

**Rouge River Advisory Council (RRAC)
Draft Meeting Summary
July 21, 2026, at 11:30 a.m. via Teams**



List of Attendees:

Present	Absent	Voting Members
X		Ashley Flintoff, Chair, Friends of the Rouge
X		Shawn Duke, Vice Chair, Stantec
	X	Marie McCormick, Citizen
X		Dan Ballnik, Citizen
X		Bill Craig, Holliday Nature Preserve Association
X		Jacy Garrison, Oakland County
X		Trisha Gabriel, Livonia
X		Noel Mullett, ECT
X		Lauren Eaton, Citizen
	X	Sally Petrella, Friends of Rouge Park
X		Brandy Siedlaczek, Southfield
X		Tyler Sonoga, Farmington Hills, Vice Chair
X		Dean Tuomari, Citizen
X		Donna Kashian, Wayne State
X		John Gundry, Wayne County Parks
X		Sue Thompson, Wayne County DPS

Others Present:

John O'Meara, ARC
Alice Bailey, ARC
Amy Funck, ARC
Lucas FOTR Intern
Heather Rice, Washtenaw County WRC
Erma Leaphart
Jen Tewkesbury, EGLE
Stephanie Petriello

Introductions

Ashley Flintoff called the meeting to order. She conducted roll call by asking attendees to introduce themselves, including their name, and affiliation. There were 14 voting members present. Introductions were completed.

Approval of Meeting Summary

Ashley Flintoff reviewed the meeting summary from April 21, 2026. A motion to approve the meeting summary was made by Bill Craig (Holliday Nature Preserve) and seconded by Noel Mullett (ECT). The motion passed unanimously among voting members.

Old Business

None at this time.

EGLE Update

Jen Tewkesbury reported the following:

Old Channel Project (LROC)

Work is complete and the contractor has demobilized. Ferriss Marine has made complaints about access to their site. Amber (EPA) has met with them directly at the site. Ferris was aware of depths from the beginning. Discussions will continue with them.

Fordson Island

EGLE has sent some communications to ask if City of Dearborn would like to work on Fordson Island. Ashley (FOTR) met with the City on site yesterday, they are still very much interested. Marathon has agreed to transfer their land, working on final agreement for city council approval then mayor signature. Ashley will send email to City and Jen to update interest and reinvigorate potential funding.

Concrete Channel Project

Progress is stalled on the EPA end of things, they did not renew the contractor's contract at this time. There was concern that access agreements weren't making progress and that there wasn't going to be enough land to fulfill the purpose of the project, particularly the Beaumont / Corewell Health parcel. There is a possibility to use the USACE legal group to facilitate those access agreements but it could take a long time to go that route. John mentioned that Wayne County was still interested in the access agreement but needed to be updated due to new Wayne County Parks Director being hired. Originally the Corewell health site was optional, which has created some of the delay with getting them on board.

There is a virtual SPAC meeting next Wednesday.

EPA Update

Julie Carter was unable to attend.

Rouge AOC Grants Update

John O'Meara reported the following (updated document was included in the agenda handouts)

- Firefighter's Park in Troy is completed, under warranty period, contractor is done.
- Inkster implementation started this spring, main construction activities will occur this year with most vegetation going in next spring.
- Merriman has begun, most work should be completed this year.,.
- Patton park is in design, in Detroit, when the original list was put together geographic distribution was a factor. The city has put in some bio swales on site to help control stormwater.
- Wilcox and Pheonix will be done this year, Kurt sent some successful photos from fishing there last night.
 - Question on Wilcox – community around area is still interested in doing invasive species project, but on hold during project. In theory contractor is complete and warranty is over this fall. Can look at what the community wants to do, may be in different area than warranty. By next spring will be outside of the contractor work.
- Johnson Creek intercounty drain – permit conditions have been agreed to. Permit is on hold; as we do not want the five-year clock to start. Intercounty drain is working with EPA on time extension and additional funding needed as they can't proceed with bidding/contractor selection until time and funding is known.

PAC Business

New PAC Grant

EGLE is currently working with the EPA on updated work plan, including funding for work for Curt Wolf from the University of Michigan to find partners engaged for the Main Channel Project. Hopefully that as a third party academic, non-governmental, he may have more success engaging partners.

EGLE is adding funding to the current SPAC support grant for engagement in the rouge river channel project, once the approval is through EPA, that amendment will come through.

The ARC submitted a revised work plan with the scope that UofM (Curt) is working on as a new task. Curt will work within Rouge and Detroit Rivers to find partners for the project. There is still a working group, but it has had a lot of turnover within DTE and Marathon. To make sure things are still moving, we will need other partners and more engagement.

PAC Support Grant

John O'Meara reported that the EGLE contract is in place. The initial bug hunt was completed and the fish piece is starting. The other piece is engagement; three meetings with the public in one form or another. Those will start late summer or early fall, the idea is to get out with the public and remind them why it's an AOC, tell them about work that has been done to date, and solicit thoughts on the river and their

use/engagement of it. This includes what they may know of or would like to potentially see happen. Term public is used but public can be anybody but the ones speaking (citizens, municipal folks, others). Need to sort through the logistics. Similar to what Detroit did, plan to do a survey for public input. This will also allow folks that aren't able to come to a meeting to have input as well.

SPAC Representative and Alternate – With Erma's retirement, need a new SPAC representative. Lauren was alternate; she can move to representative. Alternate only has to attend if representative can't., Brandy Siedlaczek volunteers.

Motion to make Lauren SPAC rep and Brandy as alternate – Noel Mullet made the motion, Bill Craig seconded.

Outreach Habitat Tours Subcommittee

Noel Mullett reported that the subcommittee will be attending Bugtopia – ECT is funding the table, will be a joint table with the ARC. Bill Craig has agreed to table along with ARC staff Meghan Price and Amy Funck. Others may join.

SPAC Report

Lauren reported that there will be a virtual meeting on July 29th. If interested, let Jen or Lauren know.

SPAC habitat subcommittee – had a meeting last week. At the full SPAC meeting will re-emphasize what the subcom has done to date, the habitat website hosted on ARC/RRAC site. Would like to get information from other AOCs to add to that site. Looking at new focus now that the website is mostly up and running. Maybe create a statewide habitat restoration media-based thing. Raisin has done a documentary, Kalamazoo has a film, Detroit has done snippets, would like one State of Michigan Restoration media that PACS, EGLE and EPA could use. Hopefully can be done by combining existing content and not creating much new content.

SPAC Community Engagement and Education Subcommittee – Erma Leaphart and Lauren
Erma has been working with Detroit city council on creating policies for data centers. Missed last meeting – Lauren attended, had 3 goals when started – one was involving just authority, but with new administration that had to go out the door. Another goal was trying to engage community members to be more involved, aware of what an AOC is. Other goal was for PAC to share resources and materials – look for best practices. The subcom has best practices link on their web page. The Detroit River PAC is hosting the webpage.

Best practices checklist – involving communities that haven't really participated. Next meeting is August 10th and Lauren will be presenting on what the Rouge has been doing.

Other Related Watershed Projects

Ashley mentioned that she attended the ribbon cutting for the Northville Downs park – daylight 600 feet of river. Part of the funding was American rescue funding, overall cost was 17.8 million. FOTR did some fish monitoring shortly after it was daylighted and found 11 species – along with heron, deer, etc. Exemplary in an urban watershed without a lot of green space left, and it received a lot of media coverage.

New Business

Ashley Flintoff reported that the next meeting will be shifted to December 2nd. Will be hybrid.

Comments

Shawn Duke asked what the outlook may be for delisting as an AOC; and if any of the BUIs have been removed. Jen Tewkesbury reported they have all been improved – sediment is a huge one for the Rouge, so Lower Rouge Channel Project is a huge one to get done. No BUIs have been removed. Jen gives EPA

estimates of when BUIs can be removed – the first likely one will be fish and wildlife once habitat projects are completed. The state initiates the removal of BUIs, but have never removed without PAC agreement and support.

Ashley reported that Chris and John were part of the RRAC / before the RRAC. Wanted to acknowledge the blood sweat and tears that they have put in. RRAC put together some framed resolutions for each of them.

Review of Action Items

- Approved the April 21, 2026 meeting summary
- Motion passed to make Lauren SPAC rep and Brandy as alternate
- Information on UM funding can be found below

The motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Bill Craig and seconded by Noel Mullett. Motion to adjourn passed unanimously.

UM Funding: If and/when the Rouge PAC (they will also be included in the Detroit PAC) support grant is amended by EGLE for inclusion UofM assistance with obtaining potential legacy act partners the following is the scope that will be provided:

Task 4 – GLLA Partner Development

The work to be provided by UofM is to provide strategic support in developing potential GLLA partners by: (1) recruiting and engaging additional industrial partners through targeted outreach, convening consortium meetings, and clarifying acceptable in kind and cash contribution pathways under GLLA; (2) coordinating closely with engineering and environmental consultants to align planned infrastructure and remediation work with Management Action implementation and to substantiate match eligibility; (3) systematically identifying, screening, and documenting candidate nonfederal match projects across local governments, utilities, transportation agencies, and industrial partners in the Rouge River AOC—including review of capital improvement and master plans, development of a working inventory of projects, and coordination with sponsors to define scope, costs, schedules, and anticipated water and sediment quality benefits; and (4) supporting USEPA, EGLE, and ARC with ongoing communication, meeting participation, and preparation of concise tracking, reporting, and billing documentation that together will help meet nonfederal cost share obligations for sediment remediation and source control in the Rouge River AOC system.

It is anticipated that nonfederal match can be secured through a combination of local water infrastructure projects, utility investments, and industrial in kind and cash contributions that can be directly linked to water quality and sediment quality improvements in the Rouge River. Candidate infrastructure projects may include upgrades to combined sewer overflow controls, stormwater and green infrastructure retrofits, municipal and regional wastewater treatment improvements, and other source control measures led by entities such as the Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA), Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD), Wayne County, and GLWA member communities including Dearborn. Many such projects are planned years in advance but are subject to budgetary and scheduling constraints; therefore, strategic coordination and timing are critical to ensure that eligible projects can be aligned with GLLA requirements and counted as nonfederal match.

This effort will identify specific water infrastructure and industrial projects that can potentially be considered as match, and will develop clear, defensible justifications for the water quality and sediment quality benefits attributable to individual projects. Work will be iterative: candidate projects and partner contributions will be identified, vetted with EGLE and EPA, and refined to demonstrate how they satisfy GLLA and GLRI match criteria and contribute to Management Action implementation in the Rouge River AOC.

Prepare periodic progress summaries and final documentation that describe actions taken, partners engaged, match opportunities identified or secured and recommended next steps for EGLE and watershed partners.