

Rouge River Advisory Council (RRAC)
Meeting Summary
November 24, 2015

Attendees:

Dan Ballnik
Marty Boote, ARC
Cory Borton, HRC
Bill Craig
Jacy Garrison, Oakland County Water Resource Commissioner's Office
Aimee Lalonde-Norman, Friends of the Rouge
Noel Mullett, Wayne County Department of Public Service
Sally Petrella, Friends of the Rouge
Chris O'Meara, ARC
Jim Ridgway, ARC
Devan Rosturfer, SEMCOG
Brandy Siedlaczek, City of Southfield
Jen Tewkesbury, MDEQ Office of the Great Lakes

I. Introductions

Introductions were completed.

II. Old Business

B. Craig reported on the SPAC meeting saying that the strategic planning was worthwhile and thanked all that participate in the RRAC. The SPAC meetings really bring everyone together and there is value in the SPAC and learning from others.

ARC/FOTR Investigation Update

A. Lalonde-Norman gave a brief update. She stated that the two organizations continue to look at what is required to develop a new organization and are engaging stakeholders and corporate sponsors to get their opinions. There is still discussion on whether it would be an alliance or a council. That is what they will be looking at next along with the governance and structure. The directorship would include roughly 15 on a board from community government, corporate and the general public. A. Lalonde-Norman indicated that there would not be a lot of change in what the two organizations are doing already program-wise. Administrative support would be shared. We expect a vote from both organizations this spring to decide whether we are moving forward with the next phases of planning and the Erb Foundation will support the legal and marketing aspects of this next phase. B. Craig asked is we are recreating the wheel or if there are other organizations like this. A. Lalonde-Norman said that there are other organizations like this including watershed councils that do similar contracted services for the governmental partners. J. Ridgway stated that RRAC would become part of the new organization as well along with the communities. He stated that it would keep the old members but bring in new members as well. B. Craig stated the importance of connecting with the non-ARC members and bringing them in also. J. Tewkesbury agreed that it is important to include the non-ARC members as the GLRI is looking to RRAC for projects to fund.

III. RRAC Vice-Chair Vacancy

The Vice Chair vacancy has opened up due to job change. Bill Craig volunteered to be Vice Chair, with no other volunteers the RRAC voted Bill Craig as Vice Chair.

IV. Update from Habitat Committee

J. Tewkesbury discussed the status of the projects for delisting report. The next step will be to have the SPAC sign off on the document with a letter. Negotiations with EPA will follow to document what the top tiered projects are. The MDNR, MDEQ and Fish & Wildlife Services will review the list. There will be discussions regarding process and data that support them and then they will be forwarded to EPA to start the funding process. J. Tewkesbury asked that the Habitat Committee meet again to do a final review and then propose the final document to the RRAC for a vote. Once the RRAC votes then it can go to the MDNR/MDEQ for review in early 2016. It was decided that the Habitat Committee would meet in January, 2016, to have the document finalized by March 1.

V. EPA/MDEQ Update

MDEQ/Federal Partners meeting

J. Tewkesbury reviewed the partner meeting that will be held in December to discuss each BUI in all of the AOCs. Sediment will be the main issue in the Main Channel and the importance of getting local interest and match. Habitat projects will need to be found within the concrete channel.

AOC Conference

J. Tewkesbury informed the group that the planning committee has been working on social events or tours (good and bad examples like the concrete channel) for the upcoming AOC conference at U of M- Dearborn. If anyone has any suggestions please forward them to Jen.

GLC NOAA partnership opportunity

The GLC has a partnership with NOAA and the AOCs. GLC would be doing the grant management for shovel ready projects with funding over a number of years.

Henry Ford Oxbow

M. Boote stated that this project will be requesting funding again in the upcoming round of funding opportunities.

HFE Dam Fish Passage Design

J. Tewkesbury stated that this project had its kickoff meeting to create the fish passage at the Henry Ford Estate using the best alternative for the project. They hope to also get the powerhouse working again.

Wayne County Invasives

FOTR is doing most of the work for this project with a large effort being done during Rouge Rescue in 2016 with the Student Conservation Association. Wayne County will be doing an invitation to bid on the invasives management piece of the project. N. Mullett stated that they will be working with the International Wildlife Refuge and Elizabeth Park and partner Marathon for phragmites control on Fordson Island with most of the work being done on Dearborn property.

Lower Rouge River Old Channel Sediment Clean-up update

J. Tewkesbury reviewed the ongoing design of the old channel. They are doing some monitoring to see what the effects of dredging would be on the process. Turbidity study will be done to see what the limits are. They are reviewing how they want to do the dredging with so many variables within the project. There are navigational issues and seawall structure issues. Honeywell is a great sponsor on the project. Habitat work ideas are needed in upland or other area of the Rouge AOC. J. Tewkesbury asked that the group forward any ideas to her. M. Boote suggested the Oxbow project which is scheduled for summer implementation at this point.

BUI Updates

J. Tewkesbury stated that the sediment work goes a lot toward removing BUIs. Habitat work would help with the fish & wildlife. DWSD and Dearborn work affect the beaches. Eutrophication includes impoundments in the Middle including Nankin which is a problem area and dredging would be a project that would be helpful. Other issues are fish tumors and fish consumption. B. Craig said he accepts the State criteria and that they tweaked them and the PAC needs to accept them with the revisions. RRAC will send a letter agreeing.

VI. SPAC Meeting Update

B. Craig reviewed the 2015 SPAC meetings. The spring SPAC meeting was on May 3-4. The agenda and information is on the SPAC website. Site visits included wetlands and shoreline restoration and streambank stabilization at a golf course. EPA and GLRI updates were given on what funds are available. The summer meeting was held June 3-4 and both Dan and Noel attended with Jen. Legislative meetings were held to connect with the different AOCs. Business meetings were held and lobbyists met with the different AOCs. The keynote was a St. Clair representative and Kurt Heise, a State Representative, was helpful as well. The fall meeting, October 16-17, was held in Lansing. The first SPAC meeting and AOC Regional Conference will be held on March 3-4, 2006 at U of M-Dearborn. Bill is hoping to get many ARC representatives at this meeting so we can share our successes.

There was a discussion of the importance of delisting versus recovery and ensuring the monitoring and testing. Life after delisting – Deer Creek and White Lake have been delisted.

VII. New Business

Improved Communication between RRAC and ARC members

B. Craig stressed the importance of keeping everyone informed which was part of the RRAC 5-year vision. J. Tewkesbury offered to attend ARC meetings to give updates on potential funding issues.

RRAC Website and Document Access and Storage

C. O'Meara passed out the FTP site directions and asked that members test the site to make sure it is working. Updates on the RRAC website will continue to be made including links to the SPAC meeting agendas/handouts.

How is Marathon Changing the Landscape

There was discussion about seeing a map of the Lower Channel to see what areas Marathon feels are hands off for possible projects. Where are the opportunities for open spaces. J. Tewkesbury said she could contact Sam Lovall to see if he could attend a future RRAC meeting and give a brief presentation. Land changes ownership so often it has been hard to get projects to stick.

Value of Fish Surveys

Funding support is needed for fish surveys. It was suggested that Sustain Our Great Lakes may be a good funding source or possibly the Fish & Wildlife Services. S. Petrella stated that they may want restoration services. S. Petrella stated the importance of an extensive review and the need for a tangible thing at the end. There was a discussion of where would be a good area for fish surveys.

There was a discussion regarding the Ford and Hines Drive work being done on the MDOT property and if anyone knew what was being done. MDOT said it was road related.

IX. Review of Action Items

- Jen to ask MDOT about Ford & Hines
- Jen to see if Sam Lovall could present at the next meeting
- Chris to send FTP directions to RRAC
- Jen to send revised BUI criteria
- Chris to start putting SPAC agendas/handouts linked on RRAC website
- Bill Craig voted as Vice Chair
- Chris to set up meeting of Habitat Committee
- Send project ideas for the Legacy project in the Lower Rouge to Jen

The motion was made to adjourn the meeting by N. Mullett and supported by D. Ballnik. The motion passed.