

**Rouge River Advisory Council (RRAC)  
Draft Meeting Summary  
April 30, 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 - *Absent*  
John O'Meara, ECT - *Present*  
Sally Petrella, Friends of Rouge Park - *Present*  
Brandy Siedlaczek, Southfield - *Absent*  
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  
Don Carpenter,  
Drummond Carpenter

John Gundry, WCP  
Leah Medley, EPA  
Trisha Gabriel, Livonia  
Heather Rice, Washtenaw  
Co. WRC Office  
Greg Bajuk, HRC  
Stephanie Petriello, OCWRC  
Regina Sistrunk, City of  
Dearborn

**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 January 16, 2024. Heather Rice wanted to state that she would like the habitat restoration grant status report attached to the meeting summary when sent out. Also, Heather noticed an error in the January 16, 2024, meeting summary on page 4 in Other Related Projects regarding Salem Township Wastewater Treatment Facility – 840 gallons should be changed to 840,000 gallons. Chris O'Meara stated she would make the requested corrections. The motion to approve the meeting summary as corrected was made by Bill Craig, Holliday Nature Preserve and seconded by Tyler Sonoga, Farmington Hills and passed unanimously by voting members.

**Old Business**

None at this time

**PAC Business**

**EJ-DEI Training Options and Update**

Marie McCormick reported the RRAC retained the services of Morgain McDonald Consulting LLC. They developed an option for non-profit and general board training. The training is a 90 minute, at-your-own-pace training. The training includes topics that were previously covered around unconscious bias but includes topics of microaggressions and gatekeeping. Marie stated she would recommend the next set date of training to begin or to be scheduled for Fall of this year. Marie is suggesting gatekeeping would be a better topic. Marie is looking for feedback from the RRAC.

Bill Craig stated he would be interested in a one session date and time for gatekeeping. Sally Petrella agreed with Bill. Jacy Garrison also agreed with Bill. Marie asked if any other voting members had any preferences. Tyler Sonoga, Shawn Duke, Dan Ballnik all had no preference either. Erma Leaphart stated she would prefer the set date but was concerned about not all members being able to attend the training on the same day. Marie stated Morgain records the sessions, the only downfall of not attending is they do

not record the breakout sessions and that is where most of the learning happens. Marie can confirm with Morgan.

Marie asked if there was any other question or feedback. If not, she will assume the RRAC is interested in the gatekeeping 90 minute training. Marie will work with Morgain and Chris to send out a doodle poll.

### **Recruitment Package**

Marie McCormick reported that the RRAC agreed to begin the process of creating a recruitment package for anyone to participate in the RRAC. Marie is working internally with Sam and Lauren (FOTR) to transfer leadership. Marie also stated that she is transitioning out of her role as Executive Director of FOTR. Marie will have an internal meeting regarding those changes on Thursday. Marie will get with Chris to discuss.

Marie asked if there were any questions, there were none.

### **SPAC Report**

#### **SPAC Meeting**

Erma Leaphart reported the SPAC meeting was held on January 29, 2024. Some highlights were:

- EGLE Update: EGLE has brought in Elizabeth Collins as an Equity and Inclusion Officer; Melanie is still in process of working on hiring two AOC coordinators. Jen T. stated the State has two offers out on those positions currently. Erma stated one of the new coordinators would be responsible for binational AOC, St. Clair, Detroit and St. Marys. The other will coordinate Saginaw, Manistique and River Raisin. Erma also reported Teresa Seidel who retired from EGLE is now director of GLNPO. Phil Argiroff is now the acting director of Water.
- EPA Update: EPA anticipates having 5 new staff in spring. EPA also plans to hire a new Great Lakes Legacy Lead. The action plan draft is out and comments are being received through May 24<sup>th</sup>. The list of approved projects will be out soon. Moving forward projects as proposed, EPA would like more community discussion.
- SPAC Bylaws: There is a small group of staff who will review bylaws every year or two to ensure they are relevant and up to date.
- PAC report: The SPAC meeting minutes are attached to this RRAC meeting agenda for RRAC members to review. James Clift was a guest speaker from EGLE. EGLE also hired a Community Outreach and Engagement Specialist, Lisa Heron. The Office of Great Lakes hired a Great Lakes Stewardship Coordinator, Katt Mika. They were invited to the meeting to see what work has been done and what challenges the Rouge is facing. There is a new groundwater database with a link.
- Next SPAC meeting is June 5, 2024.

Marie thanked Erma for the updated.

### **SPAC Habitat Subcommittee**

John O'Meara reported the most recent meeting was held last month and some highlights were:

- In process of finding a location for depository of maintenance examples that others can use
- John will talk with Chris about having the RRAC potential site as the depository location. The State can't post it due to firewall concerns.

Marie thanked John for the update.

### **SPAC EJ-DEI Subcommittee**

Erma Leaphart reported two years ago, the subcommittee created three goals. Some highlights were:

- Goal 1 was to create a suite of accessible materials that could be used for recruitment for new PAC members.

- Goal 2 was to review goals by all PACs as they related to new membership, outreach and engagement. This year the subcommittee decided with this goal that they would attach metrics to it.
- Goal 3 was for PACs to encourage awareness and alignment within Justice 40.

Marie thanked Erma for the update. Marie asked if there were any questions for Erma or John. There were none.

### **EGLE Update**

Jen Tewkesbury shared her screen for a presentation of the Rouge River Area of Concern BUIs for history and status. Some highlights were:

- Current Status: Zero BUIs removed; nine remain in various phases of restoration/assessment
- Partners play roles in AOCs: Federal, State, Local and others
- State's main role: Facilitate communication; draft approvable Management Action List (Rouge has been approved); review requests with EPA quarterly for management action funding; initiate BUI removal with consultation from the RRAC
- BUI Removal Process: 1. Management actions complete for BUI; 2. formal assessment of BUI by EGLE; 3. drafting of BUI removal document by AOC coordinator; 4. RRAC review removal document and concurs; 5. EGLE-approved final goes out for public notice and to EPA task force lead
- AOC Delisting Process: similar process to BUI removal process administrative take more time and effort
- BUI History, Removal Criteria and Current Status: Beach Closings. Discussions were held.
- Eutrophication and Undesirable Algae Historical Context; State Removal Criteria; Current Status. Discussions were held.

Jen T. asked if there were any questions to email her.

Marie asked Jen to give a presentation on sediment and Fish wildlife BUIs at the next meeting. Jen agreed.

Jen's EGLE update highlights are: There will be some GLEC staff in the river the next few months collecting fish. The State is funding monitoring for fish in the Detroit and Rouge Rivers for tumors. Fish will be collected, look at their livers and age them. Marie asked if she had any photos to send to Marie so she can share through FOTR. Leah mentioned to Jen if they need help with FWS to let her know.

Marie asked if there were any questions. Jennifer Maude asked if there were known locations for the fish monitoring. Jen stated the sites are downstream of the Henry Ford Estate Dam.

Lauren Eaton asked what the method of collection was for the fish. Jen stated they are looking at electroshocking if they cannot get into wadable areas.

### **EPA Update**

Leah Medley reported the following:

- Action Plan is out for public comment
- Technical Sediment Lead position was filled
- Approval meetings every quarter to get funding for projects identified. Perrin Park Design and L-Rock Phase 2 are up for approval.
- Contract for design of Rouge River Concrete Channel has been awarded to Jacobs Engineering.

Marie asked if there were any questions. There were none.

## 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 status of a lot of projects have not changed
- Six sites that are in their final year of vegetation maintenance under construction
- Seeley Creek will wrap up construction this spring
- Wilcox Lake/Phoenix Lake started construction this spring and should be done by September
- Inkster Park and Fire Fighters Park have design completed. Fire Fighters Park will go out to bid shortly.
- Merriman and Wallaceville are currently in design

Lauren Eaton stated she was just at Fire Fighter Park for spring bug hunt. She asked what the plan was for mussel reintroduction. John O'Meara stated at this time he is not sure/aware if it is part of the implementation scope. John O. will send her the contact information for the firm doing the work.

Bill Craig stated the Wilcox/Phoenix public meeting was successful and asked if there would be more public meetings for Wallaceville and Merriman as well. John O. stated yes to both.

Marie McCormick asked about bank restoration at Wilcox as well as a request for stump grinding. John O. stated based on funds within the project he will see what can be done. The contractor is looking at cost for stump area grinding in planting beds and outside of the area they will be cut at grade and treated so they naturally decompose. Bank restoration if reasonable/fundable would require a state permit modification before any work could be done.

## Other Related Watershed Projects

### Other Related Projects

Marie McCormick stated one mentioned in the past is the Northville Downs project. The key part of the project is the daylighting of the river that is happening in the Walled Lake Branch. There is currently an RFP out for bid for contractors to do that work. Jennifer Maude stated the demolition is underway at the dams. The schedule is to have the river alignment and earth moving work completed this year. Ford Field West adjacent to the west of the river also has work going on.

Erma L. asked if the daylighting the river was to manage stormwater or aesthetics. Jennifer Maude stated it was both. The study reports are available.

Bill Craig mentioned Waste Management got their permit to expand which means less forest and wetland. Marie mentioned Connie Boris with Wayne Conservation District has been active. There are 8 acres of forest that will be destroyed. That site is one of nine remaining habitats in the State of Michigan.

Marie McCormick also reported the ongoing discussion and dispute of the Salem Township Wastewater Treatment facility being built and discharging 840,000 gallons of water in Fellows Creek which would support a 1,400-acre development off Napier and Gotfredson Road.

Marie asked if there were any other projects. There were none.

## New Business

### Future Meetings

Marie McCormick reported

- **RRAC:** July 16, 2024 (hybrid), October 15, 2024 (hybrid) – Friends of the Rouge offered up their conference room for the hybrid dates.

- **Southeast Regional MI Report Card:** 5 southeast watershed organizations worked together to put out individual watershed report cards. The Rouge scored a D+ which is not too bad. There is a webinar this Friday that Marie is participating in <https://planetdetroit.us4.list-manage.com/track/click?u=90b69ddccdd15df3efc6090bd&id=cf35d45818&e=ca1001832d> – hosted by Planet Detroit. If you would like to read the watershed report card, you can find it <https://ecoreportcard.org/report-cards/rouge-river/>; indicators can be found <https://ecoreportcard.org/report-cards/rouge-river/health/>

Bill Craig stated the watershed report card is comprehensive and is not a Rouge River AOC report card. Bill asked what can be said about the different types of report card and should the RRAC have some sort of response to the report to differentiate their metrics. Jen T. stated it was in the Free Press and has gotten some good press. Jen T. stated it would be a missed opportunity to not respond as the RRAC.

## **Comments**

### Members

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

### General Public

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

## **Review of Action Items**

- Approved the January 16, 2024 meeting summary with edits
- Send Doodle poll for the EJ training

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

## **RRAC HABITAT RESTORATION PROJECTS STATUS – April 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 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2024.