

**Rouge River Advisory Council (RRAC)
Draft Meeting Summary
July 18, 2023 at 11:30 a.m. via Teams**



List of Attendees:

Voting Members:

Marie McCormick, Chair - *Present*
Dan Ballnik, Vice Chair- *Present*
Bill Craig, SPAC Representative- *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 - *Absent*
Heather Rice, Washtenaw Co. WRC Office- *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
Chris Raschke, Dearborn
Sam Davis, FOTR
Lauren Eaton, FOTR
Gregory Bajuk, HRC
Don Carpenter, LTU

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 and whether or not they were or were not a voting member. Chris O'Meara added that if anyone in attendance would like to receive future communication regarding upcoming meetings to add their name and email in chat. Chris O'Meara also reminded attendees to add their name and affiliation in the chat box if they came into the meeting late. Introductions were completed.

Approval of Meeting Summary

Marie McCormick reviewed the meeting summary from April 18, 2023. The meeting summary of the April 18, 2023, meeting was approved with no discussion. The motion to approve the meeting summary was made by Dan Ballnik and seconded by Doug Moore and passed unanimously by voting members.

Old Business

Items to be voted on (bylaws section 3.4) by RRAC voting members

Marie McCormick reported that since the last meeting there were two letters of support that went out to two different opportunities. Marie stated herself and the Executive Committee confirmed the vote for the voting members on the two items. Marie mentioned there is no clarification of what voting members vote on and asked Chris O'Meara to draft a procedure for what items voting members can vote on. Chris O'Meara wanted to mention that the bylaws will not be changed.

Watershed Report Card Update

Marie McCormick mentioned the HRWC, CRWC, Friends of the Detroit River and Friends of the Rouge have been working with the University of Maryland with funding from the Erb Family Foundation to develop a watershed report card for each respective watershed and one for the region. It is planned to have a public press announcement in the Fall. Marie shared she has a draft version of the executive report that she reviewed and there is some misinformation. She shared her screen to give the members a preview of what it will look like. Some previews of the draft report were:

- Some photos and stories, narrative will be edited
- Indicators around water, economy, ecosystem, human health, recreation and infrastructure

- The Rouge River and Watershed are in Poor condition; alphabetical parameters and color coded. Marie ran through a couple of the conditions.

Marie asked if there was any questions or comments. Dean Tuomari asked if Marie had a chance to look at the report card that the Rouge Program Office did a few years ago. Marie stated yes.

John O'Meara asked if the introduction was very specific regarding previous report cards due to the nature of different report card metrics then and now. Marie agreed.

Marie stated if anyone has any questions or needs more information, to reach out to her.

PAC Business

Conflict of Interest Statement Update

Marie McCormick asked Chris O'Meara if all Conflict of Interest Statements were received. Chris replied all were received from voting members. Marie asked Bill and Chris if there were any other items to be discussed. There was none.

RRAC IDI Review and Next Steps

Marie McCormick stated that IDI stands for Intercultural Development Inventory and that all RRAC voting members took the IDI. Marie asked how voting members thought about sharing their results to the broader group. The IDI is a cross cultural assessment of intercultural competence which is used by thousands of individuals and organizations and helps build intercultural competence to achieve international and domestic diversity and inclusion goals and outcomes. Marie mentioned she would like to hear from voting members who participated and if they had any general thoughts about their experience. John O'Meara advised Marie that she may want to hold off on that for now as members are going through their individual reviews for a better understanding. Marie asked if the compiled scores should be made public or private. John stated that it would public information as it is being paid for by the grant.

Erma Leaphart stated she didn't mind sharing the results in a summary but they need to be accompanied by a narrative written as clear as possible. Marie agreed. Chris O'Meara told Marie to check with Morgain MacDonald to see if that would be something she would provide. Marie stated next steps would be:

- There was a group debrief where the consultant when over the results for about an hour and a half
- Voting members will have a one on one with the consultant to go over individual results
- Schedule a training: Marie asked if everyone in the RRAC should be invited or limit to voting members. John O'Meara suggested Marie refer to the grant scope since that is what needs to be accomplished. Chris O'Meara stated it may cost more if you add additional people.

Marie included the following link in the chat: <https://idiinventory.com/generalinformation/>

Special Election of New Voting Member

Marie McCormick asked Shawn Duke to introduce himself. Shawn works for Stantec which was formerly Cardno which was acquired by Stantec on January 1, 2023. Shawn specializes in ecological restoration work and is a management planner.

Marie stated Shawn had submitted his application for consideration as a voting member and provided the conflict of interest statement and bio which has him meeting all the requirements.

Marie called for a motion by the voting members to approve Shawn Duke as a new voting member. The motion to approve Shawn Duke as a voting member of the RRAC made by Erma Leaphart and seconded by Bill Craig and passed unanimously by voting members. Marie asked if there was any further

discussion, there was none. Marie welcomed Shawn Duke to the RRAC and Shawn appreciated the vote of confidence and on behalf of Stantec thanked the RRAC.

Marie advised Shawn that since he was now a voting member that if there were any other items to be voted on during the meeting, he could do so.

Rouge AOC Grants Update

Status of Projects

Marie moved up on the agenda the grants update as John O'Meara had to leave for another meeting.

John O'Meara reported there is a status report of the habitat restoration projects included in the RRAC meeting packet. John stated there are currently 21 projects in progress, 4 projects will be completed this year, 6 projects are in a maintenance phase and 3 will begin construction later this summer. John stated the City of Troy is finalizing their grant for the implementation part of the grant for Fire Fighters Park and will more than likely have bidding this fall and start construction next year.

Marie McCormick asked when the pedestrian bridge is opened at the Fishway does that imply that the public has access to the space or will there be visually marked or identified trails. John stated that is not an AOC question and is WC Parks item that would be their decision. Her second question was for Wilcox/Phoenix Lake and what the status of mobilization is. John O. stated the project is out to bid and should begin this fall.

Erma Leaphart asked if the projects were mapped somewhere. John O. stated yes, they are on the RRAC website. Chris O'Meara also confirmed they are on the RRAC and ARC website. Erma asked if you could tell what status the projects are in. Chris O. mentioned each project has an individual website and is updated periodically. John O. stated in May the overall list and map was updated and can be found on the website.

Jennifer Maude noticed with the Johnson Creek Habitat Restoration project that there was a note of a presentation given to Trout Unlimited. She asked if there were any plans to offer a presentation to the Township of Northville and the River Restoration Task Force for interested local residents. John O. stated yes there could be a presentation and that she could request that from the Township. He said there were quite a few presentations on the project for the community. Marie thanked Jennifer for attending the meeting and the work with the Task Force in Northville.

Erma Leaphart asked about the Lower Rouge Reforestation project and asked what "matts" were. John O. stated they are vegetation matts to go around a sapling to stop things from growing around it. Marie stated the matts were being placed by Friends of the Rouge with volunteers. John O. stated to go to Friends of the Rouge website to sign up to volunteer. If interested in signing up to volunteer, click the link provided by Marie: <https://therouge.org/rr-events/categories/4-act-trees/>

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

SPAC Report

Bill Craig reported the following:

SPAC Meeting

Bill Craig reported the minutes from the last SPAC meeting can be found on the RRAC website.

Some highlights were:

- SPAC meeting was held virtual on May 31st 9:30am-2:30pm.
- There were a lot of action items and discussions
- RRAC members who attended were: Erma Leaphart, John O'Meara, Brandy S., Marie McCormick and Bill
- EPA gave SPAC an update: EPA currently has an evolving organization chart due to retirements and reorganization.
- Discussion held on AOC Conference in Green Bay, WI; September 13th and 14th and information is available on EPA website. Bill plans on attending, representing the RRAC.
- Discussion held on funding for EJ projects that were not explained. Bill stated it was a positive step.
- EGLE update: Melanie Foose is the new unit supervisor and Jen T. is now the AOC coordinator of 4 AOCs.
- New SPAC logo
- SPAC website has the meeting minutes on it and there is an item for members and it will take you to the Rouge AOC, then to the RRAC website. On the RRAC website, you will find RRAC meetings, SPAC meetings and Habitat Subcommittee Meetings that Chris O'Meara adds. There is also opportunity for Marie to do the same. Chris O. and Marie could discuss if necessary.
- There is more information available in the minutes. Bill stated he send the Habitat Committee minutes to Chris O. and she adds them to the site as well.
- New appointments for SPAC representatives for a few AOCs
- SPAC is forming a Bylaws Subcommittee
- Bill Craig stated he gave the Habitat Subcommittee report at the March 22nd and May 3rd meetings. Marie McCormick gave the EJ-DEI Subcommittee report.
- The PAC report was given and there was a variety of situations in each AOC to learn what they are doing and what we could go through in the future. Problems, concerns and successes are always shared.
- Next meeting will be in the St. Mary's River AOC, a date is TBD. Jen T. stated a date will come out soon, they are waiting confirmation on available dates. Marie McCormick asked if that meeting will be hybrid. Jen T. stated that is unknown at this time.

Erma Leaphart stated after looking at Bill's report that he referenced a GLRI Action Plan IV for development and there will be a public forum in Detroit at the Outdoor Adventure Center on August 15th where all RRAC members are encouraged to participate to learn and provide feedback. Marie McCormick reiterated that RRAC members should try to attend as it is an opportunity to be heard. John O'Meara stated there are other forums that are virtual by going to their website to locate the in person versus virtual. Marie McCormick added the link: <https://glri.us/action-plan#engage>

SPAC Habitat Subcommittee

Bill Craig reported the SPAC Habitat Subcommittee meeting was held virtual and was only an hour long on May 3, 2023. There were only 3 people in attendance. Some highlights were:

- Discussed CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas) which is a state supported program; Bill stated he doesn't know much about CISMA within the Rouge Watershed and there will be further discussion
- Discussed MiCorps which is a state supported program. Bill state FOTR has had previous experience with MiCorps but Bill doesn't know much information
- At the SPAC meeting, it was discussed that the above topics should be discussed at the fall AOC meeting at St. Mary's AOC. Marie McCormick stated she could address the topic or hold off. Bill mentioned it was discussed in the second meeting that FOTR could participate in the next meeting to discuss their experience with MiCorps. Marie stated they could also discuss CISMA as well. FOTR is currently a part of the Oakland County CISMA but have not been formally a part of the CISMA in Wayne County.

Lauren with FOTR stated they have communication with Patrick with Oakland County CISMA. FOTR works with him in terms of the European frog bit and thinks he would be more than willing and open to meet with folks who were interested. She also mentioned FOTR has been members of MiCorps for many years which is coordinated through Paul Stein with Huron River Watershed Council and there is a main repository for data throughout the state in terms of benthic monitoring. Lauren is willing to facilitate any communication needed. Bill Craig stated he would get back with Marie for the agenda for the next Habitat Subcommittee meeting.

A second meeting was held on June 28, 2023

- There was ongoing discussion about monitoring, funding, data, etc. which can be complicated and try to bring it down to more of a focus. Bill stated there seems to be a gap when the project is complete and demobilized that the site just sits there. When does the monitoring start as some want it sooner than later and where does the stewardship begin, if any and what are the stewardship questions with AOC sites.
- Next meeting is scheduled for the 23rd but Bill will be on vacation and will need to be rescheduled.

SPAC EJ-DEI Subcommittee

Marie McCormick reported that the subcommittee is working on the following:

- Many SPAC meetings are hosted that are once a month and July's was canceled
- Three goals were set and they are meant to be fluid and change as the SPAC EJ-DEI Subcommittee grows and goals are met and new goals are adopted.

The first goal is around what kind of existing EJ-DEI activities are happening. Documents are being shared internally for other PACs to use that focus on introduction, recruitment and retention. A letter requesting PAC existing DEI efforts for example for the Rouge would be the IDI. Also, to get a better understanding how the Justice 40 initiative impacts the RRAC and Marie believes it already has.

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

SPAC Representative Vacancy

Marie McCormick reported that Bill Craig reported at the end of his term he is stepping down as RRAC SPAC representative and that there will be a vacancy for SPAC representative. In the bylaws it gives the existing Chair the option to appoint the next SPAC representative. Marie McCormick stated she appointed Erma Leaphart with permission to be the next SPAC representative. Marie thanked Erma. Erma stated she is looking forward to it and is invested in the restoration of the AOC and is excited to serve in the role. Marie went on to say she appreciated all of Bill's hard work. Bill Craig stated it was a pleasure.

EGLE Update

Jen Tewkesbury reported the following:

- There is a new director of EGLE, Phil Roos. Jen stated they had a virtual meeting with him introducing himself. His background is business strategy and marketing and he sat on numerous boards and is interested in climate change. He admitted he did not have a science background. Phil's goal is to help the public better understand what EGLE does.
- Lower Rouge Old Channel Project: The ACOE is still working with the contractor to get a schedule completed and get on site this season. Jen mentioned there are a number of dredging projects going on throughout Michigan so there is limited availability. They are hoping to get out there this year and ramp up next year.

- Main channel Project: the partnership is ongoing between non-federal sponsors (DWSD may be a new partner). They are consistently working to get the coalition together to join partnership. Additional sampling will be done this summer through AE to fill data gaps that the contractor felt needed to be filled. That information will go into the remedial investigation and updated to move onto the feasibility study to see what the project will cost, etc.

Marie thanked Jen for the report. Marie mentioned that the RRAC signed a letter that the MEC sent out asking for state support as part of the AOC to provide additional funds.

EPA Update

Jen Tewkesbury indicated that Leah Medley had a conflict with another AOC and was unable to join.

Other Related Watershed Projects

Education and Outreach Grants Update

Sam Davis reported that she had been working with communities with AOC projects. The first project is the Wilcox and Phoenix Lake projects that includes dredging and implementing fish habitat. Sam stated a lot of that has been working with identified community groups (Old Village Association and Plymouth Pollinators) and work with them to plan events to get the communities involved. Sam went on to add there have been three events at Wilcox Lake to manage woody invasive plants, the last one was on May 20th with 45 in attendance. Wayne County provided the woodchipper to help with the refuse and filled three chip trucks. Sam indicated they will keep interacting with the groups for current and future projects.

Marie McCormick stated the idea is to build capacity with existing leadership within communities to build stewards. Marie stated they are going to look into how they engage with communities to the point in the project of it being completed, the beginning, during or after. They are going to create guidelines and will share when available. In addition, Marie mentioned RRAC submitted a letter of support with Michigan Environmental Council (MEC) to the Michigan Health Endowment Fund for a grant called the Growing Community Engagement in AOC Remediation Processes and a number of watershed groups are partners to help coordinate with the statewide PAC to gather information and engage council members in creating and engagement pilot process to grow community engagement in the remediation process.

Marie stated if there were any questions to reach out to her or Sam.

Livonia Bell Branch

Doug Moore reported that the City of Livonia worked with ECT for the design of the stream improvement project which went out to bid and is currently in process to remove 400' of concrete channel and naturalization of where concrete was. The project is 75% done according to the pictures. Doug Moore will forward the pictures to Marie McCormick and Bill Craig. Doug mentioned in 2018 the project was brought up to the RRAC to try to get GLRI funds. The work is being funded through a grant with MEDC instead.

Marie mentioned it was a great example of other projects that could be brought to the RRAC for consideration and networking space to find funding. Chris O'Meara added if there are any projects, that the ARC has a form on the website to gather information and look for funding when available. The link to the form on the ARC's website is:

<https://www.allianceofrougecommunities.com/PDFs/rrac/Rouge%20River%20Watershed%20Potential%20Project%20Template%20Instructions.pdf>

ARC Evergreen-Farmington Investigational Sampling

Chris O'Meara asked Noel if he had any update. Noel reported the project is ongoing and is funded by the Oakland County Water Resource Commission office. Noel stated they are working with GLWA,

Oakland, Macomb and Wayne Counties on making the GLWA data available in a common format and available on the data hub at some point.

FOTR Monitoring Update

Lauren with FOTR reported the following:

- Fish monitoring has been ongoing all summer; the last site is tomorrow. A total of 21 sites have been sampled which also included a number of FOTR staff to sample
- Spring bug hunt report was complete and sent out to volunteers and Rouge communities who sponsor the sites
- Fall bug hunt will be on October 14th, registrations and solicitations have been sent out
- Hosting an in-person team leader training on September 30th for past team leaders and anyone interested in becoming a team leader
- FOTR has been talking with Amanda Chambers who is with EGLE on running a native mussel workshop to be held on September 9th in lab going over ID specifics and going in the field

Other Related Projects

Shawn Duke reported Stantec has a fish electro shocking project near Southfield which is 1500lf and was curious if FOTR or anyone had previous fish sampling data by species because they are looking to do a comparative study. Lauren with FOTR stated yes and that she would coordinate with Shawn after the meeting.

New Business

Future Meetings

Marie McCormick reported

- **RRAC:** October 17, 2023 (hybrid), January 16, 2024 (virtual)
- **AOC Conference:** Green Bay, Wisconsin – September 12-14, 2023
- **Great Lakes Restoration Celebration:** The Henry Ford – September 22, 2023

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. Jennifer Maude thanked the RRAC for all they do. Marie thanked her and appreciated her attendance.

Review of Action Items

- Approved the April 18, 2023 meeting summary
- Chris O'Meara will draft the procedure for what items voting members will vote on
- Members to contact Marie if there are any questions or would like additional information on the watershed report card
- Motion was made and approved for Shawn Duke to become a new voting member of the RRAC
- If interested in volunteering placing matts around saplings for the Lower Rouge Restoration project, you can sign up through FOTR link that Marie provided in the chat
- Doug Moore to send Marie and Bill pictures of the Livonia Bell Branch project

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