Committee at its January, 2008 meeting. It was ultimately approved at a meeting of the full ARC on May 6, 2008. The goals of the public participation process were:

- ◆ To create awareness among members of the public about the condition of the Rouge River Watershed and its seven subwatersheds;
- ◆ To educate the public about the watershed management plan goals and objectives;
- ◆ To establish a process by which members of the public, who affect or are affected by the Rouge River, may participate in the development of the Rouge River Watershed Management Plan, and,
- ◆ To ensure that all interested stakeholders can review and comment on the draft Rouge River Watershed Management Plan.

Chapter 7



This plan was created by the ARC Public Involvement and Education (PIE) Committee, a group of communities, citizens, counties, non-profit organizations and stewardship groups that meet quarterly to implement and review public education activities in the Rouge River Watershed.

The plan called for the following activities:

- ◆ Three public workshops held in locations around the watershed to educate the public about the goals and objectives of the watershed management plan;
- ◆ Creation of a survey to document watershed issues and concerns for distribution to the general public and other interested parties;
- ◆ Creation of focused roundtables to review the plan, including a Schools Roundtable, a Business Roundtable, and other smaller groups;
- ◆ Presentation of the watershed management plan at the Rouge 2008, the annual legislative briefing held at University of Michigan-Dearborn, and,
- ◆ Public review of the plan.

Additionally, regular working meetings of the seven Subwatershed Advisory Groups, which are open to the public, were conducted throughout the year. Attendance at regular SWAG meetings includes community representatives, educational institutions, general public, stewardship groups and other interested parties. Watershed planning meeting topics are listed in Table 7-1 below.

Table 7-1: ARC SWAG Watershed Planning Meetings

SWAG	Goals and Objectives Desired Uses	Ecology and Flow	Water Quality	Characteristics, Existing Conditions and Potential Actions and Prioritizations
Middle 3/Lower 2 SWAG	Feb. 28, 2008	May 8, 2008	Sept. 4, 2008	October 2, 2008
Main 3-4 SWAG*	March 5, 2008	May 8, 2008	Sept. 4, 2008	October 2, 2008
Main 1-2 SWAG	March 4, 2008	April 29, 2008	Sept. 3, 2008	October 14, 2008
Upper SWAG*	Feb. 27, 2008	April 29, 2008	Sept. 3, 2008	October 14, 2008
Lower 1/Middle 1 SWAG	Feb. 28, 2008	April 24, 2008	Sept. 4, 2008	October 2, 2008

**Note: The Main 3-4 SWAG combined with the Middle 3/Lower 2 for the purposes of watershed management planning after its March meeting. The Upper SWAG combined with the Main 1-2 SWAG for purposes of watershed management planning after its February meeting.*

As stated previously, there was a very narrow window of opportunity for public involvement and review of the draft watershed management plan. Additionally, the public participation plan was constantly reviewed and updated because some planned activities ultimately were not feasible given the time constraints.

Rouge River Watershed Survey

A survey was developed to gauge the public’s opinion about the draft goals for the watershed management plan. The survey asked the public:

- ◆ To rank the draft goals in order of importance;
- ◆ To rank issues, such as flooding, streambank erosion and water quality in order of importance;
- ◆ To discuss any concerns about the river, and
- ◆ To include their name and e-mail address so they could be contacted when the draft plan was ready for review.

The survey was distributed at three public meetings held around the Rouge River Watershed in June. The public meetings included a presentation about the goals of the current plan, the projects completed to address those goals, and the draft goals for the updated watershed management plan. Additionally, surveys were distributed at a Dearborn Heights community event and Rouge 2008, an annual legislative briefing held in October, 2008 at the University of Michigan. The survey was also available on the ARC website (www.allianceofrougecommunities.com) and was publicized on the public meeting flyers and on various community websites. The survey was also publicized on an ARC video discussing the watershed management plan that was presented on local access stations in a limited number of ARC communities.

The survey was also used to gather names and email addresses of stakeholders that were interested in being notified when the plan was ready for review in December.

Stakeholder Public Meetings

The Public Participation Plan called for three public presentations around the watershed to explain the planning process, discuss the draft watershed management plan (WMP) goals and objectives and seek input. Participants viewed various displays, listened to a presentation about the WMP, engaged in a discussion about the goals and objectives and completed the one-page survey. The WMP presentation was identical for each workshop, except specific projects highlighted were from the subwatershed that the meetings targeted. The meetings took place in June, 2008. Notices for the meetings were posted on the ARC website and also on community websites. Additionally, some communities put information about the meetings in their local newsletters and contacted the local media. A brief synopsis is included below. A fourth public meeting, Rouge 2008 at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, was held October 24, 2008. Goals and issues were ranked in priority from 1 to 6, with 1 designating the highest priority, and 6 designating the lowest priority. Based on the 114 surveys (see Appendix E) from all sources, respondents ranked “Reduce sources of pollution that threaten public health,” as the most important goal and Rouge River water quality as the most important issue.

June 12, 2008, Riverside Middle School, Dearborn Heights (co-hosted by the Dearborn Heights Watershed Stewards Commission); 10 attendees. This public meeting was targeted at the communities within the Main 3-4, Lower 2 and Middle 3 Subwatersheds, which are located in the more urban, developed area of the watershed. ARC Executive Director Jim Ridgway made a presentation to 10 attendees that outlined the goals of the current watershed management plan, what was accomplished and discussed the draft goals for the updated plan. When asked what their concerns were, the participants expressed a desire for more paths along the riparian corridor in the Middle 3 Subwatershed and better access to the riparian corridor along Hines Drive that is managed by the Wayne County Parks. Participants completed the surveys. Despite the expressed need for more access to the riparian corridor and better stewardship of the riparian corridor



within Wayne County Parks, participants ranked the goal “Reduce sources of pollution that threaten public health” to be their number one concern. They ranked “Protect, restore and/or enhance natural features to maintain/improve river and watershed ecosystems,” as number 2. The goal “Maximize community assets related to the watershed,” which reflected their comments about providing access to the riparian corridor was ranked number 5 out of 6 watershed goals.



Main 1-2/Upper SWAGs public meeting presentation

June 23, 2008, Plymouth Township Hall (co-hosted by Plymouth Township) 22 Attendees: This public meeting was aimed at the communities within the Lower 1 and Middle 1 Subwatersheds, which are located in the headwaters area of the watershed. The presentation was made by Noel Mullett from the Wayne County Department of Public Services-Watershed Management Division (WCDPS-WMD). During the question and answer period, attendees expressed concern about the loss of woodlands and wetlands and the impacts of soil erosion. There was a limited discussion about the impact of flow on the river. The ranking of the draft WMP goals reflected this as the group identified “Protect, restore and/or enhance natural features to maintain/improve river and watershed ecosystems.” However, the group ranked water quality as its number one issue with habitat being ranked as the second most important issue.

June 24, 2008 William Costick Center, Farmington Hills (co-hosted by Farmington Hills) 20 attendees. This public meeting was aimed at stakeholders in the Upper and Main 1-2 Subwatersheds, which are located in the developing areas of the watershed and include headwaters in the northern portion of the Main 1-2 Subwatershed. The presentation was made by Jennifer Lawson, City of Troy and chairperson of the ARC Public Involvement and Education Committee. The group had a very spirited discussion about public health concerns and water quality and the need to address the flashiness of the river flow. The group identified “Reduce runoff impacts through sustainable storm water management strategies and programs,” as its number one goal. water quality was identified as this group’s number one issue.



Rouge 2008 October 24, 2008, University of Michigan-Dearborn

October 24, 2008 Rouge 2008 at University of Michigan-Dearborn, 150 attendees. The survey was distributed at the Rouge 2008 event, a legislative briefing held annually at the University of Michigan-Dearborn for legislators and representatives from local and county government, industry and business, education and stewardship organizations. Participants were able to view a dozen displays from watershed communities and counties and stewardship groups. The program included presentations on community projects, Rouge River water quality, ARC activities and initiatives being conducted by local business and industry located in the lower portion of the Rouge River’s Main Branch. Some 26 surveys were returned after the presentations. This group ranked “Reduce sources of pollution that threaten public health,” as its number one goal and water quality as its number one issue.

Additional Public Participation Activities, June 13-15, 2008 at Dearborn Heights Spirit Fest. The Dearborn Heights Watershed Stewards Commission agreed to distribute the survey at the Spirit Fest community event in Dearborn Heights. Fifteen surveys were collected. This group ranked “Reduce sources of pollution

that threaten public health,” as its number one goal. Water quality was identified as the number one issue.

Rouge River Watershed Management Plan Video

The City of Farmington Hills offered to produce a video to explain the watershed management planning process, the goals of the watershed management plan and highlighted various storm water projects the communities and other stakeholders conducted since the last watershed management planning process. Highlighted projects included:

- Lathrup Village/Southeastern Oakland County Water Authority (SOCWA)residential rain gardens;
- Troy Firefighters Park streambank stabilization;
- The City of Southfield’s ongoing activities to preserve and protect valuable riparian corridor;
- The Shiawassee Park woody debris management project conducted by Friends of the Rouge and the cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills;
- The Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner’s (OCWRC)construction of three combined sewer overflow retention basins;
- Canton Township’s Lower Rouge Recreational Trail
- Dearborn’s use of storm water best management practices, including rain gardens and a wetland detention pond, to treat storm water runoff from its Department of Public Works yard, and,
- The Rouge Gateway Partnership.



Filming Rouge River Watershed Management Plan video in Canton Township

Alliance of Rouge Communities (ARC) Website

The ARC website (www.allianceofrougecommunities.com) was created to educate the public about ARC activities, meetings and reports. It was instrumental in publicizing the planning process as well as allowing the ARC communities and the public to review the chapters of the plan. It also was utilized by the public to access the watershed planning survey. Thirty-five surveys were completed online by interested parties.



ARC website

Promoting the Goals of the Watershed Management Plan

For nearly 20 years, the Rouge River communities and partners, such as Friends of the Rouge, University of Michigan-Dearborn, SOCWA, and Cranbrook Institute of Science, have been educating the public about the Rouge River. Many current or planned activities dovetail nicely with the goals of the watershed management plan. Table 7-2 outlines some of the current and planned public education, involvement and information activities being conducted that meet the goals of this Watershed Management Plan. Activities are conducted by the ARC, the communities, watershed educational institutions and stewardship groups. This list is not exhaustive, but showcases the types of activities available in the Rouge River Watershed.

Table 7-2: Public Involvement, Education and Information Activities Relationship to Watershed Management Plan Goals

Goal: Improve Water Quality and Reduce Sources of Pollution that Threaten Public Health	Responsible Party	Activities	Audience
Septic System Maintenance Workshops	ARC	Workshops, printed materials	Residents
ARC Household Hazardous Waste Guide	ARC	ARC Website	All
CSO Control Program	CSO Communities	Public Meetings, Website Information, Public Information Activities	All
Environmental Hotline	WCDPS-WMD, OCWRC, Washtenaw County Drain Commissioner	24-hour hotline to report illegal dumping and illicit connections	ALL

Goal: Reduce Runoff Impacts through sustainable storm water management programs	Responsible Party	Activities	Audience(s)
Green Infrastructure Campaign	ARC PIE Committee	Workshops, Bus Tour, printed materials	All audiences
Friends of the Rouge Riparian Corridor Management	FOTR	Riparian Corridor management techniques and projects	Volunteers, Residents, Communities, Businesses
Waterfront Wisdom	OCWRC, ARC	Guide for Riparian Homeowners about riparian stewardship	Residents
SOCWA Rain Garden Education	SOCWA	Installation of Rain Gardens	Volunteers, residents, communities, businesses
SEMCOG Low Impact Development Manual	SEMCOG	Printed guide	All Audiences
Rouge Green Corridor programs	Beverly Hills, Birmingham, Southfield, OCWRC, Six Rivers Land Conservancy, OCPEDS, FOTR, SOCWA	Riparian Corridor projects, printed materials, workshops, RGC tours	All Audiences
Individual ARC Community Programs	ARC Communities	Projects	All Audiences
Wayne County Grow Zones	Wayne County	Park grow zones; signage	All Audiences

Goal: Inform and educate the public to become watershed stewards	Responsible party	Activities	Audience
ARC Website	ARC	Various public education materials	All
SEMCOG Seven Steps to Clean Water Campaign	SEMCOG website	Various public education materials	All
Individual ARC community programs	ARC communities	Website, stewardship activities, i.e. Rouge Rescue, HHW Collection Days,	All
Friends of the Rouge programs	FOTR	Rouge Rescue, Rouge Education Project, Frog and Toad Survey, Benthics	All
Water Festivals at University of Michigan-Dearborn and Cranbrook Institute of Science	UM-D, CIS, ARC Communities, FOTR, various stewardship groups, citizens	Various hands-on activities that teach children about water and river stewardships	Children
SOCWA/SOCRRA	SOCWA/SOCRRA	Various public education materials, workshops, advertising, partnerships about Recycling, Composting, Fertilizer Reduction, Rain Gardens	All

Goal Continued: Inform and educate the public to become watershed stewards	Responsible party	Activities	Audience
SOCWA/SOCRRA	SOCWA/SOCRRA	Various public education materials, workshops, advertising, partnerships about Recycling, Composting, Fertilizer Reduction, Rain Gardens	All
Wayne County Public Education	WCDPS-WMD	Riparian Education, Fertilizer Reduction,	All
OCWRC Public Education	Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner's Office	Dirt Doctors, Enviroscape, Kids's Clean Water Calendar Contest, Waterfront Wisdom brochure	All
Rouge Rescue	Friends of the Rouge	Various activities, including pulling invasives, planting native buffers, removing trash and debris.	All
Rouge Green Corridor Projects	Beverly Hills, Birmingham, Southfield	Various projects including streambank stabilization, native plantings, tours	All
Grow Zones	Various ARC Communities	Allowing mowed areas to grow; signage	All
Benthic Macroinvertebrate Search	Friends of the Rouge, WCDPS-WMD	Workshops, bug hunts	All

Goal: Maximize community assets related to the watershed	Responsible Party	Activities	Audience(s)
Nature/Schools Programs	E.L. Johnson Nature Preserve (Bloomfield Schools) Environmental Interpretive Center (UM-D) Water Fests (UM-D, Cranbrook) Rouge Education Project (FOTR)	Nature Walks, workshops, hands-on activities for K-12 school children.	Schoolchildren
Lower Rouge Recreational Path	Canton Township	Hiking	All
Douglas Evans Nature Preserve	Beverly Hills, citizen volunteers	Workshops, nature walks	All
Ford Field	Dearborn	Volunteer activities	Businesses
Rouge Park	Detroit, Friends of Rouge Park	Rouge Rescue, Hiking, Stewardship	All
Carpenter Lake Nature Preserve	Southfield	Nature hikes, signage	All
Oxbow at the Henry Ford	The Henry Ford, Dearborn	Hikes, educational presentations	All
Rouge Green Corridor	RGC Partners	Workshops, Signage, Hikes, Hands-on Activities	All
Heritage Park Nature Center	Farmington Hills	Native garden, displays, programs	All
Firefighters Park	Troy	Streambank stabilization, informational signage	All
Holliday Nature Preserve	Wayne County Parks, Friends of Holliday Nature Preserve	Stewardship activities	All
Johnson Creek	Johnson Creek Protection	Educational Activities	All
Valley Woods Nature Preserve	Southfield	Passive recreation	All
Nankin Mills Nature Center	Wayne County Parks	Displays, presentations	All
Inkster Wetlands	Wayne County Parks	Passive recreation	All

Goal: Support regional partnerships for the implementation of the watershed management plan.	Responsible Party	Activities	Audience(s)
Alliance of Rouge Communities	ARC Communities	Working together to address the improvement of the Rouge River and fulfill the objective of the watershed management plan.	Local and county governments
SEMCOG	SEMCOG and member communities	Partners for Clean Water, Low Impact Development Manual, municipal maintenance workshops.	Local and county governments



Future educational activities regarding the watershed management plan and related activities will be monitored and assessed by the ARC’s Public Involvement and Education Committee. The Committee is guided by its goals which are listed below.

- ◆ Educate and engage local elected officials and staff about issues affecting the Rouge River Watershed and the Alliance of Rouge Communities.
- ◆ Establish and support a baseline of information available to watershed audiences to assist members in meeting permit requirements and leveraging resources.
- ◆ Expand resources by working with other organizations, institutions, businesses and stewardship groups.
- ◆ Develop a strategy to educate and involve people who live in the watershed about issues that affect them and how they affect the watershed.
- ◆ Continue to educate the public and look for opportunities to enhance programming.
- ◆ Evaluate the effectiveness of public education efforts and programs
- ◆ Investigate other funding opportunities specific to public involvement and public education.

Additionally, the Rouge River Watershed communities have regularly conducted public opinion surveys to gauge the public’s knowledge of watershed-related issues and concerns. Surveys were conducted in 1992 and 1999 by the Rouge River National Wet Weather Demonstration Project and in 2004 by SEMCOG. It is anticipated that a future survey will be conducted to monitor the success of educational efforts by the ARC and its partners.

Series of ARC *Measuring Our Success Posters* 2005-2008