



# Salem Elementary School/South Lyon Community Schools Outdoor Environmental Education Lab Project, Salem Township, Michigan

THE ROUGE RIVER PROJECT  
A WORLD CLASS EFFORT



BRINGING OUR RIVER BACK TO LIFE

*A publication of the Wayne County Rouge River National Wet Weather Demonstration Project*  
**Information Date: July 2000**

## Objective

The Outdoor Environmental Education Lab Project wanted to provide an opportunity for students and local residents to experience an outdoor environmental education opportunity and to learn about Johnson Creek, its floodplain, and its relationship to the Rouge River.



### Environmental Education Lab

#### Owner

Salem/South Lyon Elementary School Districts

#### Location

Salem Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan

#### Dates

Start March 1997

Complete July 1999

#### Total Project Cost

\$98,590

## Demonstration Aspects

- # Demonstrates the value of a small wetland, an interpretive trail system, and environmental signage as an outdoor education opportunity for elementary students, Boy and Girl Scouts, and interested citizens.
- # Demonstrates how previously unused school property can be successfully converted to an outdoor classroom that creates opportunities for hands-on learning experiences.
- # Demonstrates the process for creating such an Outdoor Environmental Education Lab which is adaptable to other situations in the watershed and elsewhere.

## Project Highlights

- # Creating public support for the project through meetings with parents, teachers, school officials and volunteers.
- # Conducting volunteer workdays to clear brush along the proposed trail, plant the wetland and provide ongoing maintenance.
- # Incorporating the Outdoor Environmental Lab into the school curriculum.
- # Because of continuing interest in the project, consideration is being given to expand it.

## Major Elements

- # Creation of a half-acre wetland containing emergent, wet meadow and scrub/shrub habitat

- # Planting native upland landscaping adjacent to the wetland
- # Creation of a half-mile interpretive trail and interpretive signage
- # Curriculum updates to incorporate the outdoor classroom for hands-on learning



**Wetlands Habitat**

## Project Results

A number of parents, teachers, school officials and other volunteers were involved in the design of the project, which spurred great interest. This resulted in a number of volunteer workdays to clear brush along the proposed trail, plant the wetland and to provide continuing maintenance.

The wetland is beginning to function fully. The wetland and trail have been incorporated into the school's science curriculum learning objectives. Boy and Girl Scouts use the project for education and earning merit badges. The Outdoor Environmental Lab is the site of Earth Day activities to increase citizen awareness of environmental issues.

The project has galvanized community support for enhancements to the base project including the installation of a boardwalk bridge at the site, discussion of expanding the interpretive trail and the need for and value of open space.

To obtain further information on the Rouge Project, including documents, maps and general information, visit us at:

<http://www.rougeriver.com>

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**Environmental  
Education Lab**