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ARC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

The 2023 Alliance of Rouge Communities (ARC) Executive Director's Annual Report summarizes the activities conducted by the ARC from January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023, including products and outcomes from routine administration and meetings of the ARC and all its committees. It also includes results from ARC Illicit Discharge Elimination Program (IDEP) activities and public education activities, including workshops and developed products.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SERVICES

ARC MEETINGS AND ADMINISTRATION

FULL ALLIANCE MEETINGS

ARC Staff supported two (2) Full ARC meetings including preparation of the agenda (under the direction of the Chair), distribution of the materials prior to meetings, facilitation of the meetings (including notetaking and tallying of votes at the meeting), preparation of E-votes, and preparation/distribution of meeting summaries to members and other interested parties.

[Full ARC meeting summaries](#) can be found on the ARC's website.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Executive Committee discusses and approves items in advance of full ARC meetings including development and amendments to budgets and contracts. ARC Staff supported three (3) Executive Committee meetings including (under the direction of the ARC Officers) preparation of the agenda, distribution of the materials prior to the meetings, preparation of E-votes, facilitation of the meetings (including note-taking and documenting recommendations considered and actions taken), and meeting summary preparation and distribution. This subtask also included ongoing support services for the committee outside of the regular meetings.

[ARC Executive Committee meeting summaries](#) can be found on the ARC's website.

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Finance Committee, supported by ARC Staff, developed and administered the annual budget and work plan. ARC Staff prepared monthly financial reports, budget amendments, mailed dues invoices to members, collected dues, submitted grant reimbursement requests and paid the ARC's bills. ARC Staff facilitated two (2) Finance Committee meetings on July 9, 2023, and November 2, 2023, and prepared the agenda, distributed materials regarding budget amendments and the annual budget recommendations for review prior to the November Executive Committee meeting.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

ARC Staff provided administrative oversight of the ARC day-to-day activities by staff, consultants, contractors, and external relationships with other agencies, organizations, and individuals to meet the goals of the ARC.

2023 Activities included:

- 💧 The 2022 ARC annual report was completed and submitted to the ARC in March 2023.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

ARC Staff provided accounting services in accordance with the ARC's Accounting Procedures Manual including processing of payables and receivables.

2023 Activities included:

- ARC Staff attended the following EPA webinars: March 15, 2023 – EPA Grants Financial Management, June 20, 2023 - EPA Pass-Through Grant Applicants, Recipients, and Subrecipients and June 27, 2023 - EPA Grants Procurement, Subawards, and Participant Support Costs
- ARC Staff provided monthly reports for the ARC Treasurer and ARC members from January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023.
- ARC Staff provided necessary staff to meet the separation of financial duties and responsibilities documented in the ARC's Accounting Procedures Manual so that no Executive Director Staff member has sole control over cash receipts, bank reconciliations, accounts payable, mail or other accounting functions.
- ARC Staff maintained separate general ledger accounts as required by funding source regulations.
- ARC Staff maintained financial records and files as required by the ARC Accounting Procedures Manual including grants and vendor contracts.
- ARC Staff submitted all required information for grant reimbursement requests and grant reporting.
- ARC Staff assisted and provided information for the 2022 Single Audit, financial statement and taxes.
- ARC Staff worked with both the Finance and Executive Committee to develop the 2024 ARC Budgeting Package which included a 2% increase in dues along with a new 5-Year Plan for 2024-2028
- ARC Staff prepared monthly financial reports, mailed dues invoices to members, collected dues, submitted various grant reimbursement requests and paid the ARC's bills.

OUTREACH AND ADVOCATE

ARC Staff promoted the ARC as the advocate for the Rouge River Watershed, served as the primary spokesperson for the ARC, responded to requests for information and sought opportunities to promote ARC awareness. ARC Staff served as the ARC primary liaison to the general public, all members, including both formal and informal interaction with government officials, legislators and staff on a regular basis.

GOVERNMENTAL ACTIVITIES

2023 Activities included:

- ARC Staff provided project information for EPA's website on various ARC restoration projects.
- ARC Staff participated in a tour which included a stop at the Oxbow at The Henry Ford for the International Joint Commission WQB Meeting in Detroit on May 3, 2023.
- ARC Staff attended Great Lakes Days in Washington, D.C. on March 8 and 9.
- ARC Staff provided comments on the draft Statewide Septic Code House Bill No. 4479.
- ARC Staff conducted a tour for the USDA Forest Service on March 30, 2023. The tour included visiting Forest Service funded projects in the Rouge River



Forest Service site tour

watershed including Marv Gans Community Park (tree planting) in Northville Township, Plymouth Municipal Yard Rain Garden, Bicentennial Park (tree planting) in Livonia, and Beech Woods Rain Gardens in Southfield.

STATEWIDE PUBLIC ADVISORY COUNCIL (SPAC)

- ◆ ARC Staff attended SPAC meetings on February 6, 2023, and May 31, 2023.
- ◆ ARC Staff attended SPAC Habitat Subcommittee meetings in 2023 on January 19, March 22, June 1 and October 18.
- ◆ ARC Staff attended the Great Lakes Areas of Concern Conference September 12-14 in Green Bay.
- ◆ ARC Staff supported RRAC at their 2023 meetings including January 17, 2023, April 18, 2023, July 18, 2023, and October 17, 2023.

ORGANIZATION PARTICIPATION

2023 Activities included:

- ◆ ARC Staff participated in the One Water Public Education Campaign that is being led by SEMCOG. The campaign provides a regional public education strategy, led by local stakeholders, that provides common water resource messaging in southeast Michigan focused on stormwater, wastewater and drinking water. The messaging encourages water resource stewardship, encourages adoption of best management practices, and supports long-term investment in infrastructure.
- ◆ ARC Staff participated in SEMCOG's Regional Stormwater Standards Coordinating Committee on November 9.
- ◆ ARC Staff participated in the GLWA Watershed Hub work group and full group meetings to advance water quality monitoring in the region on August 23, October 25, and November 29.
- ◆ ARC Staff continued to participate in the Southeast Michigan Partners for Clean Water work group with meetings on September 27 and December 7.
- ◆ ARC Staff participated in the Healing Our Waters (HOW) conference on October 12-13.
- ◆ The ARC received the following awards for their restoration projects: Michigan American Public Works Association (APWA) Project of Year Award – Environmental \$1-5 Million: Wayne County Parkland Restoration Project and Keep Michigan Beautiful Award – Henry Ford Estate Fishway Project.
- ◆ ARC Staff collaborated with the Alliance of Downriver Watersheds to share best practices for permit compliance and to discuss opportunities for collaboration of some activities to reduce costs to both organizations.
- ◆ ARC Staff attended Michigan Matters: Community Water Legislation Forum on August 30, 2023.
- ◆ ARC Staff participated in the Healthy Climate Focus Group: Natural and Working Lands on October 18, 2023.
- ◆ ARC Staff attended an informational meeting on the Environmental and Ecosystem Services Tool on October 30, 2023.
- ◆ ARC Staff attended the Resiliency Framework Stakeholder Meeting on November 28, 2023.
- ◆ ARC Staff promoted the Friends of the Rouge Winter Stonefly Search (1/21/23), Spring Bug Hunt (4/15/23) and Fall Bug Hunt (10/14/23) on the ARC website and Facebook.
- ◆ In June 2023, the ARC was included in a letter coordinated by HOW Coalition partners in support of match funding for contaminated sediment remediation in southeast Michigan.
- ◆ The ARC hosted the 4th Great Lakes Restoration Celebration on September 22, 2023, at The Henry Ford. The Henry Ford donated the space, ECT sponsored the continental breakfast and SEMCOG sponsored the printing of the restoration project book that was distributed at the

event. All ARC members were invited to this free event which promoted and celebrated the grant funded restoration activities in Southeast Michigan and was attended by more than 110 federal, state, and local units of government along with those watershed groups (including the ARC) conducting the restoration activities. Included in the day's activities was a fish restocking at the Rouge Oxbow at The Henry Ford. A book highlighting restoration projects in Southeast Michigan was handed out. Speakers included Christopher Korleski, Director, U. S. EPA Great Lakes National Program Office (GLNPO), Teresa Seidel – Director, Water Resources Division, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy and Julie Simmons, Great Lakes Regional Coordinator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

- ◆ In November 2023, ARC Staff shared the draft report cards developed by the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, in partnership with the Erb Family Foundation, Friends of the Rouge, Friends of the Detroit River, River Raisin Watershed Council, Clinton River Watershed Council, and the Huron River Watershed Council and asked for comments from the ARC Members. The draft watershed report cards include one for each of the 5 river watersheds in Southeast Michigan as well as a report card for the overall region.
- ◆ ARC Staff taught a class for the Michigan SeaGrant MSU Extension about lake ecology specifically detailing the ARC's Nankin Lake Restoration project on September 28.
- ◆ ARC Staff gave a presentation on June 10 for the Trout Unlimited/City of Northville Fish Day on Washtenaw County's Johnson Creek project and the ARC's Fish Hatchery Park project.

MEMBER AND GENERAL PUBLIC REQUESTS

2023 Activities included:

- ◆ The ARC did not receive any FOIA requests from January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023.
- ◆ ARC Staff forwarded various emails from residents to community representatives for follow-up.
- ◆ ARC Staff promoted Friends of the Rouge volunteer and monitoring activities and Rouge Rescue events on the ARC website and Facebook.
- ◆ ARC Staff promoted Oakland County's 19th annual Kids' Clean Water Calendar Contest.
- ◆ ARC Staff promoted the Rouge River Water Festival held at the Cranbrook Institute of Science.
- ◆ ARC Staff provided restoration project information to a UofM School for Environment and Sustainability, Ecosystem Science and Management Masters Student to assist with their thesis.
- ◆ ARC Staff worked with both Livonia and Village of Franklin regarding a Friends of the Rouge contact for woody debris management to work with their residents on logjams on private property.
- ◆ ARC Staff met with new staff in the City of Romulus on November 20 to provide them with information on their ARC benefits and to offer any assistance they may need with their permit requirements.
- ◆ ARC Staff provided information to the Dearborn Press and Guide for the article *Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, Alliance of Rouge Communities Talk About Restoring Waterways* that was published October 22, 2023. The article also appeared in the Great Lakes Daily News.

PURSUING GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

The Executive Director staff applied for the following grants in 2023 on behalf of the ARC:

- ◆ EPA Environmental Justice – ARC staff continued to refine the Rouge River AOC Environmental Justice grant that was submitted by ARC Staff in 2022. At the request of EPA in January 2023, the request was broken up into 5 applications. ARC working with Wayne County Parks, City of Inkster, and FOTR submitted 3 grant packages (approximately \$17 million) for community connectivity/park amenities layer associated with the Colonial/Inkster Park Habitat Restoration

and Venoy Park Habitat Restoration projects. The ARC has been following up with EPA on the Inkster Park package. If awarded work is anticipated to start in winter 2024 (award pending).

- ◆ National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Sustain Our Great Lakes – The ARC submitted a pre-proposal for the project titled Rouge River AOC – WC Parkland Habitat Restoration Protection in the amount of \$225,000. The ARC was not invited to submit a full proposal.
- ◆ EGLE AOC GLRI Grant - ARC Rouge River Area of Concern PAC Support (awarded 2/27/23 to the ARC \$154,500)
- ◆ EGLE Watershed Council Support Grant – The ARC attended the webinar on April 13, 2023 that reviewed the available grant. The ARC submitted an application for Southeast Michigan MS4 Training Program with support from SEMCOG (grant not awarded \$40,000).
- ◆ In June 2023 the ARC received direct funding from EPA for the Merriman Hollow Restoration (\$215,000) - Riparian Wetland Creation of 0.8 acres. The proposed project site is adjacent to the Rouge River and would create wetlands in the existing riparian floodplain lawn area. This will provide a natural habitat for mammals, reptiles, fish and amphibians. This direct funding also included the Wallaceville West Restoration (\$150,000)- Riparian Wetland Creation of 0.8 acres. The proposed project will create wetlands and/or wet prairie in existing riparian floodplain lawn area. The wetland would be adjacent to the Rouge River and have several direct connections to the river. A boardwalk/bridge with box culvert may be necessary to connect sections of the wetland while maintaining access to the exiting foot bridge that provides access to an active recreation area.
- ◆ Erb Family Foundation – The ARC submitted an application and was awarded the grant project titled *Employing Training and Investigational Sampling to Improve Water Quality In The Rouge River Watershed*. This project will support identifying where sanitary sewage is entering the Rouge River within the Rouge Valley Sewage Disposal System service area and provide training to municipal staff on how to comply with their stormwater permit. (\$375,000 awarded in September 2023)
- ◆ USDA Forest Service Urban & Community IRA – The ARC submitted an application titled Tree Canopy Investment in Underserved Communities in Southeast Michigan (grant amount was \$3,425,330 and was not awarded).
- ◆ Wildlife Forever and USDA Forest Service – The ARC submitted an application for public education material focused on implementing community outreach to prevent Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) in the Great Lakes Region. (grant was not awarded)

Additional grant activities include:

- ◆ ARC Staff encouraged the members to submit project ideas that can potentially be used as stream mitigation sites by developers.
- ◆ ARC Staff prepared various letters of support for partners applying for grants.
- ◆ ARC Staff updated information to maintain the ARC's status in the Federal government's System for Award Management (SAM), Grants.gov and with the DUNS number. These are required to be current and renewed annually to apply for federal grants.
- ◆ ARC Staff researched and surveyed ARC Members seeking their input in determining the scope of the ARC's application for various grant applications throughout 2023.
- ◆ ARC Staff hosted a public meeting on the ARC's Wilcox/Phoenix/Inkster restoration project on March 1, 2023, with 31 attendees.
- ◆ ARC Staff prepared a letter to GLWA in support of the Southeast Michigan Regional Monitoring Program. ARC staff continued to work with regional partners (GLWA, Counties, DWSD and SEMCOG) to advance a long-term regional monitoring program and the investigational sampling plan to identify storm drains and waterways being impacted by unknown sources of sanitary

sewage. Both efforts launched in 2023 within the GLWA service areas of Macomb, Oakland, and Wayne counties. This includes the investigational sampling plan within sanitary sewer districts in the Clinton River watershed (Macomb and Oakland counties) and within the Evergreen Farmington Sanitary Drain Drainage District in the Rouge River watershed (Oakland County) and along the Lower Branch of the Rouge River (Wayne County).

- On June 2, 2023, ARC Staff participated in an EPA Desk Review of the ARC Grant titled “Rouge River AOC Habitat Restoration Implementation – Wayne County Parkland.” ARC Staff provided financial information along with discussing project progress and answering questions posed by EPA during the virtual meeting.

ARC Staff reviewed the following grants and either assisted an ARC Member in preparing it, forwarded them to individual communities to consider applying for or recommended that the ARC not apply:

- ARC Staff reviewed the EGLE Nonpoint Source Watershed Implementation funding and attended September 7, 2023, informational webinar and did not submit an application.
- ARC Staff attended the informational webinar on January 26, 2023, for the EPA Environmental Justice Government-to-Government Program. The ARC did not submit an application.
- ARC Staff attended the informational webinar on March 2, 2023, for the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation National Coastal Resilience Fund. The ARC did not submit an application.
- ARC Staff attended the informational webinar on January 24, 2023, for the EPA Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Cooperative Agreement Program. The ARC did not submit an application.
- ARC Staff reviewed SEMCOGs Green Stormwater Infrastructure Program. The ARC did not submit an application.

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

MEETING FACILITATION

Staff support was provided for two (2) Technical Committee meetings on February 28, 2023, and October 16, 2023. Topics in February included IDEP findings, investigation priorities from communities, permit renewal information, and information on the post construction reporting tool. In addition, the work plans for IDEP investigations conducted by [ECT](#) and [Wayne County](#) were approved by the Technical Committee. Topics in October included facility dye testing discussion, training updates, 2023 budget amendments, and ERB grant funding plans.

IDEP FIELD INVESTIGATIONS

Consistent with the Rouge River Collaborative IDEP Plan, illicit discharge investigations were conducted in Oakland and Wayne counties.

ARC Staff conducted investigations for Oakland County in the cities of Beverly Hills and Novi. ARC Staff assisted Wayne County with investigations in Livonia, Inkster, and Dearborn Heights. The written findings of each investigation were provided to each community and summarized in the [2023 ARC IDEP Summary](#).

Wayne County Department of Public Services, Environmental Services Division (ESD) conducted advanced investigations in the cities of Plymouth and Livonia and are detailed in the [2023 Wayne County IDEP Summary](#).

The Oakland County Water Resources Commissioners Office conducted advanced investigations in the cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills and are detailed in the [2023 Oakland County IDEP Summary](#).

ROUGE RIVER WATERSHED INVESTIGATIONAL SAMPLING

ARC Staff submitted a proposal to Oakland County's Evergreen Farmington Sanitary Disposal System to complete sampling and data analysis in the Rouge River Watershed. The purpose of this work was to improve water quality in the Rouge River by identifying areas where wastewater is impacting the river and its tributaries. This was accomplished by conducting routine sampling of the river and its tributaries at numerous locations to identify stream segments with high E. coli concentrations. This sampling was conducted in dry and wet weather conditions.

IDEP TRAINING

ARC Staff coordinated with SEMCOG to provide and encourage ARC member participation in regional IDEP and Pollution Prevention Good Housekeeping training courses sponsored by SEMCOG. The IDEP Alert Observer training held on October 10, 2023, was attended by 32 people in person and 32 people via Zoom. The IDEP Investigator training held on October 10, 2023, was attended by 37 people. The IDEP Alert Observer training held October 11, 2023, was attended by 23 people in person and 18 people via Zoom. The IDEP Investigator training held on October 11, 2023, was attended by 23 people.

TMDL IMPLEMENTATION

ARC Staff prepared the [Rouge River Watershed TMDL Implementation Plan Metrics Report](#) which tracked metrics specified in the Collaborative Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Implementation Plan were assessed in this report to evaluate progress being made towards reaching goals that were designed to improve water quality in the Rouge River watershed in accordance with TMDL requirements. This report assesses how well the ARC has achieved goals set out in the Collaborative IDEP Plan, the Collaborative PEP, and individual community metrics.

MS4 PERMIT

2023 Activities include:

- ◆ In March 2023, ARC Staff drafted the next permit's (2024-2028) [Collaborative Public Participation Plan](#), [Collaborative Public Education Plan](#), [Collaborative IDEP Plan](#) and [Collaborative TMDL Plan](#) which were reviewed and approved by ARC Members and submitted to EGLE for April 1.
- ◆ In November 2023, ARC Staff began negotiations with EGLE regarding collaborative plan reapplications.
- ◆ ARC Staff shared a template for the annual Alternative Compliance Report that was due for Post Construction Stormwater Control. ARC Staff shared with permittees a webinar link and encouraged them to use the SEMCOG tool to aid in reporting (and tracking development in the region).
- ◆ ARC Staff informed member communities on the Notice of Class Action Lawsuit-Monsanto Company. Payments from the PCB class action lawsuit are starting to be issued to communities.

Despite ARC efforts, it doesn't look like townships were included in the Settlement. Per the Settlement, the funding is to be used for "PCB sampling and/or PCB mitigation efforts". ARC Staff polled members on their interest in pooling Settlement funds with other ARC members to conduct water quality sampling across the watershed. This would generally involve collecting existing data, sample collection (storm, sanitary and/or instream), and backtracking in the sewers/drains to locate PCB sources.

- ◆ ARC Staff held a joint Tech/PIE meeting to review the draft 2024 5-year budget and 2024 budget recommendations which will coordinate the next permit activities on October 16, 2023.
- ◆ ARC Staff communicated with EGLE throughout the year on member community permits.
- ◆ ARC Staff supported communities during EGLE permit audits including Beverly Hills, Plymouth Township, Melvindale, Farmington Hills and Wayne.
- ◆ ARC staff compiled Stormwater Management Plans for several communities and posted them to the ARC's website to meet the public notice requirement of the PPP.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT & EDUCATION (PIE) COMMITTEE

MEETING FACILITATION

Staff support was provided for one (1) PIE Committee meeting on October 16, 2023. Topics included review of the new 5-year plan and for the next permit cycle beginning in 2024 through 2028 and the 2024 budget recommendations. ARC Staff supported the PIE Committee with regular email communications regarding PIE activities including scope and budget changes and review of new public education materials and messages.

PUBLIC EDUCATION MATERIALS

ARC Staff made various public education materials available to ARC members through the ARC website during 2023. More than 14,150 items were distributed to member communities and at various community events and workshops. Several items were restocked in 2023 including the FOG brochure, chemical brochure, general ARC brochure and the value of trees brochure. ARC Staff surveyed ARC Members prior to creating new public education items to determine the topic. New items in 2023 included a brochure, display banner, social media graphic and newsletter article which focused on watersheds and water quality. Distribution details are included in the [PIE Materials Distribution Report](#). Listed below are descriptions of the public education items and any specific activities in 2023.

When it Comes to Chemicals – Change is a Good Thing!

This tri-fold brochure focuses on changing chemical use to help protect water quality in the Rouge River. It provides information on changing to a chemical alternative, changing how you use chemicals and changing how you dispose of chemicals. The brochure also provides valuable links to southeast Michigan County's HHW collection events. A total of 475 copies were sent filling requests in 2023.

Watershed Wisdom for Homeowners – Healthy Habits for Clean Water Brochure

The Watershed Wisdom for Homeowners brochure educates the public about healthy habits for clean water. The brochure has been distributed to members, realtors, and homeowners' associations within the Rouge River watershed. A total of 645 copies were sent filling requests in 2023.

How Watersheds Work/How Water Quality Works

This new brochure was created in 2023 and is a double-sided brochure focusing on what a watershed is, how it works, and its relationship to water quality. It also explains the sources that degrade water quality and provides changes the public can make to reduce the impact they have on water quality. 5,000 copies were ordered in 2023 with distribution to ARC members beginning in January 2024.

Protect Water Quality All Season Long! Posters

ARC members posted these in support of their permit requirements in facilities, libraries, or other buildings that the public frequent. Posters are also distributed to the public at community events. A total of 146 copies were sent filling requests in 2023.

Have a Business in the Rouge River Watershed?

This flyer educates business owners that are in the Rouge River watershed on best management practices that can be incorporated to protect water quality inside, outside and under their business. The brochure was created in 2022 with distribution beginning in January 2023. A total of 4,700 copies were sent filling requests in 2023.

ARC Public Education Brochure

This flyer is used to educate the public about the ARC and its activities and was updated in 2023 to include more information on some of the ARC's restoration activities with 4,000 copies ordered.

ARC Member Brochure

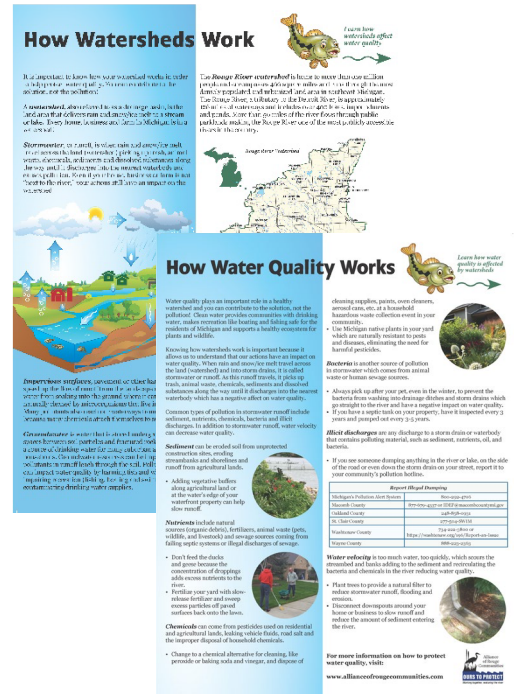
The ARC Member Brochure was distributed to ARC member communities with their membership invoices. The brochure describes the ARC, member benefits, projects, and committees. It is also distributed to other interested communities and organizations wanting to learn about the ARC.

Waterfront Wisdom Brochure

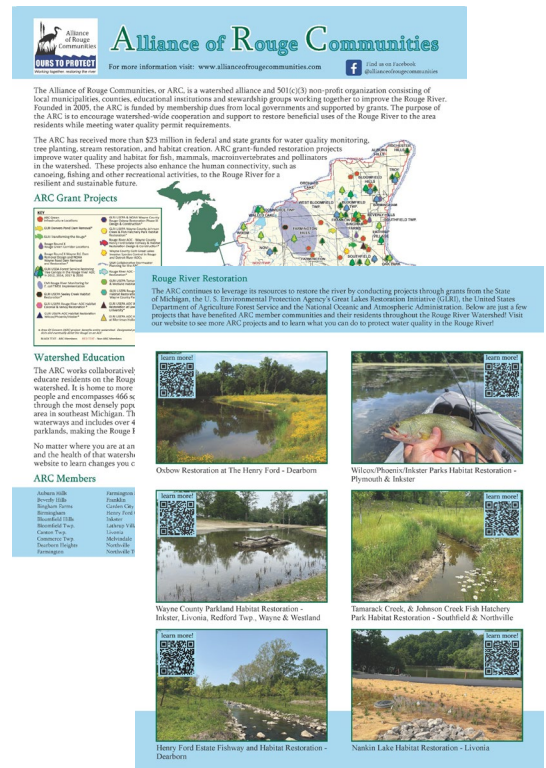
A booklet for riparian homeowners in the Rouge River Watershed. The publication was originally published by the Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner's Office Environmental Team.

Detention Pond Maintenance Manuals

A guidebook for private owners in southeast Michigan to educate them on the maintenance of detention ponds.



New brochure created in 2023.



Public Education Brochure Updated in 2023.

Black-Eyed Susan Seeds and Tip Card

Black-eyed Susan seed packets are distributed to the general public along with a tip card which educates them on the benefits of native plants. 100 seed packets were distributed in 2023.

Value of Trees

The Value of Trees tip card educates the general public on the benefits of planting native trees.

Protect the Rouge River at Home – Dispose of Fats, Oils and Grease (FOG) Properly

The FOG brochure educates the public on the proper disposal of fats, oils and grease in the house. Brochures were also distributed at member public events, the Great Lakes Restoration event and also as part of seedling giveaways at additional events. A total of 892 copies were distributed in 2023.

Additional Rouge Grant and SEMCOG Printed Pieces

The ARC has a limited supply of SEMCOG printed material and continues to distribute those when requested.

Bookmarks

The bookmarks publicize the ARC and promote Rouge Friendly tips to the public.

ARC BANNERS

As part of the Collaborative PEP the ARC committed to creating static display banners throughout the permit cycle. Below are the banners that have been previously created and continue to be rotated throughout the watershed (see [Banner Report](#)) where ARC member communities sign up to host the banners at one of their facilities for 2 weeks at a time. In 2023 the ARC's banners were displayed at 38 community locations.

- **ARC General Banners (2 sets)** - focuses on the connection of the MS4 to area waterbodies and the potential impacts discharges could have; the importance of pollution prevention and watershed restoration and stewardship; reporting illicit discharges; promoting proper disposal practices; identify and promote facilities for collection or disposal of household hazardous wastes; septic system maintenance; proper application and disposal of pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers; proper disposal practices for grass clippings, leaf litter and animal; benefits of green infrastructure; and methods for managing riparian lands to protect water quality.
- **Chemicals – Change is a Good Thing** - focuses on changing to a chemical alternative, changing how you use chemicals and changing how you dispose of chemicals. It also provides links to southeast Michigan County's HHW collection events.
- **Business Owners – Have a Business in the Rouge River Watershed –** educates business owners that are in the Rouge River watershed on best management practices that can be incorporated to protect water quality inside, outside and under their business.

How Water Quality Works

Water quality plays an important role in a healthy watershed and you can contribute to the solution, not the pollution! Clean water provides communities with drinking water, makes recreation like boating and fishing safe for the residents of Michigan and supports a healthy ecosystem for plants and wildlife.

Knowing how watersheds work is important because it allows us to understand that our actions have an impact on water quality. When rain and snow/ice melt travel across the land (watershed) and into storm drains, it is called stormwater or runoff. As this runoff travels, it picks up trash, animal waste, chemicals, sediments and dissolved substances along the way until it discharges into the nearest waterbody which has a negative effect on water quality.

Common types of pollution in stormwater runoff include sediment, nutrients, chemicals, bacteria and illicit discharges. In addition to stormwater runoff, water velocity can decrease water quality.

Sediment can be eroded soil from unprotected construction sites, eroding streambanks and shorelines, and runoff from agricultural lands.

- Adding vegetative buffers along agricultural land or at the water's edge of your waterfront property can help slow runoff.

Chemicals can come from pesticides used on residential and agricultural lands, leaking vehicle fluids, road salt and the improper disposal of household chemicals.

- Change to a chemical alternative for cleaning, like peroxide, and dispose of cleaning supplies, paints, and aerosol cans at a household hazardous waste collection event.
- Use Michigan native plants in your yard which are naturally resistant to pests and diseases, eliminating the need for harmful pesticides.

Illicit discharges are any discharge to a storm drain or waterbody that contains polluting material, such as sediment, nutrients, oil, and bacteria.

- If you see someone dumping anything in the river or lake, on the side of the road or even down the storm drain on your street, report it to your community's pollution hotline.

REPORT ILLEGAL DUMPING

Michigan Pollution	800-292-4706
Alcona County	877-476-4327 or
Alcona County	1030 Roseau Avenue
Alcona County	344-458-0811
St. Clair County	277-504-5913
Washtenaw County	734-222-3800 or
Washtenaw County	https://washtenaw.org/Report-on-line
Washtenaw County	888-222-2363

Nutrients include natural sources (organic debris), fertilizers, animal waste (pens, wildlife, and livestock) and sewage sources coming from failing septic systems or illegal discharges of sewage.

- Don't feed the ducks and geese, the concentration of droppings adds excess nutrients to the river.
- Fertilize your yard with slow-release fertilizer and sweep excess particles off paved surfaces back onto the lawn.

Bacteria is another source of pollution in stormwater which comes from animal waste or human sewage sources.

- Always pick up after your pet, even in the winter, to prevent the bacteria from washing into drainage ditches and storm drains which go straight to the river.
- If you have a septic tank, have it inspected every 2 years and pumped out every 3-5 years.

Water velocity is too much water, too quickly, which scours the streambed and banks adding to the sediment and recirculating the bacteria and chemicals in the river reducing water quality.

- Plant trees to provide a natural filter to reduce stormwater runoff, flooding and erosion.
- Disconnect downspouts around your home or business to slow runoff and reduce the amount of sediment entering the river.

WAYS TO PROTECT

The Alliance of Rouge Communities, or ARC, is a non-profit organization committed to bringing a group working together to improve the Rouge River.

Find us on Facebook: [allianceofrougecommunities](#)

www.allianceofrougecommunities.com

New water quality banner created in 2023.

2023 Activities included:

- ◆ ARC staff created a new set of banners in fall, 2023, which educates the public on what a watershed is and how it relates to water quality. It also provides things that the public can do to protect water quality. These banners will be available for reservations to ARC member communities starting in 2024.

COMMUNITY ARTICLE /AD GRAPHIC

ARC Staff have created articles that ARC members can use in their community newsletters or magazines along with an ad graphic on the same topic that can be used on websites and social media. Previously created articles and ad graphics have been posted to the ARC's website and Facebook account. The previously created articles/ad graphic topics include:

- ◆ *Brine Instead of Rock Salt to Protect Water Quality!*
- ◆ *What Is a Watershed & What Does It Have to Do with Me?*
- ◆ *When it comes to household chemicals – change is a good thing!*
- ◆ *Let's all dispose of fats, oils & grease (FOG) properly.*
- ◆ *Business owners – protect water quality inside, outside & under your building!*



Ad graphic created in 2023.

2023 Activities included:

- ◆ ARC staff created a new article and ad graphic in 2023 titled [Water Quality Solutions](#)

GIVEAWAYS

Pet Waste Containers

Pet waste containers promote clean water with the message "*In the Bag, Not the River*". A total of 1,800 were distributed to communities in 2023.

Fertilizer Clips

Fertilizer clips with the ARC logo and the phrase: "Fertilize Sparingly and Caringly." A total of 1,400 clips were distributed to communities in 2023.

Jar Opener

The message on the jar opener includes "If you live here (state of Michigan), you live in a watershed" and lists several activities that the public can do to help protect water quality in the Rouge River. A total of 800 were distributed to ARC members for giveaways in their facilities that the public visit in 2023.



GreenFest at the Detroit Zoo featuring the ARC's giveaways requested by Oakland County.

ARC WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

ARC Staff continued adding additional information and content to the ARC's website at www.allianceofrougecommunities.com, providing more information for the general public on what they can do to help protect water quality and promotes the ARC's restoration activities in the watershed. The website continues to provide ARC members valuable information to assist with meeting their

stormwater permits while providing educational information on the Rouge River Watershed. There was an increase in visitors in 2023 with more than 7,600 views.

ARC Staff initiated a [Facebook account](#) for the ARC at the beginning of 2016. Facebook posts included educational messages and photos to educate the public on ways to protect the Rouge River along with promoting ARC and partner events and volunteer opportunities. ARC Staff added 33 posts to the ARC Facebook and encouraged ARC member communities to Like and Share the ARC's posts. The ARC's Facebook account had 365 followers and 433 total page likes with a page reach of more than 6,600 during 2023. ARC Staff also respond to public comments and questions received on the ARC Facebook account or forwarded them to ARC member representatives when necessary.

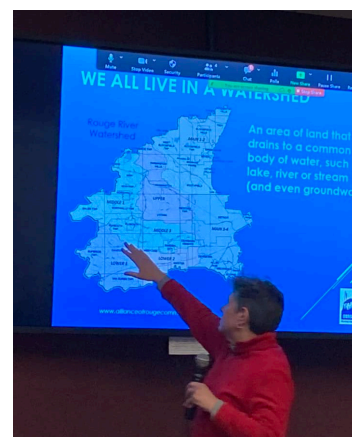
Details on the traffic and posts on the ARC's website and Facebook can be found in the [Electronic Media Report](#).

OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

The 2023 PIE outreach activities included workshops, workdays and presentations and promoting various Friends of the Rouge events. The detailed report is provided in the [Promoted & Hosted Workshop-Volunteer Report](#). The ARC also promoted Cooperating Partners events including Friends of the Rouge.

Additional 2023 Activities included:

- ARC Staff coordinated the location for a FOTR rain barrel sale in Livonia on May 13, 2023. A total of 52 rain barrels were sold.
- The ARC conducted a water quality survey in 2022 and received more than 3,600 responses. The survey compared the public's opinion on the water quality changes in the Rouge River which will help determine our future public education activities. The results are [summarized in a report](#) that was produced in early 2023 and can be found on the ARC website.
- ARC Staff was asked by the Local Impact Alliance Lunch and Learn Program to do a presentation titled Discover Healthy Yard Maintenance Tips to Protect Your Watershed on March 15, 2023, in Plymouth. The presentation was attended by 17 people.
- ARC Staff presented to the Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association on November 1, 2023, attended by 40 people and November 9, 2023, attended by 50 people. The topic was being stewards of the environment – Maintaining detention ponds.
- ARC Staff attended and hosted a booth at the Cranbrook Institute of Science's Spring into Science Water After Dark event on March 30, 2023.
- The ARC received a request from the Huron River Watershed Council to share its process for the watershed signage including obtaining permits, vendor selection and installation options in preparation of doing a similar campaign.
- ARC Staff provided public education items for an Earth Day event in Heritage Park in Farmington Hills and included handouts, pet waste containers, fertilizer clips and jar openers.



Local Impact Alliance Lunch and learn presentation.



ARC display at Cranbrook Water After Dark event on March 30, 2023.

- The ARC supported Friends of the Rouge a green infrastructure maintenance workday in Canton at Hulsing Elementary School on September 30, 2023, with nine (9) volunteers.
- The ARC supported 2 Friends of the Rouge monitoring events including the Winter Stonefly Search on January 21, 2023, and the Spring Bug Hunt on April 15, 2023.
- ARC Staff shared EGLE's 2023 SepticSmart Week: Know Your Septic System! Webinar that was held on September 18, 2023 with members.
- ARC Staff attended and hosted a display at SEMCOG's GREEN Summit on April 27, 2023, to celebrate the regions green infrastructure network.
- Oakland County distributed 250 copies of their updated 24-Hour hotline brochure at the ARC Joint Tech/PIE Committee meeting on October 16.
- The ARC signed a contract with Near Perfect Media in 2023 who will be used to promote ARC activities, events and restoration projects through TV coverage and news/magazine articles benefiting the ARC's mission and all the ARC member communities.



SEMCOG's GREEN Summit on April 27, 2023.

WATERSHED SIGNAGE

In 2023 ARC communities finished installing the new and replacement watershed signage and created a [map of the new signs](#). Beginning in 2022, ARC Staff worked with the ARC communities, the Road Commission for Oakland County, and outside vendors to design, fabricate, distribute, and install 141 of the Rouge Ours to Protect watershed signs. 21 of the signs were to replace damaged or missing signs and 120 were installed in new locations throughout the watershed. ARC Staff acquired quotes for fabrication of the signs. ARC Staff surveyed member communities on their ability to install the signs with their own staff and whether they could provide their own posts for the signs to minimize costs. ARC Staff worked with both Oakland and Wayne County to get permits to cover all communities and both counties waived permit fees. ARC Staff mapped and marked all sign locations at each site. For those communities that did not have staff to install the signs either the Road Commission of Oakland County or an outside vendor installed their signs. ARC staff delivered all signs/posts to each community or provided to the outside installers.



Sign installed in Oak Park.

