

**Rouge River Advisory Council (RRAC)**  
**Draft Meeting Summary**  
**January 12, 2021**



**Attendees:**

Attended?	Nam	Attended?	Name
Y	Dan Ballnik, Chair	N	Karen Mondora, Farmington Hills
Y	Sara Thomas, MDNR Lake Erie Management Unit	N	Noel Mullett, Wayne County Dept. of Public Services
N	Marty Boote, Alliance of Rouge Communities (ARC)	N	Rob Myllyoja, Stantec
N	Cory Borton, Bloomfield Township	Y	Tennille Newsome, ARC
Y	Bill Craig, Vice Chair and SPAC representative	N	Caitlin Nigrelli, Liaison to USEPA-GLNPO
Y	Annette DeMaria, ARC	Y	Chris O'Meara, ARC
N	Rose Ellison, EPA	Y	John O'Meara, ARC
Y	Jacy Garrison, Oakland County WRC Office	Y	Sally Petrella, Friends of the Rouge
Y	Orin Gelderloos, U-M Dearborn	Y	Heather Rice, Washtenaw County WRC Office
N	Kevin Goodwin, EGLE	Y	Brandy Siedlaczek, Southfield
N	Barb Goryca, Citizen	Y	Jennifer Tewkesbury, Michigan EGLE
N	Amy Mangus, SEMCOG	Y	Dean Tuomari, Citizen
Y	Nancy Darga, Northville citizen	Y	Paulina Appel, Livonia
Y	Shawn Duke, Cardno	Y	Tim O'Brien, citizen
Y	Tyler Sonoga, Farmington Hills		

**Introductions**

Bill Craig started the meeting until Dan was able to call in. Sara Thomas with MDNR mentioned John Bauman is now in the UP and she will be filling in until a new biologist is hired. Dan Ballnik called in after roll call was completed.

**Approval of Meeting Summary**

The meeting summary of the June 3, 2020 meeting was approved with no comments. The motion to approve the meeting summary was made by Bill Craig and seconded by Brandy Siedlaczek. The meeting summary of the September 29, 2020 meeting was approved with no comments. The motion to approve the meeting summary was made by Brandy Siedlaczek and seconded by Heather Rice.

**Old Business**

There was no old business to report.

**SPAC Report**

Bill Craig reported that SPAC had a full day virtual meeting on October 14, 2020. Bill provided the minutes to Chris O'Meara and they were included in the RRAC meeting package. Bill Craig reported the following key elements of the meeting:

- Voted for a new chair (Horst Schmidt – Torch Lake AOC).
- Voted for a new vice chair (Patty Troy – St. Clair River AOC).
- PAC grants were discussed as always. Bill reported there was a discussion about delays and that seemed to be resolved. Bill asked John O'Meara if the PAC grant was good and John O'Meara confirmed.
- Jen Tewkesbury in addition to her other duties is the coordinator for the Saginaw AOC.
- Bill also reported there is a new \$500 million Michigan Clean Water plan for drinking water and Wastewater treatment plan process that doesn't involve them.
- The Menominee AOC was delisted.

- 2021 AOC Conference will hold a meeting September 28-30 in Muskegon if Covid allows it will be held in person.
- U of M SEAS (pages 13 and 14 of SPAC minutes).
- Environmental Justice and Restoration Plans and Projects – Marie McCormick has some comments.
- Resiliency – high water issues having impacts on some of the projects.
- Sustainability – Long term management of projects (life after delisting).
- Algal Blooms.
- The next virtual SPAC meeting will be held on March 9.

### **UofM SEAS AOC Project**

Dan Ballnik reported the Rouge specifically formed a subcommittee for those who were interviewed and are waiting for the recommendations and are expected in February or March. The committee will then meet to discuss the recommendations and give feedback to the RRAC.

John O’Meara asked Dan to give an overview of the project as there were new members. Dan explained the project and the process. Bill Craig mentioned they are just forming the committee.

### **EGLE Update**

Jen Tewkesbury reported the GLRI was signed into law which paves the way for funding for another five years of potential funding for the AOC program. If President-Elect Biden approves the law it will mean the program will go from \$300 million to \$475 million annually. Jen does not think it will make it to \$475 million initially but she believes it will be somewhere in that range.

Jen also report the USACE is working through submittals and modifications on the Lower Rouge old channel for sediment work. On the main channel, EGLE has hired a subcontractor collecting samples through the stretch and fill in the gaps. The contractor will be out there this spring and summer and the data will be finalized in December. The EPA will begin a feasibility study and remedial design as soon as the data is received.

Jen also reported there is a third stakeholder meeting regarding the concrete channel next week. The USACE is working on the concepts and reporting on data collection, monitoring, sampling, etc. Once put together they will hand over to the EPA subcontractor for design and work with the property owners. This will be another long term project.

### **EPA Update**

Jen T. reported that Rose Ellison is involved in the Lower Rouge old channel work. EPA is meeting to make decisions for funding for FY2021.

### **Rouge AOC Grants Update**

#### EGLE PAC Support Grant

Sally Petrella reported FOTR held both fish surveys, fall bug hunt with support from the PAC grant and the communities. Sally provided the report prior to the meeting and were emailed out to the RRAC. John O’Meara confirmed they have one more fish survey this summer and the grant will cover the fall bug hunt. Sally also reported as part of the stonefly search, last year FOTR started testing for road salt at the sites. Sally will share those results once received. Annette DeMaria asked Sally how they were measuring. Sally mentioned they were using a test kit that measures NaCl parts per million.

John O'Meara asked Sally if once they received the results if they looked at a major weather event at any time prior to testing. Sally didn't think that was the case during testing. Most of the testing was done on the days they did the stonefly search.

John O'Meara mentioned the updated funding on the habitat list is based on the last round of projects the EPA has funded. Phoenix, Wilcox and Inkster write ups were updated for costing this winter based on bids received this fall. The summaries sent out previously. John O'Meara also reported that he is in the process of talking with Troy for Fire Fighters Park and Annette DeMaria is discussing Patton Park in Detroit as being updated.

Annette DeMaria reported the City of Detroit submitted a grant to do stormwater management on the parking lot at Patton Park and the idea is to treat the stormwater before it gets to the wetland. Jen T. mentioned they contacted Rose and her regarding their input and they advised them it would be a great precursor project.

Wayne County EPA Habitat Grant – Oxbow/HFE–Fishway Implementation/Nankin Lake Restoration  
Oxbow: John O'Meara reported the project is complete

HFE Fishway: John O'Meara reported the project is in a "steady state". The major work has been completed and vegetation has been planted. Once vegetation has been established, some of the sheeting will be lowered and flow reintroduced. John also mentioned they are trying to get the word out to stay out of the project site and any assistance is appreciated. Dan asked if there was any signage. John O. reported yes, there is signage. Jen mentioned EGLE staff went out and was able to fly a drone over the project and will likely go out this summer and do a before and after view. Bill Craig asked John O. when the project will be under Wayne County Parks. John O. mentioned it may be around September 1 as long as vegetation is established, etc.

Nankin: John O'Meara reported the project went out to bid and the bids were received. At that time, the project was in need of additional funds from EPA in order to do the full restoration. Noel, Jen and Rose were working with EPA and were able to get the additional funding. John O'Meara reported that the project should start in June.

ARC Rouge AOC Habitat Restoration - Tamarack Creek/ Johnson Creek Fish Hatchery

Johnson Creek Fish Hatchery: John O'Meara reported construction ended in fall 2020. The site has been planted and it is currently waiting on vegetation to be established spring/summer 2021. The connection between the pond and Johnson Creek is a step pool flowing channel. Bill Craig asked how long the warranty for live stakes is held. John O'Meara mentioned they are valid for one year. Bill Craig mentioned the parking lot looked like it had work done. John O'Meara mentioned it was the staging area so the contractor had to restore it back to how it was before the project.

Tamarack Creek: John O'Meara reported the project is getting ready to go out to bid, by the end of the month. The State permit has been received.

WC/ARC - 5 Parks Restoration-Riverview, Lola, Bell Creek, Sherwood, Lower Rouge

John O'Meara reported the concepts have been completed for the sites. The construction schedules are as follows:

- Lower Rouge and Sherwood - 2021
- Bell Creek and Lola Valley - 2022
- Riverview - 2023

### ARC Seely Creek Habitat Restoration

John O'Meara reported that the design is in the process of being completed and permits pulled. The construction is scheduled in 2021.

### ARC Colonial and Venoy Habitat Restoration

John O'Meara reported both projects are in final design phase and construction is scheduled for 2021.

John O'Meara indicated there are 5 projects that will have construction in 2021. The 5 Parks and Colonial and Venoy are more on the wetland creation and restoration (native prairies and wet meadows). Nancy Darga asked what is planned for the Lower Rouge. John O'Meara responded reforestation by planting saplings and whips throughout the area. The other part of the project is removing some but not all of the log jams. Sally P. commented that she thought the Lower Rouge project was a woody debris management project and now it is being called reforestation. John O'Meara responded that the metrics for the grant have been reforestation (80 acres) and log jams removal (10) and that is still the target.

### WC WRC – Johnson Creek Intercounty Drain Restoration Design

Heather Rice reported the Washtenaw County received a two year EPA grant award for the project. The project start date was October 1 and will run for two years. The project is 3 ½ miles of drain which runs west of Napier Road in Salem Twp. to north of Six Mile Road for channel restoration and enhancing six acres of riparian floodplain. Heather also reported they anticipate bid documents to go out in 2021. ECT was the successful bidder. The QAPP is with EPA for approval. She indicated public involvement would not be until spring which would include a stream walk for the public.

John O'Meara confirmed all of the above. Nancy Darga asked what "stream walk" meant. John O'Meara responded that the public will be invited to walk the area with the project team (Washtenaw County, Northville Twp., Plymouth Twp.). John O'Meara mentioned the project ends up-stream of the Fish Hatchery project and is not a direct connection.

Dan Ballnik asked John O'Meara to forward any information received on the stream walk to the RRAC, John O'Meara agreed.

### **Other Projects of Note**

None to report.

### **New Business**

John O. reviewed the PAC Support Grant Amendment.

### Concrete Channel Support

John O. reviewed the PAC Support Amendment which includes support for the concrete channel from RRAC, ARC and FOTR to facilitate stakeholder involvement.

### AOC Habitat Projects GIS Map - Mapping Rouge Projects

John O'Meara reviewed this item which provides funds to create a GIS map and brochure. John O. mentioned he and Annette DeMaria developed some options of what can be done to provide a GIS map/brochure and are explained below:

- Option 1 provides for the creation of a GIS layer that would be provided to interested watershed stakeholders and displayed on the RRAC's website in a static format. The map

would be color coded based on project completion status, and it would focus on the projects required for delisting the habitat BUI. At a future date, it could be expanded to other BUIs as they are targeted for removal.

- Option 2 provides for an interactive map that would be available on the ARC's website. Unlike Option 1, this map would provide summary information about each project at the click of the mouse. It would be more project inclusive and incorporate RRAC member restoration projects from the past 10 years. In this scenario, a dashboard could be created that provides an at-a-glance summary of the amount spent, number of projects complete by type, etc.

Jen T. stated if the RRAC considered any of the options that it would be ideal to make a decision before April so it would be easier for EGLE timing.

Annette DeMaria added the better value is Option 2 as some services will be provided by SEMCOG at no charge. The ARC would continue to maintain it outside of the RRAC. Option 1 is more for short term use with potential to be modified later. Sally P. asked Annette if it was possible to send the links for "Friends of Detroit River" and Lake St. Clair" as their examples. Chris O'Meara stated she would send the links out to the RRAC. Annette DeMaria shared her screen to the pages of the links for the story maps. Jen T. stated more AOCs are going towards that option and extra tabs can be added as necessary.

Sally P. asked about the funding for ARC to do or other entities to be involved in, specifically for the mapping element. John O. stated that funding for Option 1 would be the ARC and Option 2 would be the ARC with SEMCOG support.

#### Potential Projects Development

John O'Meara reported the ARC developed a template document to send to the ARC communities, FOTR and other ARC Cooperating Partners. This document is helpful when preparing a grant package to receive funding. The idea of the potential projects template is to develop a table similar to the AOC funding table. This template will also be on the ARC and RRAC websites and will be distributed to the ARC's members and cooperating partners for them to share with others.

Paulina Appel stated this is a valuable template/document. John O'Meara shared his screen to show an example of the table/list that will be kept on the ARC and RRAC websites.

#### Median – MDOT property

Dan Ballnik reported the median at Ford Road between Hines Drive and the river is still being mowed up to the bank and it would be a great place for a demonstration project as many of the public would see it, it is MDOT property. How would we go about addressing that? Jen T. stated she would get Dan the contact information at the local service center.

### **Comments**

#### Members

There were no comments from members.

#### General Public

Nancy Darga mentioned the Mayor of the City of Northville set up a new task force called the Northville Middle Rouge Restoration Task Force. The City had an opportunity from a private developer who purchased the Northville Race Track who is willing to work with the City to daylight the river and

turnover the land to the City to combine the park with Hines Park. Nancy was asked to be the chairperson for that project. Tim O'Brien is the former Ford Director of Land Development. He resides in Northville and was a small investor in the project. Nancy stated she will keep the RRAC updated of their efforts.

#### **Review of Action Items**

- The RRAC members to send Chris O'Meara comments on suggested amendment or other ideas they have for the PAC Support Grant amendment.
- Washtenaw County to send out the information for the stream walk for Johnson Creek Inter-County Drain project when available.
- Potential Project template will be added on RRAC and ARC websites.
- Chris O'Meara to send out the links for the Friends of Detroit River and Lake St. Clair for the story maps.

Bill Craig called a Motion to adjourn the meeting, Brandy Siedlaczek seconded the Motion. The meeting was adjourned.