

What is the REP?

A place-based environmental education program centered around water quality monitoring of the Rouge River, whose watershed is the most urbanized in Michigan.

The Rouge Education Project trains teachers in the way of volunteer water quality monitoring and provides resources and equipment, and they, in turn, take the information they've learned back to their classrooms. Students see the root cause of environmental issues in their local waterway, and begin to think about bigger picture/Great Lakes issues and implications. They are then encouraged to think about and take action to benefit the river.

Mission: To promote awareness and stewardship of the Rouge River watershed through school-based water quality monitoring, investigation, and problem solving.

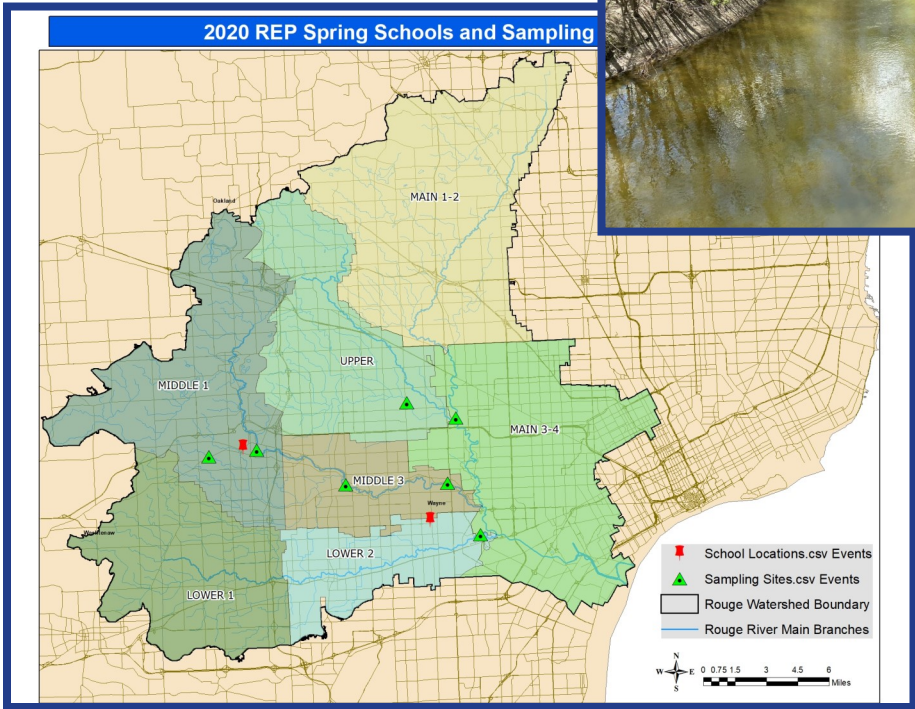
2020 marked the 33rd year of the REP.

2020 SPRING MONITORING
Crestwood High School, Dearborn Heights
Friends of the Rouge, Plymouth

During spring 2020, the world was grappling with a new Coronavirus, COVID-19, which became a worldwide pandemic. In response to the pandemic and rising death toll, schools were closed state-wide in Michigan and spring monitoring as usual was unable to take place. The Friends of the Rouge Education Manager and one teacher were, separately, able to collect limited chemical data during this time. These data were compiled and posted on a special website that was shared with schools undergoing remote learning.

1 school **0 students**
1 teacher **7 sampling sites**

RIGHT: A quiet moment along the Middle Branch of the Rouge River on spring monitoring day, where students would typically be testing



LEFT: Map of the 2020 spring monitoring event noting Crestwood High School and the Friends of the Rouge office (red) and sampling sites (green). Shaded areas of color outline Rouge River subwatersheds.

**4 schools
6 teachers**

**48 students
10 sampling sites**

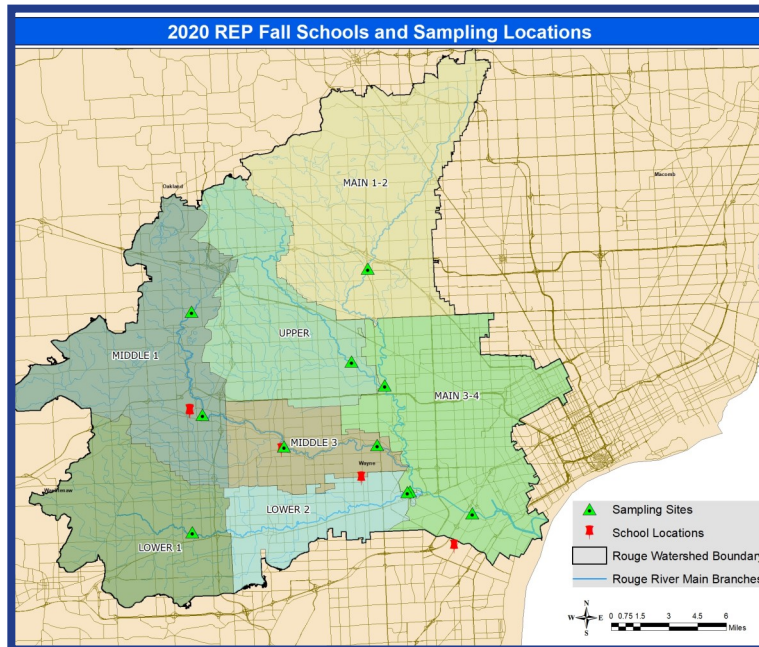


Crestwood High School students pose with their equipment across from Parr Recreation Area in Hines Park, Dearborn Heights

2020 FALL MONITORING SCHOOLS

Crestwood High School, Dearborn Heights
Huron Valley Lutheran High School, Westland
Inter-City Baptist School, Allen Park
Steppingstone School, Plymouth

Fall 2020 was still impacted by COVID-19, and many schools were operating virtually or in a hybrid environment, with few schools allotted the freedom of field trips to the river. The above schools implemented strict COVID prevention protocols and were able to safely sample during this time.



Map of the 2020 fall monitoring schools (red) and sampling sites (green). Shaded areas of color outline Rouge River subwatersheds.



A Steppingstone School student searches for aquatic bugs at Riverside Park in Plymouth

The 2020 numbers...

- Worked with four schools and 48 students
- Trained four volunteers, although they unfortunately weren't able to assist schools because of COVID-19
- We were not able to add any new schools as projects such as this were low priority for educators at this time

The results...

- Visit www.therouge.org -> Our Work -> Rouge Education Project
- The Student Survey Report was unable to be finalized due to school closures in May preventing the receipt of post-sampling surveys
- [2020 Spring Data Summary Report](#)
- [2020 Fall Data Summary Report](#)

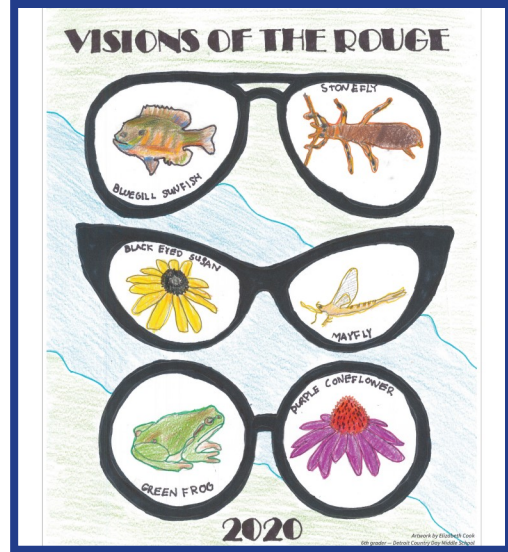
2020 Events

Workshop	Date	Location	# teachers	# volunteers
Advanced Chemical Training	03/07/2020	Plymouth	0	4
Fall Bug Hunt	10/17/2020	Northville	1	0

Most planned workshops in 2020 were cancelled due to COVID-19 creating much uncertainty in the capacity of formal education teachers.

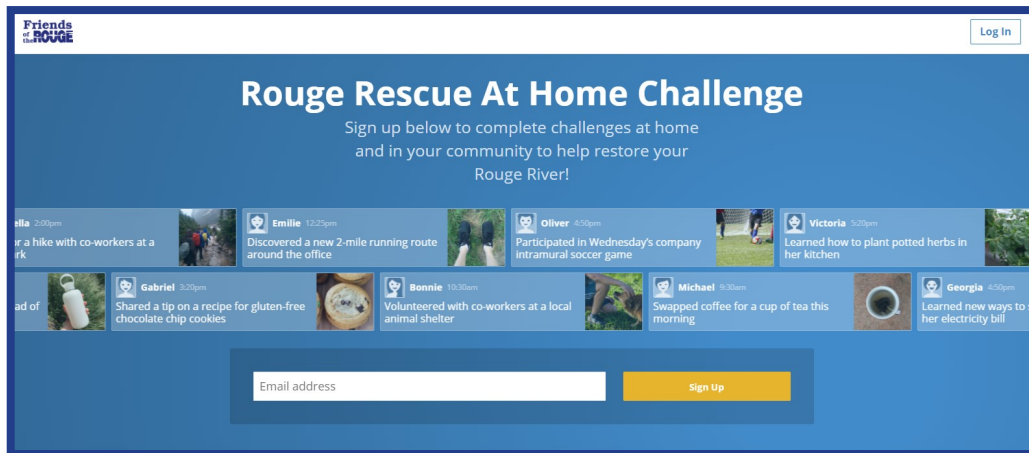
Prior to the shut-downs, a small workshop was held in March with four volunteers at the Friends of the Rouge office that was very well-received. The Education Manager was also able to assist one new teacher with the bug sampling portion at the school’s monitoring event in the fall. This same teacher attended the Fall Bug Hunt on a team the Education Manager led to learn more about this portion of sampling day. Training will continue throughout 2021 in a different capacity.

The artwork contest chose a winner in January based on the theme “2020 Vision of the Rouge”, and due to the school shutdowns, the artwork was featured online via social media and the Friends of the Rouge website in lieu of distributing physical posters to schools that were closed.



Above: Poster artwork contest design winner

Even though traditional programming was limited, 2020 provided an opportunity for reflection, partnership building, and pivoting of content development and delivery. Educational video content created by Friends of the Rouge through our ‘Take me to the River’ series and ‘UnCruise’ were shared via social channels. We began developing an interactive online self-guided activity, which will be a step-by-step way to teach about the river and how to be an engaged part of the community. Community mapping to identify schools to recruit from a diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice lens began. We are also working on coming up with internal systems to address the needs for informal watershed education on-demand through presentations, online training segments, and connecting experts in our community with interested parties such as school groups.



Above: Homepage preview of the at-home activity via the WeSpire platform

**THANK YOU...
LEAD TEACHERS**

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Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan
Mercedes-Benz Financial Services
DTE Energy Foundation
Alliance of Rouge Communities
Giffels Webster
Teacher Mary Balamucki

PARTNERS

Aerokats & Rover Education Network (AREN)
Arch Environmental Group
Earth Force
Global Learning & Observations to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE)
Sister watershed groups:
Flint River Watershed Coalition, Clinton River Watershed Council, Huron River Watershed Council
Southeast Michigan Stewardship Coalition (SEMIS)



***Above: Trainees at the Advanced Chemical Training
in early March (pre-COVID)***



***Above: Students from Crestwood High School
sampling at Parr Rec Area in Dearborn Heights***