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# Press Release

For Immediate Release

## Public Invited to Share Ideas on Water Trail for the Rouge River

### Water trail planning effort seeks public input on June 5 at Nankin Mills.

**ROUGE RIVER, Mich.** – May 23, 2018 – Planners for a water trail along the Rouge River seek public input and guidance at an open forum on Tuesday, June 5, at 6 p.m. at the Nankin Mills Nature Center, 33175 Ann Arbor Trail in Westland. Register at <http://evite.me/jeKpkTFRAE>.

A water trail is defined as a route along a river, lake, or bay specifically designed for people using small boats like kayaks, canoes, single sailboats or rowboats. The trails, sometimes called “blueways,” are the aquatic equivalent to a hiking trail (or greenway). Water trails are supported by a comprehensive system of well-developed access and launch points.

The forum is part of a larger effort to develop a Strategic Plan for the Lower Rouge River Water Trail. The goal of the plan is to provide the framework for the future development, enhancement and long-term sustainability of the water trail along the river. At the forum, following a brief presentation, participants will be asked to help identify new access sites, identify potential obstacles and hazards, identify community assets and linkages along the river, and prioritize potential improvements to access sites.

The water trail planning effort is being overseen by the Friends of the Rouge and a steering committee that includes representatives from local jurisdictions, liveries and interested citizens. The Friends of the Rouge (FOTR) have been working on different elements of the water trail since 2014. In 2017, the Fred A. and Barbara M. Erb Family Foundation FOTR funded the Strategic Plan which will establish a comprehensive vision for the water trail moving forward.

“We are excited to see the strategic planning process underway,” stated Marie McCormick, executive director of FOTR, “this plan will set the stage for a long term vision to bring the

community back to the river – to leverage the draw of recreation to foster environmental stewardship and economic development.”

As the plan begins to take shape, the committee will look at ways to connect with similar water trails in the region as well as communities along the river that could use the water trail to help develop new opportunities for economic development.

The nonprofit Land Information Access Association (LIAA) is assisting with the water trail planning effort. Harry Burkholder, executive director of LIAA, said the Strategic Plan is a great way to establish goals and priorities for the water trail, noting the plan will also include recommendations for trail maintenance, management, signage, safety and stewardship. Burkholder also noted that the water trail can help enhance the environmental perception of the river.

“Many communities across the state and especially in Southeast Michigan are working to develop water trails along their local water bodies,” Burkholder said. “We look forward to working with the steering committee and the entire region to develop an action plan that will help guide the development of a safe, inclusive and sustainable water trail.”

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## **Contact**

Marie McCormick, Executive Director  
Friends of the Rouge  
313-792-9627  
[mmccormick@therouge.org](mailto:mmccormick@therouge.org)

Harry Burkholder, Executive Director  
LIAA  
231-929-3696  
[burkholder@liaa.org](mailto:burkholder@liaa.org)