

**Rouge River Advisory Council (RRAC)  
Draft Meeting Summary  
January 11, 2022**



**List of Attendees:**

Dan Ballnik, Chair	Noel Mullett, Wayne County DPS
Tennille Newsome, ARC	Dean Tuomari, Citizen
Bill Craig, Vice Chair and SPAC representative	Alice Bailey, ECT
Chris O'Meara, ARC	Trisha Gabriel, Livonia
Annette DeMaria, ARC	Doug Moore, Livonia
John O'Meara, ARC	Tyler Sonoga, Farmington Hills
Rose Ellison, EPA	Ashley Allen, HRC
Sally Petrella, Friends of the Rouge	Brendan Koziol, Arch Environmental Group
Leah Medley, EPA	Alexandra Fries, UMCES
Heather Rice, Washtenaw County WRC Office	Lorena Villanueva, UMCES
Katie Grantham, SEMCOG	Heath Kelsey, UMCES
Brandy Siedlaczek, Southfield	Shawn Duke, Stantec
Erma Leaphart-Gouch, Sierra Club MI Chapter	Marie McCormick, FOTR
Jennifer Tewkesbury, Michigan EGLE	

**Introductions**

Dan Ballnik started the meeting. Tennille Newsome completed roll call. Rose Ellison stated Caitlin Nigrelli can be removed from the attendees list.

**Approval of Meeting Summary**

Dan sought approval of the meeting summary from November 2, 2021 and asked if there were any questions. There were none.

The meeting summary of the November 2, 2021 meeting was approved with no comments. The motion to approve the meeting summary was made by Doug Moore, Livonia and seconded by Marie McCormick, Friends of the Rouge.

**Southeast Michigan Report Card Presentation**

Alexandra Fries with UMCES introduced herself as the Program Manager. Heath Kelsey, Director of Integration Application Network and Loren Villanueva, Project Manager of UMCES also attended.

Alexandra shared her presentation for the Southeast Michigan Report Card project. Alexandra explained the project is a two year project funded by the Erb Family Foundation. The main objective is to create socio-environmental report cards for 5 rivers (Clinton, Detroit, Huron, Raisin and Rouge) and to integrate the results into an assessment of the southeast Michigan region.

There was a kick off workshop that occurred in November 2021, some RRAC members were in attendance. Alexandra mentioned there are potential report card categories as Water Quality and Quantity, Ecosystem, Recreation, Economy, Management, Social, Cultural, and Human Health. The summary report was sent out.

Marie McCormick added the Rouge indicators list is a very rough draft with potential ideas and that they are looking to receive feedback. Marie stated she would like to bring the list to the Alliance of Rouge Communities Board or a subset of the group as Friends of the Rouge. Marie asked anyone if there was

any feedback they had to offer. Erma asked where “acreage” was inserted whether or not it included acreage of wetlands. Alexandra was going to check.

John O'Meara suggested the Rouge indicators list be provided to the RRAC. Alexandra stated she could provide a Google sheet of the list of Rouge indicators to Chris O'Meara. The deadline for feedback on the indicators list for RRAC members has been set for February 1.

Alexandra's summary of the workshop was emailed to the RRAC members as a handout with today's meeting Agenda along with her contact information within the presentation.

## **Old Business**

### Election of RRAC Voting Members

Sally Petrella reported there were no objections to the Draft RRAC Voting Members list and was approved. Chris O'Meara displayed the voting members list on the screen and was included as an attachment with today's meeting Agenda.

Sally reported the Committee then solicited nominations for officers for the next two year terms.

### Nominations for RRAC Chair and Vice Chair

Sally Petrella reported the only nominations received for RRAC Chair was Marie McCormick and RRAC Vice Chair was Dan Ballnik for a two-year term (2022 and 2023). Sally then put the nominations to a vote by the voting members. The RRAC voting members voted and approved Marie McCormick as the RRAC Chair with unanimous votes. The RRAC voting members voted and approved Dan Ballnik as RRAC Vice Chair with unanimous votes.

### Volunteers for Bylaws Update Committee

Sally Petrella reported the nominating committee came up with the voting members list. There has been discussion on expanding the list to represent the watershed which will be the Chair's task and that a by-laws committee would be instrumental. Sally then asked if anyone would be interested in the by-laws committee and if anyone is interested, please add your name in the chat or email Chris O'Meara.

Dan Ballnik stated Marie McCormick, as newly nominated for the RRAC Chair will continue taking over the meeting. Marie McCormick thanked the group for electing her as RRAC Chair and appreciates any feedback.

## **SPAC Report**

Bill Craig stated there was nothing to report. The 2022 schedule has not been defined with the exception of the meeting on January 20.

Jen Tewkesbury asked Marie if she would like to be added to the SPAC list as Chair to receive information. Marie indicated yes.

Jen also reported there will be a presentation at the SPAC meeting on general overview of the State's process for BUI removal.

Marie McCormick wanted to know when an appropriate time would be to discuss SPAC subcommittees in the Agenda. Jen suggested now in the SPAC report would be great to keep it together.

Marie McCormick reminder everyone she is the Rouge River PAC representative in the newly formed SPAC Diversity Equity and Inclusion subcommittee organized by Melanie Foose. Marie stated that there are 10 different AOCs represented in the subcommittee. The first meeting was last week. It is undecided on

whether or not the trainings will be for all PAC members or leadership. Marie asked if there were any questions. Bill Craig asked if he could get on the email list for the subcommittee, Marie agreed and asked if anyone else was interested. There were none.

### **EGLE Update**

Jen Tewkesbury reported the following:

- EGLE is currently working remotely until March 1, 2022, potentially until May due to advanced Covid numbers.
- The EPA is requesting from EGLE that they provide an AOCs prioritized projects list for funding for FY 23-26.
- The main channel work is in progress. The sediment sampling was completed and all samples have been sent to the lab and are being analyzed. A report will be put together once all are received by the scale of contaminants and where they are located. EGLE has bi-weekly meetings with Steve Waddell with Ford has been on the calls as a representative. They are interested in being non-Federal partners. EGLE is hoping the project will be in feasibility in FY23.
- The concrete channel design work hopes to begin FY23-25. This is a large scale project with a lot of landowners. ECT is involved in this project and are meeting with the landowners on their input for their property before design begins.
- SPAC meeting will be January 20.
- AOC PAC member meeting will be held in May. Hope to have the meeting in person.

Marie McCormick stated she is interested in hearing about the private partnership with Ford.

Erma asked if the sediment projects are the most critical from the aspect of Environmental Justice? Jen responded yes and that EPA is looking closely at the Environmental Justice. Jen also stated the sediment work ties into 7 BUIs.

Bill Craig asked when Rose was going to retire. Rose mentioned it will be reported later. Jen stated she also mentioned Rick P. will be retiring this spring.

### **EPA Update**

Rose Ellison stated she wanted to mention the lower Rouge River channel project and the Rouge old channel project that Jen already mentioned above. Rose hopes the contractors can be back out in spring and finish the project. There was more debris in the channel than they thought.

On the old main channel there was a shoreline collapse where the DTE dock was. Since the project was in demobilization phase, EPA decided to go and reevaluate the design and slopes to make sure there wouldn't be a slope failure from the dredging. Rose hoped once in the field, they should be able to clean up the old channel this year.

Rose also reported on the concrete channel stretch with regard to habitat and scenarios.

- What if they took out the concrete?
- What if they don't do anything?

Rose then mentioned they came up with 8-9 projects along the concrete channel without removing the concrete which would cause friction and water backup/flooding. Rose mentioned ECT is working on the project and ECT is subcontracted through Jacob's Engineering for property owner outreach. Rose stated she was at a couple face to face meetings with property owners and so far all are receptive to ideas and are interested. The outreach phase will be extended for another 6 months. After outreach, the design phase will be ready to move forward.

Rose wanted to also mention there are 17 habitat grants that are either in process or ready for funding. Rose also mentioned with the new infrastructure bill the GLRI will receive an additional billion dollars over the next 5 years.

Rose Ellison reported that after 34 years with EPA she is retiring in April. Rose stated she will still be around for another year in the background working part-time. Rose's replacement will be Leah Medley. Leah will participate in future RRAC meetings.

Dan Ballnik congratulated Rose on her retirement. Dan asked Rose if a summary of the 8-9 projects that will be occurring in the concrete channel will be available. Rose stated yes and throughout the design process the PAC will be updated. John O'Meara stated the best option will be to email the flyer that was sent to the landowners regarding the project. John stated the phase they are in right now is communicating with landowners with what they would like to see done on their property or any thoughts.

Erma asked if the reason for considering taking out the concrete channel was due to habitat. Rose stated yes that it was for habitat purposes.

### **Rouge AOC Grants Update**

#### Nankin Lake Project Highlight

As discussed at the last RRAC meeting John O'Meara indicated he would give a presentation on one specific project. RRAC members had requested Nankin Lake and Alice Bailey explained the project.

Alice Bailey introduced herself before giving the presentation. Alice shared her screen for the presentation. Alice explained the project is a GLRI project. The funding is administered by EPA to Wayne County, who then hired ECT to do the work. Wayne County Parks is involved as the project is on the Parks property.

Alice stated there are two main focus areas. 1) 3 acres of invasive species management and 2) 4 acres of habitat restoration. The grant objective required is to have 4 acres of habitat restoration: 3 acres of in lake habitat created/restored and 1 acre of riparian habitat restoration and 3 of invasive species removal.

Marie McCormick asked how the design was incorporating any sediment loading coming off the parking lot. Alice Bailey stated they are incorporating parking lot improvements and bioretention areas. Alice stated in the final design ECT has met or exceeded the grant objective requirements by having 7 acres of habitat restoration/created which includes 6 acres of in lake habitat, 3.9 acres of open water habitat, 0.8 acres of deep-water habitat, 0.65 acres of spawning habitat, 1.76 acres of emergent/submergent habitat, 1.0 acre of riparian habitat restoration, 23 fish habitat structures and 35,000 cu yards of sediment removal and 3 acres of invasive species control.

ECK is the contractor and has started working on site.

Marie McCormick asked if there were going to be any amenity/recreational products that wouldn't affect habitat. Alice stated Wayne County Parks has visions with access for fishing, paddling, etc.

Sally Petrella appreciated the information on the project. She stated people have come to her and ask about certain projects and Nankin in particular and thought she could lead them to the RRAC website for the information. Sally stated she did not find any project information on the website. She stated it would be great if project information could be found in one place and hopes the Rouge Story Map would help in the future. Chris O'Meara informed Sally that both the ARC and RRAC website have the public flyers for the projects. If it is not an active or funded project, there is a proposed project description of the work on

the RRAC website. Chris noticed Nankin Lake was not on the RRAC website and it is possible that was due to the project being a Wayne County project rather than the ARC. ARC staff will contact Wayne County and get permission to add the Nankin Lake flyer that was prepared to the ARC and RRAC websites. Chris also mentioned the GLRI funded projects status are updated monthly on the ARC's Facebook page. Sally thanked her for that information.

Sally asked with their fish work that the Round Gobi is in the middle branch and possibly got through bucket release and as far as they know it is in Nankin Lake and downstream, not upstream. Sally asked if the project found any in the surveys and could signage be integrated with the County. John O'Meara stated he would mention it to Wayne County Parks regarding putting signage around the dock/ kayak and parking lot. John also stated he didn't know what the survey data was on the Round Gobi but would have their data sent over. Alice mentioned she had only heard there were a lot of goldfish.

Sally also asked if more impervious surfaces were being added by paving the parking lots. John O'Meara stated with the bioswales you are filtering runoff and that is the intent. With the pavement being added they will not be clogged as much as gravel parking lots.

Bill Craig asked if the parking lot off Hines Drive was the proposed kayak launch. John O'Meara stated no, it will be off Ann Arbor Trail.

Bill Craig also asked if the location of the 35,000 cu yards of soil being removed was from the deeper end. John O'Meara that is the overall total to be removed from the lake. Marie McCormick asked if the sediment had any known contaminants and where is the sediment being disposed of. John O'Meara stated they are following the requirements of the state. Most of it will go to a type 2 landfill and whatever portions of the sand by mechanical separation can be reused. Sally asked if there was contamination, John O'Meara stated they are following the states requirements.

Marie McCormick thanked Alice Bailey and John O'Meara for the background information on the project.

#### Wayne County EPA Habitat Grant - HFE-Fishway Implementation

HFE Fishway: John O'Meara reported the EGLE permit expires in July. There is potential to have initial flow going through the channel to keep any invasives from establishing this summer. Continuation of the vegetation establishment needed due to flooding will be continued. EPA has given Wayne County additional funding due to the flooding events.

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

Tamarack Creek: John O'Meara reported construction is complete with vegetation. Some adjustments will need to be made over the winter to the new realigned channel and then go in to vegetation maintenance.

Johnson Creek Fish Hatchery: John O'Meara reported the site is currently in vegetation monitoring phase. This project has won a couple of awards. Michigan Parks and Rec Association has given an award which Northville will accept. The project will have another year of vegetation maintenance.

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

John O'Meara reported the following:

- Lower Rouge log jam removal has begun. Two medium size log jams have been removed and they are currently working on a large jam by the City of Wayne. FOTR is in the process of ordering their materials and this spring will start reforestation plantings over the next year.
- Sherwood Park is out to bid for contractors. Bids are due next week for summer 2022 construction.
- Bell Creek Park will be ready for contractor advertising the end of the month for 2022

construction.

- Lola Valley Park will be ready for contractor advertising the end of the month for 2022 construction.
- Riverview (Levan Knoll) will be ready for contract advertising this fall and is scheduled for construction in 2023. Habitat designs are complete.

#### ARC Seeley Creek Habitat Restoration

John O'Meara reported the Drain Commissioner's office has been working with local landowners on drain easements for invasive species work. Once the easements are signed, the project will go out to bid possibly early winter. Construction will be in summer 2022.

#### ARC Colonial and Venoy Habitat Restoration

John O'Meara reported that both Colonial and Venoy projects are currently out to bid.

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

John O'Meara asked if Heather Rice was on the call to give an update, she left at 3pm and was no longer on the call. John O'Meara reported design is between 60-90% and are looking into access agreements with landowners. There has been discussion with EPA to get additional funding for implementation based on the estimates in order to meet the metrics.

#### ARC LTU Wetland Habitat Design

John O'Meara reported design is currently in process and will be completed this spring for potential implementation funding later this year.

#### ARC Wilcox, Inkster, Phoenix Design

John O'Meara reported conditional approval of the QAPP has been received by EPA. Data collecting is in process. Write ups of the projects will be provided on the websites.

#### Rouge Story Map

John O'Meara reported they are working with SEMCOG on the layers and it is becoming more GIS driven. Katie Grantham reported in early 2020 a dashboard was created for projects in Lake St. Clair and this one was based on that concept. Katie showed the dashboard of the restoration projects which show whether they are future, complete or ongoing. If you click on the graphs, it will show on the map those individual project status. On the map if you click on a "point", a project description, status and photo will be shown. Katie would appreciate any feedback.

John O'Meara stated that on this initial layer the AOC projects will be the focal point but we hope to add other projects in future efforts.

Marie McCormick wanted to confirm the Rouge Story Map would be for RRAC projects. John O. confirmed they are for AOC projects, other restoration activities and other project in general; the AOC habitat projects were the first to be added.

Sally Petrella asked if a link could be provided of the draft Rouge Story Map since the PAC funded the map so members can have input. John O'Meara confirmed yes.

### **2022 PAC Grant Activities**

#### 2022 PAC Grant Activities

John O'Meara reported the PAC Grant will be out in February most likely. John asked RRAC members to get him suggestions of grant activities they would like to have included for the next round of SPAC funding. The activities may start in Spring.

## **Other Projects of Note**

### NOAA Partnership Grant

John O'Meara reported the Friends of Detroit River is leading the regional partnership grant that includes the Detroit, Raisin, Rouge and Clinton Rivers and will be turned in next week. This will be a 3-year partnership with no guarantees of money. Sally Petrella asked if there were any Rouge specific projects and that the partnership has not funded any Rouge projects. John stated to date the current partnership has not funded any Rouge projects, but that it is important to be included so that when the money is available the Rouge is included. The AOC projects have been funded directly by EPA. There are some Rouge AOC and non-AOC projects included in the grant application.

## **New Business**

None to report.

## **Comments**

### Members

- Bill Craig wanted to acknowledge the passing of Rajendra Sinha, former RRAC member who worked in Wayne County Health and Human Services. He participated in the contaminated site subcommittee with the Rouge River.
- Bill Craig also wanted to thank Dan Ballnik for serving more than two years as Chair on the RRAC.
- Bill Craig also welcomed Marie McCormick as the new Chair for the RRAC.

### General Public

None to report.

## **Review of Action Items**

- Approved September 21, 2021 meeting summary.
- Alexandra was UMCES wills end Google Sheet with list of indicators to Chris O'Meara.
- RRAC members voted and approved Dan Ballnik as RRAC Vice Chair.
- RRAC members votes and approved Marie McCormick as RRAC Chair.
- RRAC members to email Chris O'Meara and Sally Petrella their interest in being included in the by-law committee.
- Chris O'Meara/John O'Meara to email flyer that was sent to the landowners regarding the concrete channel project.
- RRAC members to email Chris O'Meara and John O'Meara any ideas of activities for the next PAC Support Grant
- Next Meeting; possibly in March

Dan Ballnik made the motion to adjourn the meeting, Bill Craig seconded the Motion. The meeting was adjourned.