

**Rouge River Advisory Council (RRAC)
Draft Meeting Summary
January 16, 2024 at 11:30 a.m. via Teams**



List of Attendees:

Voting Members:

Marie McCormick, Chair - *Present*
Dan Ballnik, Vice Chair - *Present*
Bill Craig, Holliday Nature Preserve Association - *Present*
Jacy Garrison, Oakland County - *Present*
Erma Leaphart, Sierra Club - *Present*
Doug Moore, Livonia - *Present*
John O'Meara, ECT - *Present*
Sally Petrella, Friends of Rouge Park - *Present*
Brandy Siedlaczek, Southfield - *Present*
Tyler Sonoga, Farmington Hills - *Present*
Dean Tuomari, Citizen - *Present*
Shawn Duke, Stantec - *Present*

Others Present:

Chris O'Meara, ARC
Tennille Newsome, ARC
Ashley Allen, HRC
Jennifer Maude, Citizen
Eric Wahrman, DWSD
Noel Mullett, ARC
Jen Tewkesbury, EGLE
Sam Davis, FOTR
Lauren Eaton, FOTR
Donna Kashian, Wayne State
John Buszkiewicz, DNR
Katie Grantham, SEMCOG
Jordan Twardy, Dearborn Econ Dev
Olivia Williams, Student
Don Carpenter, LTU
John Gundry, WCP
Leah Medley, EPA
Trisha Gabriel, Livonia
Heather Rice,
Washtenaw
Co. WRC Office

Introductions

Marie McCormick called the meeting to order and completed roll call by calling on attendees listed in the Teams meeting. Attendees gave their name, affiliation. Introductions were completed.

Approval of Meeting Summary

Marie McCormick reviewed the meeting summary from October 17, 2023. The meeting summary of the October 17, 2023, meeting was approved with no discussion. The motion to approve the meeting summary was made by Brandy Siedlaczek, Southfield and seconded by Doug Moore, Livonia and passed unanimously by voting members.

Old Business

Old Inkster Wetland RPO Project

John Gundry asked at the last meeting about an old Inkster Wetland RPO project that was prepared by Tilton & Associates. Chris O'Meara stated she looked for the files and was unable to locate them. Noel Mullett suggested if there is anything existing that is hardcopy it would be at the Wayne County office on Commerce Court. Noel will follow-up with John Gundry.

Dean Tuomari asked if possibly some of the old RPO reports were put on CD. Chris mentioned she received the files from Wayne County and searched through them and was unable to locate it.

PAC Business

Voting Member Term (2024-2026)

Marie McCormick reported that Bill Craig, Jacy Garrison, Brandy Siedlaczek and Dan Ballnik would like to renew their voting membership for the 2024-2026 voting term. Marie asked if they had any objections in renewing their membership, there were none. Marie called a motion to renew the four members as voting members of the RRAC for voting term 2024-2026. The motion to approve Bill Craig, Jacy Garrison, Brandy Siedlaczek and Dan Ballnik as renewing voting members for the term 2024-2026 was made by Tyler Sonoga, Farmington Hills and seconded by Erma Leaphart, Sierra Club and passed unanimously by voting members. There was no discussion.

Marie McCormick reported there are three new RRAC voting members John Gundry (Wayne County Parks), Don Carpenter (LTU), Trisha Gabriel (Livonia). Chris O'Meara stated that John Gundry wasn't on the call and his membership would be pending until he logged on to meet the meeting requirements for membership. John Gundry joined the meeting shortly after the vote was started. Marie added that hopefully members were able to read the bios of the new members. Marie asked the RRAC if there were any questions for the new members. There were none.

Marie called a motion to approve the three new voting members of the RRAC. The motion to approve John Gundry (Wayne County Parks), Don Carpenter (LTU), Trisha Gabriel (Livonia) as new voting members for the RRAC was made by Jacy Garrison, Oakland County and seconded by Bill Craig and passed unanimously by voting members. There was no discussion.

Marie congratulated everyone on their memberships.

Chair and Vice Chair Term (2024-2026)

Dan Ballnik asked the RRAC members if there was anyone who wanted to take on the Chair position as Marie McCormick's term was up. There were no volunteers.

Dan Ballnik called a motion to approve Marie McCormick as Chair for the RRAC for the 2024-2026 voting term. The motion to approve Marie McCormick as Chair of the RRAC was made by Erma Leaphart and seconded by Bill Craig and passed unanimously by voting members. There was no discussion.

Marie McCormick asked the RRAC members if there was any nominations for the Vice Chair position. Tyler Sonoga volunteered. There were no other volunteers.

Marie McCormick called a motion to approve Tyler Sonoga as Vice Chair for the RRAC for the 2024-2026 voting term. The motion to approve Tyler Sonoga as Vice Chair of the RRAC was made by Trisha Gabriel, Livonia and seconded by Sally Petrella and passed unanimously by voting members. There was no discussion.

Marie congratulated Tyler. Marie explained to Tyler that with his position he will now be able to join the meeting to set the agenda and whenever Marie is unavailable, he would run the RRAC meetings.

SPAC Report

SPAC Meeting

Erma Leaphart reported that there is a hold on January 29th. Marie asked if the meeting would be held in person or virtually. Jen Tewkesbury confirmed the date of the SPAC meeting is January 29th and will be held virtually.

SPAC Habitat Subcommittee

John O'Meara reported he is now the Chair of the SPAC Habitat Subcommittee, effective the next meeting. In October 2023, there was discussion around what type of documents may or may not have been produced by different entities as it relates to long term monitoring/maintenance. The sub committee is looking at a way to set up a depository for information.

SPAC EJ-DEI Subcommittee

Erma Leaphart reported that last year there were 3 goals. The first goal was for the subcommittee to create a suite of materials for recruiting and retaining new members. The second goal was to provide a list of activities that the PACs are currently doing and the third goal was to be more aware of and align the work with the Justice 40 EJ initiative. The meeting was held on January 8th and the first goal will be kept as is. The second goal has changed from a list to the PACs advising of the work they are doing.

Marie asked if there were any questions for Erma or John O'Meara, there were none.

EGLE Update

Jen Tewkesbury reported the following:

- Teresa Seidel who was Water Resources Director resigned her position at EGLE. There is no replacement for her position as of yet. Phil Argiroff is the Acting Director.
- The AOC Federal Partners meeting was held in November with EPA and NOAA. This year the first day was dedicated to sediment discussion then outlined the timeline of the projects and how to get funding.
- Lower Rouge Old Channel Project: The ACOE finalized the contract with contractors and hope to be out there in Spring to begin dredging.
- Main channel Project: the data gaps were collected in October for sediment. The EPA contractor is putting together the remedial investigation report and feasibility study. EGLE hopes to receive that information in Spring. Once received EGLE is hoping to take it to the local partners for funding. Marie McCormick asked about the non-Federal partner requirement, if it had to be a business entity or LLC and whether or not it could be state earmarked funds. Jen stated yes but they don't have any. Marie asked if there were any legislative champions for the project, and Jen stated that is something they haven't pursued yet, but they are aware, and it would be more of a local effort. The guestimate for the project is \$120 million but a more exact cost is anticipated this Spring.
- The fish tumor BUI project will be started this Spring. The Great Lakes Environmental Center is going to sample fish and get baseline data for how bad the tumor situation is before they do the cleanup. Sally Petrella asked if it will be in the lower stretch where the dredging will be. Jen confirmed yes and maybe a little up stream. Marie asked if they will be doing electroshocking. Jen stated it would be anywhere from cage fishing to electroshocking.

EPA Update

Leah Medley reported the following:

- Teresa Seidel is now EPA's director taking the place of Chris Korleski.
- EPA is on a continuing resolution through February 2nd.
- The EPA recently received approval for EJ work at Inkster Park which is the first in Michigan. This is just for design and outreach work. The habitat work is going up for approval with Teresa next week. Project funding is in process with award to the Alliance of Rouge Communities. John O'Meara advised Marie that there hasn't been external notification but the ARC would get with Friends of the Rouge and Wayne County Parks to get the formal information together when asked for.

Rouge AOC Grants Update

Status of Projects

John O'Meara reported the following: *Grant update sheet is in the RRAC Agenda packet that was provided in the meeting invite.*

- Since last meeting in October status of a lot of projects have not changed. Some projects are complete with construction and are in maintenance mode in 2024.
- The Henry Ford Estate Dam Fishway was opened in August 2023 and has been functional with signs of fish and other activity.
- Riverview Levan Knoll Site Restoration started construction in December 2023. This project consists of wetlands, wet prairie, upland prairie and reforestation in the floodplain.
- Inkster Park is finishing designs and permitting. The permits have been submitted to the State and will begin construction later in 2024.
- Wilcox/Phoenix Lakes: contractor is in process of getting paperwork in order to begin permitting and site activities. Tree removal and clearing may be done before April 1st to make sure no bat constraints and mobilization will begin late Spring.

- Wallaceville/Merriman Hollow: The surveyors have done their work and base information is being transferred to begin the design process.
- Fire Fighter Park – Sprague Drain: designs have been complete and permits are in process. Mid to late 2024 construction will begin.
- JCID: negotiation and discussion on EGLE permit and some of the items that are being requested. Once permit is in place, then construction bidding will occur; should begin in late 2024.
- Rouge Concrete Channel: landowner engagement process has been completed. The ACOE and EPA have worked through their process in order to move to the design phase of the work. Work should begin in the summer of 2024 which will reengage landowner and begin design for the habitat work.

Sally Petrella asked about Tamarack Creek and what FEMA redesignation 2024 meant. John O. stated the floodplain changed in the area so FEMA needed to be notified and redesignation of floodplain boundaries needed to be done. There is a about a half-acre of land outside the floodplain area now.

Report on Rouge fish data and P51 analysis

Olivia Williams shared her screen for her presentation for her Thesis work ([link to presentation](#)).

Jen T. commented that based on Olivia’s findings it sounds like the State needs to review their criteria for the Rouge and should discuss. John O. mentioned to Jen that she would receive a copy of Olivia’s Thesis in the report.

Sally Petrella thanked Olivia for all her work on the Rouge this summer on all 50 sites.

John B. with MDNR thanked Olivia for her work and stated she provided great information.

Other Related Watershed Projects

Other Related Projects

Marie McCormick reported that the project of Daylighting in Northville was brought up and was hoping Jennifer Maude stayed on the call to provide information. No one else had any updates.

Erma Leaphart asked if there was more information on the DWSD projects in Eliza Howell and Brightmoor areas. Marie asked what kind of projects they were. Erma stated they are GSI stormwater. Don stated they were both CSO stormwater projects.

Marie McCormick stated a wastewater treatment facility is being proposed for development in Salem Township and will be discharging 840,000 gallon of water in Fellows Creek everyday. The public comment period has not been opened. When it does FOTR will send out information.

Don stated he could provide a presentation of projects for the next meeting. Marie stated for Don to get with Chris O. or her to get it on the agenda.

New Business

Future Meetings

Marie McCormick reported

- **RRAC:** April 16, 2024 (virtual), July 16, 2024 (hybrid), October 15, 2024 (hybrid)
- **Understanding Implicit Bias:** January 23, 2024 at 8:30am-10:30am
Chris O’Meara has the link. If you do not have the link, please get with Chris O. or Marie and they will provide it.
- **Additional DEI Training Options:** (virtual vs. train-at-your-own-pace)

Comments

Members

Marie McCormick asked if there were any comments or questions. Bill Craig commented that Wayne County Parks received a \$6 million grant to do work in the Holliday Nature Preserve on Tonquish Creek. Bill wanted to thank Dan Ballnik for all his years of service as Chair and Vice Chair with RRAC and other causes.

General Public

Marie McCormick asked if there were any comments or questions.

Review of Action Items

- Approved the October 17, 2023 meeting summary
- Approved renewal of voting membership for Dan Ballnik, Jacy Garrison, Brandy Siedlaczek and Dan Ballnik
- Approved new voting membership for Don Carpenter, John Gundry and Trisha Gabriel
- Approved Vice Chair of RRAC as Tyler Sonoga
- Approved Chair of RRAC as Marie McCormick

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

RRAC HABITAT RESTORATION PROJECTS STATUS – January 2024

Nankin Lake Restoration

- Project complete August 2023
- Vegetation maintenance Spring 2024.

Johnson Creek Fish Hatchery Restoration

- Project complete October 2023.
- Vegetation maintenance 2024.

Tamarack Creek Restoration

- Project complete December 2023.
- Vegetation maintenance 2024.
- FEMA redesignation January 2024.

Seeley Creek Habitat Restoration

- Additional invasive treatments scheduled in 2024.
- Vegetation maintenance will go into 2024.

Colonial Restoration

- Contractor working on punch list items.
- Vegetation maintenance will go into 2024.

Venoy Restoration

- Contractor working on punch list items.
- Vegetation maintenance will go into 2024.

Sherwood Restoration

- Vegetation maintenance will go into 2024.

Bell Restoration

- Contractor working on punch list items.
- Vegetation maintenance will go into 2024.

Lola Restoration

- Contractor working on punch list items.
- Vegetation maintenance will go into 2024.

Lower Rouge

- Reforestation mats have been being installed.
- FOTR sampling survival inventory to be done.

Riverview Restoration

- Contractor began site work in December 2023 and will work through winter, weather depending.

LTU Wetland Habitat Restoration

- Vegetation maintenance in 2024.

Wilcox Lake Restoration

- Construction contract signed November 2023.
- Contractor working on construction submittals over winter.
- Contractor to begin site mobilization April 2024.

Phoenix Lake Restoration

- Construction contract signed November 2023.
- Contractor working on construction submittals over winter.
- Contractor to begin site mobilization April 2024.

Inkster Restoration

- Design is at 75%
- EGLE permit application to be submitted.
- Construction contracting in late 2024.

Johnson Creek Intercounty Drain Restoration

- EGEL permit is still in application phase.
- Construction bidding late 2024.

Firefighter Park – Sprague Drain Restoration

- Anticipated Mid/Late 2024 for construction.

Wallaceville Restoration

- EPA QAPP approved.
- Wetland field work November 2023
- Site topography November 2023.
- Design in process, completed late summer 2024.

Merriman Hollow Restoration

- EPA QAPP approved.
- Wetland field work November 2023
- Site topography November 2023.
- Design in process, completed late summer 2024.

Rouge River Concrete Channel

- Land owner and design work anticipated to begin 2nd quarter 2024.