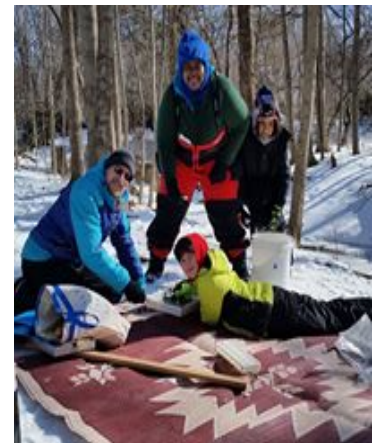




# Friends of the ROUGE

*Standard Operating Procedures for Field Volunteers  
Post Covid-19 Stay-at-Home Orders  
June 2020*

*(Based on Keep America Beautiful May 6, 2020, American Medical Association Screening,  
CDC Guidelines and Michigan's Safe Start Plan)*





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## Introduction/Purpose

Friends of the Rouge (FOTR) is a non-profit organization founded in 1986 that works to restore, protect, and enhance the Rouge River watershed in southeast Michigan, USA through stewardship, education, and collaboration. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Michigan in spring 2020 and Michigan governor Gretchen Whitmer passed the Stay-at-Home Executive Order, FOTR closed the office and staff began exclusively working from home. FOTR normally engages thousands of volunteers annually but events had to be cancelled. The organization focused instead on online engagement and education.

As the spread of the virus flattened in response to these precautions and the governor released a Safe Start Plan (Appendix), FOTR began researching how to phase in re-engaging volunteers in a safe manner as Stay-at-Home restrictions are lifted.

**The Purpose** of this document is to outline that staged process of re-engagement post COVID-19 Stay-at-Home Orders, following clear guidance from state and local authorities and the Centers for Disease Control. This guidance is based on the best available information at this time and will be modified as information and recommendations change.

### Michigan’s Safe Start Plan Guidelines

Governor Whitmer’s May 7, 2020 [“Michigan Safe Start: A Plan to Re-engage Michigan’s Economy”](#) describes six phases of pandemic response (see table). Within each phase, the work that can be done by businesses and organizations and restrictions to stay safe is described.

Phase	Name	Allowed with safety measures?		Restrictions			
		Outdoor work	Indoor work (office)	Six-foot Social distancing	Face covering required	Gathering	Confirmed/suspected cases and exposure must self-quarantine; at-risk stay at home
1	Uncontrolled Growth	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y
2	Persistent Spread	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y
3	Flattening	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y
4	Improving	Y	limited	Y	Y	small groups	Y
5	Containing	Y	Y	Y	Y	medium groups	Y
6	Post-pandemic	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N

In early May **Phase 3, Flattening**, was reached. This phase allows “non-critical businesses that pose lower risk of infection to open with increased safety measures” allowing **“Outdoor work with additional safety measures and guidelines.** **Phase 4, Improving**, was reached on June 1, 2020 and allows outdoor gatherings of small groups (up to 100) with social distancing. **Phase 5, Containing**, allows increased gathering size. **Phase 6, Post-pandemic** removes all restrictions.

This document is designed to help ensure Friends of the Rouge field staff and volunteers have the tools and resources to provide up-to-date health and safety resources and to minimize personal contact before, during, and after events. Keeping our volunteers safe is job No. 1. This document will be updated as new information is provided.

## **Volunteering Requirements for Friends of the Rouge post COVID-19 Stay-at-Home Orders**

Volunteers will be invited back to volunteer for Friends of the Rouge when clear guidance from the state indicates that COVID-19 pandemic conditions have reached the State of Michigan's Phase 4 or above. All volunteers must agree to:

1. Pre-screening
2. Pre-Registration and remote sign-in.
3. Exercise six foot physical distance at all times.
4. Wear face coverings at all times
5. Frequently wash or sanitize hands and provide your own gloves when possible.
6. Report any change in health status or exposure to infected persons within 14 days of event.
7. Agree to work in assigned group only and report any changes.
8. Agree not to share tools/equipment except amongst household members and to clean and disinfect them.
9. Food and water

### **1. Pre-screening and at-risk individuals**

People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms and can even carry and spread the disease without experiencing any symptoms. Symptoms may appear two to 21 days after exposure to the virus. In an effort to keep you, our volunteers, and community as safe as possible, please fill out this questionnaire about symptoms and potential exposure to anyone with the disease when you register. Please repeat it 24 hours prior to the event. If you respond yes to any of questions 1-4, please cancel your volunteering and notify FOTR. Individuals considered at-risk are asked to stay at home until Phase 6 is reached.

<https://forms.gle/S3AjrW4Jpt9iCctF8>

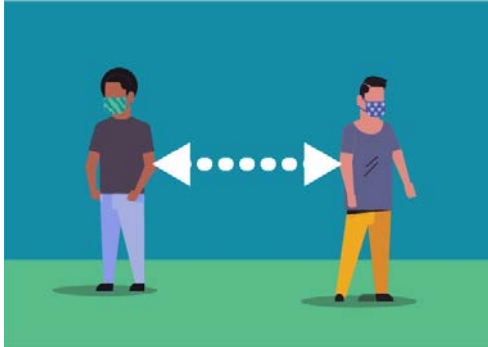
### **2. Pre-Registration and Remote Sign-in**

As statewide COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, FOTR will begin offering opportunities for volunteers, beginning with outdoor activities and including the required 6 foot social distancing. All volunteers must register online and complete the pre-screening questionnaire. Check the [FOTR website](#) to find the program and event you are interested in and fill out the registration form. FOTR will respond back to let you know your registration has been accepted and your screening approved. The day before the event (24 hours), please submit the health questionnaire a second time so that we are made aware of any changes in your status. When

you arrive at the event, you must check-in with the organizer at a social distance by providing your full name and receive your instructions.

### 3. Physical Distancing

(info and graphic from [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/social-distancing](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/social-distancing))



Current state guidelines require you to maintain a 6 foot distance (about 2 arms' length) or more from other people outside of your home and this must be followed by all FOTR volunteers. Since people can spread the virus before they know they are sick, it is important to stay away from others even if they or you have no symptoms.

Due to the complex procedural requirements of fish surveys, there may be exceptions to social distancing. Due to this, fish survey volunteers will be required to have prior experience, undergo additional screening, and no new fish survey volunteers will be taken on in 2020.

### 4. Wear Face Coverings at all times

Cloth face coverings may slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others. All volunteers and staff at FOTR volunteer events are required to wear face coverings at all times.

Volunteers are asked to provide their own face covering as they are necessary for any travel outside the home. FOTR will have a limited supply. Directions for making your own are available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-make-cloth-face-covering.html>. Make sure that your face covering covers both your nose and mouth and fits snugly against the sides of your face and that you can breathe easily.

Before putting on your face covering, wash your hands. Do not touch the face covering or put it up around your neck or on your forehead. If you must adjust it, make sure to wash your hands. Remove it by grasping loops or ties and not touching the rest of it. Launder face covering before and after volunteering.

### 5. Frequently wash or sanitize hands and provide your own gloves when possible

Most FOTR volunteer activities require the wearing of gloves to protect hands from dirt and wear and to limit exposure to river water and cold. FOTR asks volunteers to supply their own work gloves, launder them before and after volunteering and wash or sanitize their hands before putting them on and after taking them off. Since the virus can potentially survive on

gloves, refrain from touching your face and frequently wash or sanitize your hands. Access to hand washing is not available in the field but alcohol based hand sanitizer will be provided.

For the monitoring programs, latex/nitrile or rubber gloves are traditionally provided to protect volunteers from potential pathogens in river water. These will continue to be provided by FOTR for work with river water and will offer some additional protection from the virus. It is very important that volunteers wash or sanitize their hands before putting on gloves, do not touch their face or hair with the gloves, and remove them carefully. Remove gloves by using the gloved hand to remove the first glove, then inserting the index finger from the ungloved hand into the inside edge of the second glove and pulling it off from the inside. All used latex/nitrile gloves should be put in the supplied garbage bag immediately.

**6. Report any change in health status or exposure to infected persons within 21 days of event (before and after).**

If you develop Covid-19 or learn that you been exposed to an infected person within 21 days before or after volunteering for FOTR, you must notify Friends of the Rouge immediately by emailing the FOTR staff member organizing the event you volunteered for. While the pre-screening questionnaire should cover this in most cases, you may learn after the fact that you have the disease or have been exposed. In order to track and notify anyone who was potentially exposed to the virus by you, we will need this information from you as soon as you are aware of it.

**7. Agree to work in assigned group only and report any change in who they contact while volunteering.**

To further reduce potential spread of the virus, FOTR will limit groups of people to household members when possible and to small assigned groups. Volunteers must work within these assigned groups and notify us of any changes to this. In the event that a volunteer contracts the disease or is exposed to someone with the disease, this tracking will enable us to quickly contact anyone who had contact with that volunteer. This, combined with social distancing and face covering should limit exposure and keep all volunteers safe.

**8. Agree not to share tools/equipment except amongst household members and to clean and disinfect them.**

Tools and equipment have a small possibility of being vectors for the disease as the virus is able to survive for three days on plastic and metal. Therefore, volunteers are asked to provide their own tools when at all possible and not to share them except amongst members of their own household. While it may be tempting to grab someone else's spade, volunteers are asked not to share. In some

cases, specialty tools or equipment are required, especially for the monitoring programs. In these cases, FOTR will limit their use or follow a more specific protocol covered in the program section.

## 9. Food and water

FOTR will not provide food at events until Phase 6 is of the **Michigan's Safe Start Plan** is reached.

Many events and workdays are held in high heat and humidity. It is important for volunteers to stay hydrated. Individual water bottles will be provided. In order to reduce possible spread of the virus, volunteers will not be permitted to access the cooler/water. One staff person will access and distribute water to volunteers.

Volunteers will be encouraged to bring their own refillable water bottle to help reduce waste and protect water resources, however, dispensers will not be provided until Phase 6 is reached.

## Program Requirements

### Restoration Projects

Friends of the Rouge restoration programs engage volunteers in river cleanup and land stewardship activities in public parks and private property within the 48 communities that make up the Rouge watershed. Volunteers will follow the general guidelines as well as measures specific for each program.

### River Cleanup Events

In person Rouge Rescue cleanup and stewardship activities were cancelled for spring 2020 and quickly shifted to engage volunteers through an online portal to adhere to stay at home orders as the virus was first identified in Michigan. Volunteers were encouraged to take action to Rescue the Rouge Every Day in their yard or neighborhood and report activities through the online portal. It is unclear if cleanup events will be held in 2020. If events are scheduled volunteers will follow general guidelines. No additional requirements for cleanup events are needed.

### Rain Garden Installation & Maintenance Workdays

Rain garden installations cover smaller work areas and will be limited to small groups of volunteers. Where space is limited, volunteers will maintain social distancing by taking turns and rotating through work stations in order to give everyone an opportunity to participate and learn all of the steps required to install or maintain rain gardens. At the start of the workday, staff will inform all volunteers of safety protocols and assign teams/tasks.

Volunteers will be encouraged to bring their own gloves and tools and not share these items with anyone outside of their household. If use of FOTR tools and equipment is necessary to complete tasks, staff will assign tools for individual use only. In the event shared tools/equipment are needed, items will be sanitized between users.

Waste generated from these workdays will be placed in appropriate receptacles and disposed of properly.



## Watershed Monitoring

FOTR's monitoring programs engage volunteers in collecting data on calling amphibians, benthic macroinvertebrates, fish and more. Volunteer monitors will follow the general guidelines as well as measures specific for each program.

## Frog & Toad Survey

Since surveys are done independently, there are few changes to this program. Until the state reaches Phase 6, all new volunteers will train online with materials sent electronically or mailed and no Group Listens will be held. Volunteers are asked to survey with their household members only or maintain the required 6 foot distance and wear a face covering. Teams made up of non-household members should avoid traveling together or take protective measures including wearing face masks and sitting far apart.

## Benthic Macroinvertebrates

Indoor gathering for sampling days (Bug Hunts and Stonefly Search) will not be held until state reaches Phase 6. Until then, equipment and team procedures will be altered as follows.

Teams will be made up of members of the same household as much as possible. Team Leaders will be provided their site assignments prior to the event and will pick up equipment the morning of or prior to the sampling day. They will be responsible for distributing equipment to team and collecting and cleaning equipment following the sampling.

Additional team members will be assigned to a specific team and meet the Team Leaders at the site. As much as possible, teams will be made up of a minimal number of households. Separate households will maintain safe social distances while at the site and should wear gloves at all times while handling forceps, trays, and other sampling gear. The collector should be the only person on the team with contact with the bucket to get water from river at the sampling site, and also the only person in contact with the collection net. The person on the team assigned to assist the collector running trays should maintain social distance as much as possible from the collector and the other team members. Each team should set up at the site in a way to maintain social distance amongst the team.

Only one person will fill out the forms on the clipboard to avoid contact with shared pencils or paperwork. If it is practical, development of an online form to be used on a tablet or smartphone to eliminate the need for paper forms to be returned to the FOTR office.

Until Phase 6 is reached no in person training or lab days will be offered. Online trainings and refreshers will be offered as much as time allows.

## Fish Surveys

Fish surveys will be conducted by a minimal team made up of Fish Survey Field Supervisors Robert Muller and Philip Kukulski, FOTR staff and select volunteers who have exhibited the required skills. No new volunteers will be trained until Phase 6 has been reached. At the start of each monitoring day, Field Supervisors will assign specific equipment to each team member and only that team member will touch that equipment. Physical distancing will be maintained when at all possible. During instream surveys, it may not be possible to maintain a 6 foot distance. Therefore, face coverings will be worn and seine surveys will be conducted in a manner that avoids contact with one another as much as possible.