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Canton man takes lead of organization in charge of cleaning up Rouge

BY KURT KUBAN • OBSERVER STAFF WRITER • DECEMBER 14, 2008

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Few people are as knowledgeable about the Rouge River and the ills that plague it as Tim Faas.

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As director of municipal services for Canton Township, Faas knows firsthand about the efforts that have been made by Rouge communities to clean up the waterway, and how much more needs to be done to return it to a safe recreational resource that allows fishing and even swimming.

Faas, who lives in Farmington Hills with his wife Ceri, was recently elected to a two-year term as chair of the Alliance of Rouge Communities (ARC), an organization formed in 2006 by dozens of communities within the Rouge River watershed to help restore the river and to comply with federal clean water requirements.

Faas will chair his first full meeting when the ARC meets on Tuesday in Novi.

Faas is assuming the job of chairman at an interesting time for Alliance, which has a membership that includes about 40 communities, and several counties. Currently the ARC is in a legal dispute with the Michigan Department of Environment over new requirements for storm water management plans, which each community has to file with the state to show that it is complying with federal water quality regulations.

According to Faas, most of the ARC communities believe the new requirements are too costly, because they will force communities to do much more water sampling of storm water discharges into the river than is currently required.

"The ARC position is we've been doing a very good job with our monitoring program, better than the rest of the state. This will be very costly to our communities," Faas said.

The fight with the DEQ will be a topic that will be discussed at Tuesday's meeting, Faas said.

Faas, 47, grew up in southwest Ontario, Canada. He worked for the city of Windsor for about a decade as assistant director of the public works department. He came to Michigan for a job opportunity, and became the director of operations for the Western Townships Utilities Authority (WTUA). From there, Faas became the director of Municipal Services for Canton.

In addition to trying to get the state to ease its position, Faas says he has two major goals for the ARC during his tenure as chairman. First, he wants people to learn about the organization and realize it has real value. He says ARC is important for its member communities, because it helps them meet federal mandates like water quality monitoring and public education - programs that would be much more costly for individual communities without the pooled resources of the ARC, which has a \$749,559 budget for 2009.

"Beyond the overall improvement to the watershed that we have seen because of the work we've done, the Alliance is a way for the communities to pool resources and at the lowest cost to comply with water quality



Tim Faas, Canton's director of municipal services, is the new chair of the Alliance of Rouge Communities (ARC), which is in charge of improving the Rouge River. (Bill Bresler | staff photographer)

ARC MEETING

What: The Alliance of Rouge Communities (ARC) public meeting

When: 2-4 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 16

Where: Novi Civic Center, The Gateway and Events Room of the Parks, Recreation and Forestry Quarter, 45175 W. Tem Mile Road, Novi

For more info: Visit www.allianceofrougecommunities.com/

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requirements," Faas said.

His other hope is to help find secure funding for the ARC, from grants, corporations, and even individuals. He believes if ARC is successful proving its value, then the second part of the equation will much easier.

"We have so much real data to show how much the watershed has improved," Faas said. "In Canton in particular, the Lower Rouge has gone from one of the worst in terms of water quality to one of the best."

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