

Friends of the Rouge • 4901 Evergreen Road-220 ASC • Dearborn, MI 48128
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Promoting restoration and stewardship of the Rouge River since 1986

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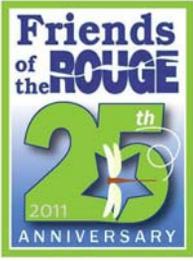
Rouge Canoe Expedition Successful *Canoeing to Grow on Rouge River*

Once so degraded it caught on fire, the Rouge River is being explored by paddlers in growing numbers. Due to ongoing pollution reduction efforts through the [Rouge River National Wet Weather Demonstration Project](#) and others, water quality has improved enough to make canoeing on the Rouge a real possibility for the general public.

“Paddling on the Rouge River is more of a possibility at this point in time than at any time since [Friends of the Rouge](#) began 25 years ago,” said Friends of the Rouge (FOTR) staff member Sally Petrella. FOTR has worked for 25 years to educate and involve the public in the river and has been leading paddling trips on the river since 2003 that continue to grow. This fall, inspired by the news of the removal of a dam that impairs canoeing, Petrella and five other canoe enthusiasts set out to determine whether a canoe route from Canton to Dearborn has enough potential to be developed.

The trip was inspired by the recent announcement that the removal of the [Wayne Road Dam](#) is being funded by the [Great Lake Restoration Initiative](#) and the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#). The [Alliance of Rouge Communities](#) is overseeing the removal. The Wayne Road Dam, located beneath Wayne Road in the City of Wayne, is the only impediment for fish swimming up the Rouge River from the Detroit River and its removal will help to restore one of the Rouge River’s nine [Beneficial Use Impairments](#). Friends of the Rouge is assisting with the Outreach and Education component of the dam removal and thought a canoe trip would be a great way to connect people to the project. The grant supported the canoe trip. A public meeting about the project will be held in next spring.

Over a sunny week-end October 7-9, 2011, [Friends of the Rouge](#) staff and members successfully canoed the 21.69 miles from Canton to Dearborn on the Lower branch of the Rouge River. While the trip was not easy due to numerous blow-downs, the route had enough water and scenic beauty to make for a fun canoe trip once the logjams are opened. Photos and updates on the trip were posted on FOTR’s Facebook page and photos are on the FOTR website [www.therouge.org](#).



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It took three days to complete the route, traveling during daylight hours only. The weather was fabulous and the turning of the fall leaves made for a scenic trip. The group encountered 171 logjams large enough they were forced to exit the canoes and numerous others they ducked under or over. Wildlife was abundant: wood ducks and great blue herons around almost every bend; a giant snapping turtle, cooper's hawks, kingfishers, a mink, clear evidence of a beaver, and more. A group of four deer were startled to see canoeists near Military Road in Dearborn.

Following the expedition, Friends of the Rouge hosted a public trip on a five mile section of the route on October 29, 2011. Next spring, FOTR plans to address the issue of opening logjams for canoeing by holding a training session for municipal employees and others on how to open logjams. The training will be part hands-on and will be followed by work days in the river.

The communities of Canton and Wayne are already making their own efforts to improve the river for canoeing. Canton is working on a grant-funded project to inventory all of their logjams and strategically manage them. Canton's recent creation of a set of trails along the river centered at Morton Taylor will be their initial focus where the logjams are accessible. In the City of Wayne, resident and canoe expedition member Kurt Kuban has been working for years to develop and keep open the route from Wayne Road to Inkster Rd. His goal for next year is to open the entire stretch of the lower Rouge within the City of Wayne. The Wayne Road Dam removal, scheduled for next summer/fall will make the trip possible without a dangerous portage.

Friends of the Rouge is very excited to promote recreation on the Rouge as a way to connect people to the river. While the Rouge is not pristine like rivers up north, it is right here in our own backyard, costs little to travel to and is accessible to the most populated region in the state.

About FOTR: Friends of the Rouge is a 501c3 non-profit organization dedicated to promoting restoration and stewardship of the Rouge River ecosystem through education, citizen involvement and other collaborative efforts, for the purpose of improving the quality of life for the people, plants, and animals of the watershed. The Rouge River covers 466 square miles in three counties and 42 communities in the metropolitan Detroit area. Additional information at www.therouge.org

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