

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rouge Assembly Activities

- At the December 2, 2003 General Assembly meeting the Rouge Assembly took several actions. The membership approved the co-chairs and members of the Organizational Committee. According to the terms of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) members of this committee must be approved by the Rouge Assembly. A budget of \$846,276 was adopted for 2004 for the Rouge Assembly. The budget includes funds to continue support to the subwatershed advisory groups, support for the public education committee, monitoring, and a contingency. Community assessments for 2004 will be the same as 2003. Through December 8, 40 communities and counties have joined the Rouge Assembly and over \$256,000 in assessments for 2003 have been collected. Only two eligible communities in the watershed have not decided if they will join the Rouge Assembly and one community has decided not to participate in the Rouge Assembly.
- Much of the work of the Rouge Assembly will happen in the six committees. They are Executive, Technical, Public Involvement and Education, Finance, and Organizational, and Membership Committees. The Membership Committee is an ad-hoc committee that will begin meeting in 2004. The other five committees have met once or twice in 2003 and will meet again in early 2004.
- The Rouge Assembly worked with the MDEQ Southeast Michigan District to extend the SWPPI submittal deadline from December to January 2004 for Rouge Watershed Communities. MDEQ has since extended the end date to May 2004.
- At the December 10, 2003 Rouge Assembly Meeting a resolution to suspend implementation and enforcement of MDEQ SSO Policy for one year in response to cuts to state shared revenues was unanimously adopted. The letter and resolution were mailed to Governor Granholm, Judge Feikens, Brooks Patterson, Robert Ficano, Steven Chester, and State Senators and Representatives within the Rouge River Watershed.

Restoration Success Stories

- Rouge 2003 was held on October 10 at The Henry Ford in Dearborn. Over 300 people attended the event. Three congressmen and Senator Debbie Stabenow participated in a roundtable discussion moderated by Robert Ficano. A highlight of the event was the dedication for the oxbow restoration at Greenfield Village. The restoration provides a 2,200 feet channel that varies in width from 15 to 105 feet and depths of 3 to 8 feet. The channel is surrounded by 3 acres of submergent and emergent wetland systems (0-3 foot depths) that provides habitat for various wildlife species. Planted slope stabilization techniques provide additional shrub areas. Different types of wildlife have already begun to use the new habitats including macroinvertebrates and amphibians. Also, herons, migratory songbirds, wood ducks, frogs, turtles, raccoons and coyotes have moved into the area. Fish are also migrating into the oxbow from the Rouge River through the new storm sewer hydraulic connection. It is developing into an excellent nursery area and will only get better as the aquatic plant communities and associated aquatic invertebrates continue to develop. Trail and other amenities were constructed in the oxbow during the summer and fall of 2003.
- Subwatershed management plans prepared in 2001, set a target of phosphorous levels at 0.05 mg/L. A review of water quality data in 2003 shows that much of the Main 1-2, Middle 1 and Middle 3 and the Lower branch upstream of the YCUA discharge are at or near this target. The YCUA discharge impacts phosphorous levels in the Lower Rouge and the Main 3-4.

- Nearly 1500 5th grade students from 30 schools in Oakland County attended the Oakland County Water Festival on September 17 and September 19, 2003. Teachers were given a 5th grade curriculum binder with lessons plans they can use in their classrooms.
- The Rouge Project website, <http://www.rougeriver.com>, continues to serve as the primary tool of information dissemination for the Rouge Project. There were several significant, new items added to the Rouge web site between August 2003 and November 2003. In August, the new SVG Rouge River Watershed Interactive Maps were posted to the site. Types of maps included bacteria sampling, stream flow, and storm water management areas. Web site pages for the administration of the new Rouge River Watershed Local Management Assembly were drafted in October and will be maintained on the main Rouge River web site accordingly. Other highlights include the posting of the Updated Draft Rouge River Remedial Action Plan in November and notice of the new Dataview CD-Volume 9. The Rouge River web site continues to receive significant numbers of web users from around the world. There were 112,709 hits to the site in August 2003, 120,256 hits in September, 209,273 in October, and 184,935 hits in November. Web site traffic was seen from all continents, with the exception of Antarctica.
- Wayne County has revised the county stormwater ordinance. It is a performance based ordinance which includes water quality and quantity requirements. The Wayne County Storm Water Management Standards Manual incorporates the amendments to the ordinance made in August 2003 and includes an expanded design standards section. The manual is available from the Wayne County Department of Environment and their website at <http://www.wcdoe.org/Watershed/watershed.htm>.
- Wayne County has been selected to receive three grants totaling more than \$700,000 from the Clean Michigan Initiative (CMI) Clean Water Fund. These grants will support services to improve water quality in the County's rivers, lakes, and streams.

Public Education Efforts

- Public involvement activities within the Rouge River watershed continue to increase awareness of the Rouge watershed and water quality issues in the region. The Friends of the Rouge Fall 2003 Rouge River Benthic Monitoring Program, soon to be in its 4th year, was a great success this year. Twenty-five sites were sampled in the Lower Branch, Middle Branch, Main, and Upper Branch during October 2003. Over 100 volunteers assisted in gathering monitoring data that now serves as the valuable baseline data for 10 sampling sites. Friends of the Rouge shares its monitoring findings with the MDEQ, the 48 Rouge communities, and all of the helpful volunteers. Friends of the Rouge also continued its storm drain stenciling efforts in Rouge communities during the late summer months.
- The University of Michigan-Dearborn Environmental Interpretive Center continues to offer various Rouge River related activities and programs for children and adults. The Rouge River Floodplain Ecology program is an investigation of the Rouge River and nearby floodplain forest offered in October. Participants learn about hydrology, watershed management, erosion and sedimentation, and ecology. The Interpretive Center also continues its year-round Rouge River Bird Observatory, which teaches about how and why birds are banded, bird populations, and habitats.
- The Southeast Oakland County Water Authority (SOCWA) sponsored two Rouge River related events during the Fall 2003. 'What's Bugging You?', which offered Rouge-friendly insect and garden tips, was held in August 2003. A second workshop, 'Rain Gardens and Rainbows: Enhancing Rouge River Water Quality', was held in September and offered information about creating and maintaining rain gardens and how they can help to protect water quality in the Rouge River watershed.

Rouge Project Subgrants

- Six Rouge grant projects were completed since September through the investment of over \$3 million. The projects included establishment of a wetland revolving fund, drain improvements, improving habitats at schoolyards, involvement of stakeholders in river improvements, illicit connections investigations and collecting sewer system data.

CSO Controls and Water Quality Monitoring

- 2003 is the first year of the five-year monitoring framework negotiated with MDEQ on the communities' behalf. As part of the framework continuous water quality and flow/level monitoring was conducted throughout the watershed in 2003. The rotating intermittent water quality sampling program was scheduled for the Main 1-2 in 2003. Due to the later than expected start of the Rouge Assembly the Main 1-2 sampling will be completed in 2004 along with the Upper Subwatershed which is scheduled for 2004.
- DataView Volume 9 has been finalized and is ready for distribution. It includes Rouge Project monitoring results for 1994 through 2003. Copies can be ordered from the Rouge Project website at www.rougeriver.com.
- The 2002 Baseline Data Summary Report has been drafted and is under review by Wayne County. This report summarizes the baseline environmental conditions observed in the Rouge River Watershed in 2002. The report documents water quality trends and supports the combined sewer overflow basin performance monitoring and reporting.
- An evaluation by MDEQ of lakes in the watershed classifies the lakes as phosphorus limited with respect to plant growth. Best Management Practices (BMPs) to reduce phosphorus will result in better lake quality. The trophic state of the lakes has not changed since the mid-1990s. Meadow Brook, Phoenix and Newburgh Lakes are classified as Eutrophic which means the lakes have an excess supply of nutrients and support a high degree of biologic productivity including excess algal/plant growth and nuisance algal blooms in the lakes.
- A comparison of Macroinvertebrate scores between "professional" and "volunteer" samples showed no meaningful differences in the results. This data supports the MDEQ decision to accept the use of volunteer data for Macroinvertebrate evaluations.
- Ten CSO basins throughout the Rouge Watershed are currently in operation and six communities have completed sewer separation projects.
- Progress was made on the last remaining Phase 1 CSO control project, which is located in Dearborn. The original Phase 1 CSO control project planned in Dearborn, which was abandoned due to early construction problems, was a tunnel designed to control three major CSOs. A new design to control these three CSOs is well underway, and the new project will consist of three individual facilities rather than a single tunnel.
- Considerable planning and basis-of-design work is also underway by others in regards to control or elimination of the Phase II CSO outfalls in the Rouge watershed:
 - Alternative evaluation reports were submitted to MDEQ in 2002 for the remaining uncontrolled CSOs in Inkster, Redford Township and Dearborn Heights. Some of these uncontrolled CSOs may tie into larger CSO control projects being planned by Detroit and Dearborn, which are still being defined.

- A Basis of Design report has been submitted to MDEQ for uncontrolled CSOs in East Dearborn.
- Planning is underway for CSO controls in West Dearborn.
- The City of Detroit has begun construction of the Baby Creek Screening and Disinfection facility, requested proposals for design of the Oakwood CSO facility, and completed a two-year monitoring program for five uncontrolled CSOs in the last few miles of the Rouge River. It is also anticipated that the City will soon request proposals for designing the Upper Rouge Tunnel, a major CSO control tunnel along the Rouge River. The City is continuing to perform water quality monitoring near the downstream end of the Rouge River each year as part of its long term CSO control plan.