

Rouge River Advisory Council (RRAC)
Draft Meeting Summary
January 17, 2023



List of Attendees:

Voting Members:

Marie McCormick, Chair - *Present*
Dan Ballnik, Vice Chair - *Present*
Bill Craig, SPAC representative - *Present*
Jacy Garrison, Oakland County - *Present*
Doug Moore, Livonia - *Absent*
Noel Mullett, Wayne Co. DPS - *Absent*
Heather Rice, Washtenaw Co. WRC Office - *Present*
Brandy Siedlaczek, Southfield - *Present*
Tyler Sonoga, Farmington Hills - *Present*

Others Present:

Chris O'Meara, ARC	Jen Tewkesbury, EGLE
Tennille Newsome, ARC	Leah Medley, EPA
John O'Meara, ARC	Rose Ellison, EPA
Annette DeMaria, ARC	Chris Raschke, Dearborn
Alice Bailey, ARC	Olivia Williams, UM Student
Ashley Allen, HRC	Donna Kashian, Wayne State
Sally Petrella, FOTR	Erin Cassady, FOTR
Stephanie Petriello,	John DeLisle, NCS
OCWRC	Shawn Duke, Stantec
Dean Tuomari, Citizen	Sam Davis, FOTR

Introductions

Marie McCormick started the meeting and began with a quote from Martin Luther King Jr. which ties into the work that the RRAC does – *“Every green tree is far more glorious than if it were made of gold and silver”*.

Marie McCormick completed roll call by calling on attendees listed in the Teams meeting. Attendees gave their name, affiliation and title. Chris O'Meara reminded attendees to add their name and affiliation in the chat box. Introductions were completed.

Approval of Meeting Summary

Marie McCormick reviewed the meeting summary from October 18, 2022, and asked if there were any questions. There were none. The meeting summary of the October 18, 2022, meeting was approved with no comments. The motion to approve the meeting summary was made by Dan Ballnik and seconded by Bill Craig.

Heather Rice asked if the letter of support went up for vote on October 18, 2022. Chris O'Meara stated she would check.

Old Business

Marie McCormick stated there is no old business, but it will be kept on the agenda as a placeholder for the future.

PAC Business

Marie McCormick stated the nomination committee had a meeting, which included Marie, Dan, Bill and John O'Meara and stated the new bylaws give a loose framework for allowing new members to join as a voting member. Interested candidates must be nominated by an existing member and do the following:

- Attend minimum of two RRAC meetings within calendar year
- Provide short bio (less than 250 words) to include their interest statement and representation (as outlined in the bylaws i.e., community, municipality, academia, nonprofit, etc. If you wear multiple hats, please state which organization you would be representing.
- Balance of representation – right now there are 9 voting members which is the minimum with a maximum of 30.
- Conflict of Interest Statement to be signed by individual seeking membership. Marie also stated the remainder of existing members will need to sign a Conflict of Interest Statement.

Marie asked if there were any questions about the membership. Bill Craig asked Marie if she wanted to speak about the draft guidelines. Marie stated in addition to the actions for the membership, that a draft document of the guidelines will be distributed for review. Marie also mentioned Bill Craig sent her an outline of an interest form for one who has an interest in becoming a voting member of the RRAC. Marie will put it in Google form. Bill Craig wanted to reiterate it was just a draft.

Marie also reported that her, Dan and Bill discussed there is a number of individuals who qualify for membership based on the bylaws and actions for membership prior to this meeting. Marie stated the nominees and who they would represent are John O'Meara-ECT, Sally Petrella-Friends of Rouge Park, Erma Leaphart-Sierra Club or Healing Our Waters Coalition and Dean Tuomari-as Citizen of Livonia. Bill Craig stated that those are the four individuals that can be nominated today and he supports the nomination. Marie stated she needed to hear from each nominee that they accept the nomination. Marie asked Sally Petrella and Dean Tuomari if they accepted the nomination and they agreed. Chris O'Meara accepted on behalf of John O'Meara because he was not present during the discussion but was present later in the meeting. Marie mentioned since Erma is not in today's meeting that the RRAC could vote on her pending her acceptance via email. *Update: Erma Leaphart has accepted the position as a voting member through email on 1/23/23.*

Marie then requested a motion to accept the four nominees. The motion to approve the nominations of John O'Meara, Erma Leaphart, Dean Tuomari and Sally Petrella as voting members of the RRAC was made by Bill Craig and seconded by Dan Ballnik.

Shawn Duke asked if there was an interim process for those interested and not on the list who may want to be nominated before the final bylaws are in place. Marie stated that the bylaws are already final and that the four individuals nominated already met the requirements and that any future individuals' interest will follow the new actions of memberships per the bylaws.

Marie asked if there was any discussion, there was none. The motion passed unanimously. Marie welcomed the new members.

EGLE PAC Grant Update

Jen Tewkesbury reported the previous PAC grant has been closed out. The recent PAC grant was submitted and is at EGLE's executive level waiting for approval. Jen mentioned there was a change in Director and Deputy Director with EGLE, currently the PAC grant is on the deputy director's desk who was named yesterday. Sally Petrella asked who the new director was. Jen stated the new director, is an acting Director and is Dan Ikinger from MDNR and Dr. Tammy Newsome from DNR as acting Deputy Director. Sally then asked who was left to oversee DNR. Jen stated she is unsure. Marie asked if the Director of EGLE was an appointed position, Jen confirmed.

SPAC Report

Bill Craig reported the following:

SPAC Meeting

Bill Craig reported the next virtual SPAC meeting will be February 6, 2023.

SPAC Habitat Subcommittee

Bill Craig reported the SPAC Habitat Committee has not met since the last RRAC meeting. The next virtual meeting is January 19, 2022 11:00am-12:00pm.

SPAC EJ-DEI Subcommittee

Marie McCormick reported that the group met on January 9, 2023 and she was unable to attend but was able to receive some notes from the meeting and had conversation with some attendees. Some of those highlights were:

- Develop a fact sheet about DEI
- Develop a PAC invitation package that would discuss responsibilities of a PAC member

Marie plans on looking into more information about the meeting details and what they are looking for. Marie also mentioned the SPAC EJ-DEI is open and if there is any interest from voting and non-voting members who would like to attend to send Marie an email or Melanie Foose directly.

Dan Ballnik asked who the contact was for the SPAC Habitat Subcommittee. Bill Craig stated he was the chair. Dan stated he would like to be added to the list.

SPAC Representative Upcoming Vacancy

Bill Craig stated he will be stepping down as SPAC representative for RRAC. He stated the term ends for the SPAC representative at the fall SPAC meeting. It will then be the responsibility of the Chair to delegate a new SPAC representative and an alternate representative. Bill stated he will fill his term by attending the rest of the meetings and the AOC conference.

Marie McCormick thanked Bill for his service as the SPAC representative. Marie stated it is an opportunity for someone else to step in the role. Marie asked if any existing members have an interest to email Bill or Marie. Marie may also call individuals for interest. Jen Tewkesbury mentioned that the position is voluntary and there are some field trips, dinners, etc. and learning how other AOC programs work. Marie stated it is an honor, privilege and learning experience.

EGLE Update

Jen Tewkesbury reported the following:

- PAC grants are in process
- Sediment projects and the Rouge old channel project are still moving forward.
- Main channel project remedial investigation was complete and know where the contaminated sediments are and what the levels are. The next step will be the feasibility study in the area this winter. Jen mentioned that it is an active shipping channel. Once feasibility study is complete, the project will go into remedial design. There have been some nonfederal sponsors that have signed on with an agreement with EPA and there are weekly/bi-weekly meetings to discuss the project. There are some infrastructure dollars that need to be used.
- Habitat projects are moving forward and in process.
- There are some projects in the next fiscal year to be awarded.
- EGLE received EJ grant applications for the Inkster project. The applications are currently being reviewed by EPA and EGLE and should hear back within the next couple of weeks. John O'Meara reported that the project will be broken into 5 subgrants due to the size. The summary will be in to EPA today and the individual grants will be in later this week. The overall total was \$28 million.
- Fort Street Bridge (EJ project): EGLE and EPA reviewed the proposal and there were some concerns about the streambank work that was proposed for the project. The remedial investigation was completed, and the results were that there are toxic sediments in the area. When FOTR applied for the permit, EGLE did not talk with Sam or Jen to see if there were concerns of sediment in the area. Jen stated they have an internal discussion tomorrow morning to determine the next steps forward since the permit was issued. Jen stated the project is on hold for now until they can figure out a better timeline with the contaminated sediment cleanup. Marie McCormick expressed her concerns and stated that FOTR's communications have been vague and problematic about the reasons why the project wasn't acceptable. She believes a

formal comment about the concerns rather than hearing from Michael Hennesey would be helpful. Marie then stated they do not plan on dredging in the river, they are excavating an area of lawn. The project would replace an old wood seawall with a stone shoreline with native plantings. Marie asked if since a permit was issued, how does that work. Jen stated that is part of their phone call tomorrow with EGLE and EPA internally. Jen stated after the internal communication, they will send a formal response and meet with FOTR on the path forward. Rose Ellison stated as far as dredging the river bottom and the side slopes and shoreline. Rose mentioned you wouldn't be able to dredge without being cognizant of side slopes especially if FOTR did work on the edge. Jen mentioned that the project could be a habitat project once the cleanup is complete. Sally Petrella stated she understands EGLE reasoning but FOTR has been working with different partners and entities and concerned about moving forward since the project was permitted. Sally hopes that it will be a priority project. Marie also added speaking for the Fort Rouge Gateway partnership that finding this information out has been demoralizing and devastating. Jen understands FOTR concerns and brought up that since you are working in an AOC that these issues are brought up all the time and there have been contaminated sediments in the area. Jen doesn't want an EJ sensitive area to encourage people to recreate in contaminated sediments and wants the project done correctly and safely.

- Rick will be retiring and they will post his position.

EPA Update

Leah Medley reported EPA now has a budget for the year. EPA's GLRI annual budget is the highest they have received at \$368 million for FY23. Mark Tugman, EPA's branch chief has retired and Amy Pelka is in his acting position. During that time, there was request for early funding for projects and unfortunately those were not approved. Leah has a meeting with the director and hopes to get them approved.

Rouge AOC Grants Update

Status of Projects

Alice Bailey reported the following RRAC habitat restoration projects status:

Henry Ford Estate Dam Fish Passage

- Pedestrian barriers will remain in place at the maintenance bridge
- Contractor has completed vegetation maintenance for season and site corrections needed.
- Vegetation maintenance will occur again in 2023.
- Full opening will occur in July/August 2023.

Nankin Lake Restoration

- Removal of sediment from site has been completed.
- Some in lake structural habitat being placed over winter.
- Site restoration will occur in spring 2023.
- Vegetation maintenance will occur in 2023.

Johnson Creek Fish Hatchery Restoration

- Contractor finished vegetation maintenance and some punch list items
- Additional vegetation maintenance will occur in 2023.

Tamarack Creek Restoration

- Contractor working on punch list items over winter when ground frozen.
- Contractor will replace, in spring, vegetation that did not survive.
- Contractor will complete fence installation in summer 2023.
- Additional vegetation maintenance will occur in 2023.

Seeley Creek Habitat Restoration

- Finalizing contracts with selected contractor.
- Kickoff meeting is planned in January
- Contractor will do some invasive treatments this winter and begin stream work spring 2023.

Colonial Restoration

- Contractor has some punch list items to complete in spring but is generally done.
- Vegetation maintenance will be conducted in 2023.

Venoy Restoration

- Construction has punch list items to complete in spring but is generally done
- Vegetation maintenance will be completed in 2023.

Sherwood Restoration

- Construction has been completed, with exception of a few punch list items.
- Vegetation maintenance will be completed in 2023.

Bell Restoration

- Main construction work and seeding was completed this fall
- Plantings to be done in Spring 2023
- Punch list and site restoration in early summer 2023
- Vegetation maintenance will be completed in 2023.

Lola Restoration

- Main construction work and seeding was completed this fall
- Plantings to be done in Spring 2023
- Punch list and site restoration in early summer 2023
- Vegetation maintenance will be completed in 2023.
- 2023 (seeding done this fall).

Lower Rouge

- Reforestation work on pause to be completed next spring 2023

Riverview Restoration

- Anticipation of construction bidding late this February 2023.
- Contractor on under contract in Spring 2023.
- Construction will begin in summer 2023.

LTU Wetland Habitat Restoration

- Design grant closed out by EPA.
- EGLE permit received.
- Construction bidding anticipated for February 2023
- Some invasive work may occur in spring otherwise construction will begin in summer 2023

Wilcox Lake Restoration

- Design complete
- EPA Implementation grant received by ARC
- EGLE has requested some additional sampling as part of the permit
- Construction bid documents to be completed in January 2023 (EGLE permit dependent) and bidding in February 2023.
- Contractor to begin construction will in late spring 2023.

Phoenix Lake Restoration

- Design complete
- EPA Implementation grant received by ARC
- EGLE has requested some additional sampling as part of the permit
- Construction bid documents to be completed in January 2023 (EGLE permit dependent) and bidding in February 2023.
- Contractor to begin construction will in late spring 2023.

Inkster Restoration

- Design is at 30%
- Additional habitat areas will be designed for based on EPA conversation
- EGLE permit application to be submitted in summer 2023.
- Construction start anticipated in later winter 2024.

Johnson Creek Intercounty Drain Restoration

- EGLE has requested some additional sampling as part of the permit process
- Construction bid documents to be completed in winter 2023
- Some easement acquisitions needed/in process
- Anticipation of bidding project summer 2023.
- Construction start late in 2023

Firefighter Park – Sprague Drain Restoration

- Field work in progress
- Design and permitting spring/summer 2023
- Anticipated construction bidding in Fall 2023/winter 2024

Alice Bailey asked if there were any questions. Marie McCormick asked if the site designs for the projects were on the ARC's website. Chris O'Meara stated yes, they have their own page and they are also available on the RRAC's website.

Dan Ballnik stated he was at Inkster Road and Hines Drive, Nolar Bend and noticed 100 ft or more of streambank has been cleared of vegetation and asked if anyone knew anything about a project in that area. John O'Meara asked Dan to send him an email with a Google pin and a picture and he will check to see if it is any AOC.

Project Presentation

Marie McCormick introduced Olivia Williams who is an University of Michigan Master student. Olivia Williams shared her screen and gave her report on Electroshocking vs. Seining in the Rouge River. Some highlights were:

- Part of her master thesis
- Project is fourfold
- 54 sites sampled
- 3 electroshocking methods (barge, backpack and boom)
- Seining vs Electroshocking comparisons
- Procedure 51
- Fish in Procedure 51 were broken down into 9 categories
- Species richness by closest date in Stream Branch
- Tolerance Species by closest date in Stream Branch
- Similarity between methods across sites
- Difference of species in Middle Rouge and Bishop Creek
- Seining seem to be a preferred method for FOTR

- Next steps include: working on 2 models, collecting relevant data and is expected to be completed in late spring 2023.

Olivia asked if there were any questions and to please email her with any at wolivia@umich.edu . Marie McCormick asked Olivia where she sees the collection of fish in the Rouge continuing as a means to assist in delisting the Rouge for BUIs. Olivia suggested seining is the preferred method to continue monitoring. Marie asked Olivia if she sees a need for additional supplemental locations for sampling. Olivia stated the Rouge has been well covered.

Other Related Watershed Projects

Update on Fish Surveys

Sally Petrella thanked Olivia for her presentation and work. Sally reported FOTR completed sampling of 22 sites. A link to the report is available here:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/196rbMCqjpS6ClO5em_OT23wPFh3uo0a1/view

Some highlights of the sampling were:

- Endangered species and status: FOTR did not find any redbreast dace this year. Last year they found one in Johnson Creek. In the upcoming year, more extensive work will become in Seeley area.
- PAC restoration projects: FOTR was able to go with DNR around Henry Ford dam and Oxbow
- Migration of the round goby and its impact on fish in lower Rouge
- Degraded areas: The main branch area of the Rouge is degraded finding 4 species of 11 fish.

Education and Outreach Grant Update

Marie McCormick stated that she has not heard of the grant outcome and will advise when she does. If there are any questions to let her know.

Livonia Bell Branch

Annette DeMaria reported the City of Livonia is undertaking a stream improvement project at the downstream end of Denmark Drain. The concrete bottom is being removed and naturalized. Grant funding was received by MEDC. ECT is working on the design process.

Marie McCormick asked the group if there were any updates with daylighting the Rouge at Northville Downs. There were no updates. Annette asked what conservations have been like with Nancy and Marie stated they were vague. Marie stated Barr Engineering was selected and was selected by the developer and no third party review overseeing the work. Marie is concerned about missed quality river and daylighting restoration efforts opportunity. Marie asked if Jen T. had any information. Jen stated she is not aware of any permits being issued and that EGLE has a lot of concerns with the project and that Pat Durack and Jeremy Richardson with EGLE has been involved. Marie asked Jen if there is anything EGLE can do to have a third party review. Jen stated no, Pat Durack would be the person to advise the developer/engineering firm. Annette stated ECT/ARC submitted two grant applications for \$40,000 for oversight of the project and both were denied by EGLE.

New Business

Future Meetings

Marie McCormick reported RRAC future meeting dates that have been sent out and they are as follows:

- April 18, 2023
- July 18, 2023
- October 17, 2023

Comments

Members

Marie McCormick asked if there were any comments or questions. Bill Craig stated there was a great public meeting for Wilcox Lake in Plymouth that included FOTR, ECT, ARC, WCP that was well attended with over 100 people.

General Public

Marie McCormick asked if there were any comments or questions, there were none.

Review of Action Items

- Approved the meeting summary from October 18, 2022
- Chris/Tennille to confirm in October 18, 2022 meeting summary whether or not letter of support was voted on as mentioned by Heather Rice
- Approved the nomination of four voting RRAC members which include John O'Meara, Erma Leaphart, Dean Tuomari and Sally Petrella)
- Chris to get accept/decline from Erma Leaphart for voting member nomination
- Let Marie know if interested in joining the EJ-DEI subcommittee
- Let Marie/Bill know if interested in serving as SPAC Representative
- Dan Ballnik to send John O'Meara a pin location of the site off Inkster Road

Sally Petrella made the motion to adjourn the meeting, Bill Craig seconded the Motion. The meeting was adjourned.