

**Rouge River Advisory Council (RRAC)**  
**Draft Meeting Summary**  
**May 9, 2022**



**List of Attendees:**

Marie McCormick, Chair	Leah Medley, EPA
Dan Ballnik, Vice Chair	Jennifer Tewkesbury, Michigan EGLE
Bill Craig, SPAC representative	Dean Tuomari, Citizen
Jacy Garrison, Oakland County	Shelby Dix, ECT
Noel Mullett, Wayne County DPS	Rob Myllyoja, ECT
Heather Rice, Washtenaw County WRC Office	Trisha Gabriel, Livonia
Brandy Siedlaczek, Southfield	Shawn Duke, Stantec
Tyler Sonoga, Farmington Hills	Michelle McCrackin, Citizen
Chris O'Meara, ARC	John Buszkiewicz, DNR
Tennille Newsome, ARC	Jordan Twardy, Dearborn Economic Dev
Annette DeMaria, ARC	Hassan Sheikh, Dearborn Economic Dev
John O'Meara, ARC	Christine Purdy
Sally Petrella, Friends of the Rouge	Stephanie Petriello, OCWRC

**Introductions**

Marie McCormick started the meeting. Tennille Newsome completed roll call of voting members only. All other attendees were asked to enter name/affiliation in the chat. Marie McCormick asked attendees who were not voting members to introduce themselves. Introductions were completed.

**Approval of Meeting Summary**

Marie McCormick reviewed the meeting summary from January 11, 2022 and asked if there were any questions. There were none. The meeting summary of the January 11, 2022, meeting was approved with no comments. The motion to approve the meeting summary was made by Bill Craig and seconded by Dan Ballnik.

**Old Business**

Report from Bylaws Committee

Marie McCormick reported the Bylaws Committee has been working to redraft the bylaws of the RRAC and that the Committee has met approximately three times with other discussions in between. The Bylaws Committee consists of: Bill Craig, Dan Ballnik, John O'Meara, Brandy Siedlaczek, Doug Moore, Heather Rice, Sally Petrella, Marie McCormick and Erma Leaphart with legal support from Sara Rubino with OCWRC, a former board member of FOTR. Marie mentioned they referenced bylaws from the St. Clair PAC as well as the Clinton River PAC. Sarah offered additional suggestions to the base of the new bylaws. The existing bylaws were used and were conformed to the new style.

Sally Petrella confirmed the Committee has met three times with another meeting to be scheduled. Dan Ballnik stated he had some additional questions. Marie McCormick shared her screen of the bylaws with the questions.

Brandy stated she did not receive any invites for the bylaws committee meetings. Marie McCormick double checked the meeting invite and Brandy was not included. Marie suggested Brandy email Sally Petrella to be added to the next meeting invite.

John O'Meara suggested that all discussion on questions be saved for the bylaws committee specific meeting verses during the RRAC meeting. Marie would like to enter the questions in the document so they can answer them at the meeting.

Marie McCormick stated that Sally Petrella would send out the next meeting invite for the Bylaws Committee.

### **SPAC Report**

Bill Craig stated there was a SPAC meeting on January 20. Bill stated he failed to share the meeting minutes and presentations with the RRAC email list. Bill Craig stated he would get Chris O'Meara to provide them. Bill Craig reported the SPAC meeting included EGLE, EPA, PAC reporting updates.

#### Report from All PAC Meeting

Bill Craig reported a webinar meeting was held on May 3, 2022. Michigan's Area of Concern Program, Past, Present and Future webinar access has been shared to the RRAC distribution list which Chris O'Meara previously sent out. The meeting included a presentation by Rick Hobla that explains how the AOC started, what the missions is, how it has evolved over time and then went on to Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funds and PAC Grants. Bill stated it was a great history of how "we" got to the place we are if you just got on the RRAC. There was also conversation from the EPA Director, a billion dollars of funds will be distributed and will mainly focus on contaminated sediments which will be of great help to the Detroit and Rouge Rivers. Bill reported there was discussion of having All PAC meetings annually.

#### AOC Conference

Bill Craig reported the AOC Conference will be held on May 24, 25 and 26 in Muskegon, MI. Bill Craig and Dan Ballnik will be attending on behalf of RRAC. Bill also mentioned John O'Meara will be attending on behalf of the ARC.

#### SPAC Habitat Subcommittee

Bill Craig reported one meeting has been held with Jen Tewksbury as the lead. Bill stated the longer title of the subcommittee is Habitat Monitoring and Maintenance Subcommittee. This committee is to see how the habitat projects weather over time as they are completed and move through the restoration process to approval for delisting. The main concern is erosion and invasives. Bill Craig stated the main question is what happens after the contract ends and who does what about the projects. The next meeting of subcommittee is May 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Marie McCormick stated from what she heard from other meetings was that the Rouge AOC would receive around \$100 million toward sediment remediation and the Detroit River would receive around \$400 million toward sediment remediation. Jen Tewksbury stated those are rough estimates for the projects. EGLE is currently doing data collection and that feasibility has not been completed yet.

#### SPAC EJ-DEI Subcommittee

Marie McCormick reported the subcommittee is continuing work and she has attended one official meeting. Marie mentioned there was an implicit bias training that is open to all PAC members that is being held on May 13. Marie mentioned Chris O'Meara sent out the information previously by email. If you are interested in attending, there are spots available and if you need information to get with Chris O'Meara as Marie would like a strong Rouge PAC attendance.

### **EGLE Update**

Jen Tewkesbury reported the following:

- EGLE is currently back in the office as of last week.

- EGLE is currently working on the old channel. Negotiations are continuing with the ACOE and the contractor. The contractor anticipates getting out this spring for dredging.
- The main channel initial sampling has been analyzed and data that was collected has been mapped for the main channel in the Detroit River. EGLE is currently discussing next steps for a feasibility study to see what the project will cost. EGLE has bi-weekly meetings with Steve Waddell who is representing Ford. They are interested in being non-Federal partners.
- The concrete channel renderings are being prepared for landowners to show them what the project will look like.
- State of the Straits Conference will be held Wednesday. Jen will be presenting on the Rouge River for past and future work along with the contaminated sediment work. Steve Waddell will be there to talk about past legacy work he has been involved in.
- Do Not Eat Fish PFAS/PFOS advisory came out last week. EGLE has been sampling throughout the state especially near airports and manufacturing. Jen mentioned downstream of Willow Run there are some PFAS issues only in the small pan fish and blue gill species. There was no sampling down further into the watershed because the Henry Ford Estate fish passage is not open yet. EGLE will continue to do more sampling in the upper regions of the watershed and will keep RRAC posted. This is not an AOC issue but an emergent contaminant.

Marie McCormick would like Jen to explain to the group why only pan fish and blue gill are the only fish that are do not eat list. Jen T. stated the smaller fish bioaccumulate toxins more and how they move through the system.

#### **EPA Update**

Jen Tewksbury stated Rose Ellison's last day was Friday, she will however be part time and Leah Medley will now continue in Rose's place.

Leah Medley stated she would now be the main contact in Rose' place. Leah reported EPA have their quarter 4 approval for management of the funds that AOCs need. Leah hopes to advise the outcome of the approvals in the first week of June.

Leah reported she has been working with Jen Tewksbury and John O'Meara on FY23 project requests and will be preparing those for EPA management. She stated she would be at the AOC conference and would like to have a meet and greet.

Marie McCormick asked Jen T. how the RRAC could be more involved in the sediment projects. Jen T. stated it was a good question and that currently it is at a high level right now being state led. Once all main work is complete, there should be room for RRAC to be involved.

Marie McCormick asked John O'Meara how the RRAC is involved in the FY23 project requests. John O'Meara stated the projects come from those remaining on the RRAC created "[Rouge River AOC Projects Needed to Remove the Habitat BUIs](#)" that was approved by both the State and EPA. Marie asked if habitat descriptions were prepared for all remaining projects, John confirmed yes the initial ones used for the list development are. He stated that as projects get initiated on the list some of the descriptions may need to be detailed more or updated. John O'Meara and Jen T. explained the process to Marie and the RRAC.

Shawn Duke from Stantec stated they are interested in participating more in the development in any of the conceptual designs or feasibility studies and asked to be involved. Jen T. stated it depends on who the work is for and the ARC is the fiduciary for the RRAC EGLE PAC Support. John O'Meara stated it depends on the process of local governmental entity getting the grant.

## **Rouge AOC Grants Update**

Marie McCormick received feedback from RRAC members and requested that John O'Meara provide a summary narrative sheet of all AOC grant projects prior to the meeting and then give highlights on each project during the meetings.

John O'Meara reported the following:

### EGLE PAC Grant

The extension has been signed and monies have been distributed, John O. needs the contract back from Marie. Marie McCormick stated she had some edits and will send when she is finished.

### Wayne County EPA Habitat Grant

- Nankin Lake Restoration: Construction has begun and dredging will begin in Livonia and will continue for a couple of months.
- HFE-Fishway Implementation: will have some spring restoration work done and will be partially opened this summer for initial flow through the channel to keep invasives from establishing before full flow.

### ARC Rouge AOC Habitat Restoration

- Tamarack Creek: Construction is complete and is in maintenance phase.
- Johnson Creek Fish Hatchery: the site is currently in vegetation maintenance phase.

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

- Lower Rouge log jam is currently in process.
- Lower Rouge Reforestation (by FOTR) is currently in process.
- Sherwood Park construction has started for spring and summer 2022.
- Bell Creek Park construction has started for spring and summer 2022.
- Lola Valley Park construction has started for spring and summer 2022.
- Riverview (Levan Knoll) will be ready for contract advertising this fall and is scheduled for construction in 2023.

### ARC Seeley Creek Habitat Restoration

The Drain Commissioner's office has been working with local landowners on drain easements. Once the easements are signed, the project will go out to bid with construction summer 2022.

### ARC Colonial and Venoy Habitat Restoration

Both Colonial and Venoy projects will begin construction in two weeks.

### ARC LTU Wetland Habitat Design

Design is currently in process and the permit will be submitted to EGLE.

### ARC Wilcox, Inkster, Phoenix Design

Field work his being completed and designs of the restoration are in process.

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

Heather Rice reported ECT is wrapping up final design and then permit is awaiting submittal. The proposed work is mostly in Wayne County as long as access work is approved with landowners.

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

## **Tamarack Creek Project Presentation**

Shelby Dix with ECT gave a presentation on the Tamarack Creek ARC Rouge AOC Habitation Restoration project. Some highlights of the presentation were:

- Purpose of the Project - Floodplain connection and storage; wetland restoration; stream restoration and stabilization
- Proposal Plan - Excavation of 11,5000 cubic yards of material; create wetland pockets; native plantings; invasive species removal and native plantings; stream realignment; install habitat structures to create 1950 lft of creek restoration and over 4 acres of habitat created/restored
- Photos - Shelby shared photos of progress of the stream and floodplain restoration; wetland restoration; additional accomplishments

Marie McCormick thanked Shelby for the presentation. Marie asked if the former space had any social trails to the project. Shelby stated the area does not have public access. The area is mostly owned by residents, WXYZ, and MDOT.

Bill Craig asked if there was a maintenance agreement with any of the property owners. Shelby stated the contractor is obligated to maintain their vegetation for two years. Bill also asked how the site will be inspected once contract is complete. John O'Meara reported since it is in a naturalized area the hope is that there is not a need for long term inspection, but City of Southfield can look at the creek if it impacts the "infrastructure" and MDOT has the basin.

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

## **Other Related Watershed Projects**

### Northville Daylighting

Marie McCormick stated the ARC and RRAC have been involved in the process with the City of Northville with daylighting the Rouge River. The site is on the corner of Sheldon Road and 7 Mile Road that is a 49-acre parcel. Annette DeMaria reported that they hope to start the data collection this summer.

### Greenways/Blueways Update

Marie McCormick stated this is a FOTR project in partnership with the Lower Rouge Water Trail Partnership Committee as well as Wayne County Parks. The project entails building a 29-mile water trail as well as connecting mostly riparian focused greenway trails.

Marie McCormick stated that she would like this agenda item to be a place where other watershed projects can be discussed.

## **New Business**

Dan Ballnik asked if under the water trail project, he be added to the distribution list. Marie McCormick will make sure Dan starts to get the invites. Marie stated the invite would come from Herman Jenkins, not her.

## **Comments**

### Members

Dan Ballnik asked if Jordan Twardy from the City of Dearborn was still on the call. Hassan Sheikh stated he was on the call and would step in for Jordan. Dan will contact the City of Dearborn on some issues that affect the Rouge Watershed.

Bill Craig stated on behalf of RRAC, he would like to thank Rose Ellison for her dedication and contribution over the years on the projects especially on the Rouge River Concrete Channel. Marie McCormick agreed.

Sally Petrella wanted to provide an update the RRAC on UM-SEAS student. The student is continuing to work on her fish research. In addition to the fish sampling with FOTR, the student is including an additional 20 sites, she will begin in June. FOTR will be doing a lot of fish sampling. FOTR is currently working with Wayne State to collect fish from different areas of the Rouge.

#### General Public

Shawn Duke stated he appreciated the insight on pursuits of projects.

#### **Review of Action Items**

- Approved the meeting summary from January 11, 2022.
- Brandy will get with Sally to receive the next Bylaws Committee meeting invite.
- Sally Petrella to send out the next Bylaws Committee meeting.
- John O'Meara to provide a grant narrative for projects to be included in future meeting handouts.
- Marie McCormick will have Dan Ballnik added to the water trail distribution lists.

Marie informed the council that the next RRAC meeting is scheduled for July 21, 2022, at 1:00 p.m.

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