

For your organization and ours, 2020 was a year like no other. Ingenuity was borne out of necessity: for your Friends of the Rouge team, 2020 was a year of unprecedented creativity, public engagement and marketing reach!

Highlights included:

- a 5-night, live, Zoom special event series, the “Rouge UnCruise”
- a surge in public interest for volunteering to protect and enhance their local outdoors
- the use of new tools like the WeSpire gaming platform and the online store to reach and empower the public to “Rescue the Rouge, everyday”
- a new frontier of public engagement through live video to meaningfully connect



Support from incredible organizations like yours makes all of this possible. We would be honored to have you as a partner for a cleaner and more vibrant Rouge River. You are invited to take a look at the attention that your support would bring as we further the mission together.

2020 Earned Media Reach

Year	Media Hits	Impressions	Earned Media
2020	440	206,000,000	\$1,900,000
2019	171	113,000,000	\$1,000,000

In 2019 – 2020, Friends of the Rouge engaged a third-party marketing firm in collaboration with the three other watershed groups in Southeast Michigan. This ongoing partnership has yielded exponential exposure to media outlets and an escalation of regional and nation attention, with a resultant top-of-mind awareness among state and national leadership.

Website Reach

In 2020 the Friends of the Rouge website experienced a more than 80% increase in traffic over the same period in 2019.

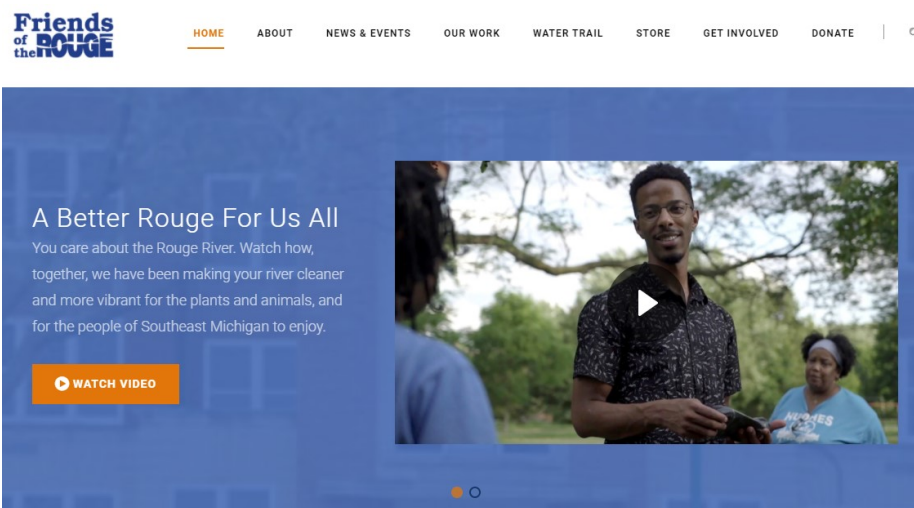
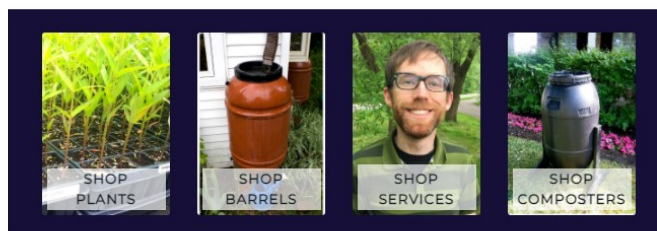
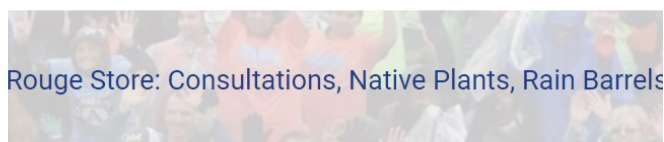


Table compares 2020 use of www.therouge.org to 2019 use.

Images right & below: therouge.org

Users	Sessions	Bounce Rate	Session Duration
48,000	67,000	60.27%	2m 8s
Up 88.1%	Up 81.5%	Down 1.7%	Down, 6.4%

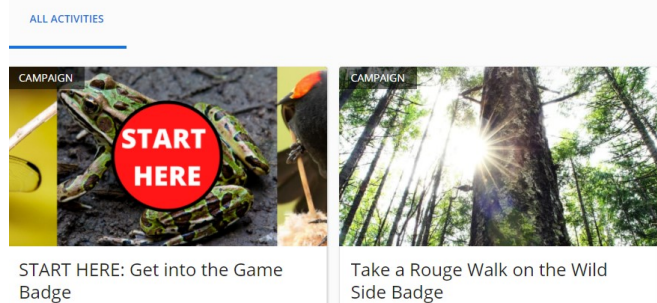
Website Reach: Online Store



Friends of the Rouge's online store launched to bring clean water tools to the watershed community. Native Michigan rain garden plants, rain barrels and composters were advertised via Google Ads, social media and e-news. These purchases move the needle on goals set forth by the Rouge River Watershed Management Plan.

2020 Sales	Impressions on Website & Social Media	# of Customers	Units Sold
rain barrels/ composters	311,583	288	420 barrels
native plants	102,539	112	4,400 plants

Website Reach: WeSpire Gaming Platform



Images: (above) Online Rouge Rescue entry page for participants (below) Rouge Rescue participant photos

During the statewide lockdown, in lieu of the traditional spring *Rouge Rescue* cleanup event, Friends of the Rouge provided a free online game (via WeSpire software) to encourage community members to take action for a better river. Participants engaged in a friendly competition to see who could do the most to “rescue the Rouge”.

Over 350 registered users completed 2,253 actions for a better Rouge River: learning watershed threats, picking up trash, planting natives. Additionally, the gaming platform was tailored for the 2020 Ford Motor Company intern class.



Volunteer Event Reach—Action, Advocacy & Education!

Friends of the Rouge developed COVID-19 Field Volunteer Protocols for post-stay-at-home-orders*. By June, volunteers were invited to modified outdoor education and action events that were safe and impactful. **Thousands of volunteers engaged online or in-person with Friends of the Rouge at one of the over 100 advocacy, education and action events held for the public.**

Total Volunteer Hours	# of Volunteers Who Volunteered at Least Twice
4,542	315



Image: volunteers installing a residential rain garden in the City of Detroit, summer 2020

*Based on protocols from and collaboration with: Wayne County, EGLE, Keep America Beautiful, American Medical Association Screening, CDC Guidelines and Michigan's Safe Start Plan.

Major Event Reach—The 2020 Rouge UnCruise Goes Online

COVID-19 changed the nature of the annual FOTR fundraiser, but not its spirit! In lieu of an in-person River Cruise, Friends of the Rouge brought the Rouge River to the community. Over 5 evenings in Aug. & Sept. 2020, Friends of the Rouge hosted live, hour-long virtual kayak trips via Zoom. Each "UnCruise" trip featured live narration, Q & A, footage from a different segment of the river and recorded interviews with scientists, local business leaders and historians. **Viewers participated from 50+ Metro Detroit & Michigan communities and from 8 other states.**

Total Live Zoom Users ¹	Estimated Live Event Participation ²	YouTube UnCruise Event Views ³
983	1,475	815

1. Registered, unique email addresses excluding event panelists.
2. Conservative estimate of live event participation = no. of unique Zoom users (screens) x 1.5 (people per screen).
3. For all five events combined

Image: Rouge UnCruise event footage—a view from the river



E-News and Email Communication Reach

Email communication—through the bi-monthly e-newsletter “Rouge Rundown” or via ad hoc email blasts—remains a key way to communicate with “FRIENDS” across the watershed!

Email List & Bi-monthly E-News Reach

7,400



Facebook Reach

Friends of the Rouge successfully leveraged Facebook and Facebook Ads in 2020 to double its reach and engagement over 2019.

Facebook was an essential tool to reach and connect with members, volunteers and the community during the pandemic.

New for 2020—original video content! River monitoring, training tutorials and outdoor recreation was all brought to the watershed community through Facebook Live. In one successful engagement series—filmed weekly from March through August—staff live-streamed from unique locations along the Rouge River as part of the “Take me to the River” Facebook Live series. And, for the first time, classes were offered as a Facebook Live Events. One spring education event had 1000+ attendees—about 10X the number that an in-person version of this class would generally accommodate.

Image: Facebook post from December 2020—Friends of the Rouge answering questions from the public about the green Rouge River in Beverly Hills

Facebook Metric	2020	2019
Reach	999,389	500,956
Impressions	1,375,116	680,523
Likes	13,822	12,701
Followers	14,276	12,654



16,527
People Reached

2,792
Engagements

Boost Post

👍 🥰 🍷 234

36 Comments 153 Shares

YouTube Reach

Coincident with the statewide lockdown, Friends of the Rouge increased live, online, educational opportunities and content. Once created, the recorded content was added to the Friends of the Rouge YouTube Channel as permanent resources that can be used by all.

Date	2020	2019
Views	13,015	7,071
Hours of Watch Time	385.2	72.9
Impressions	62,228	14,978

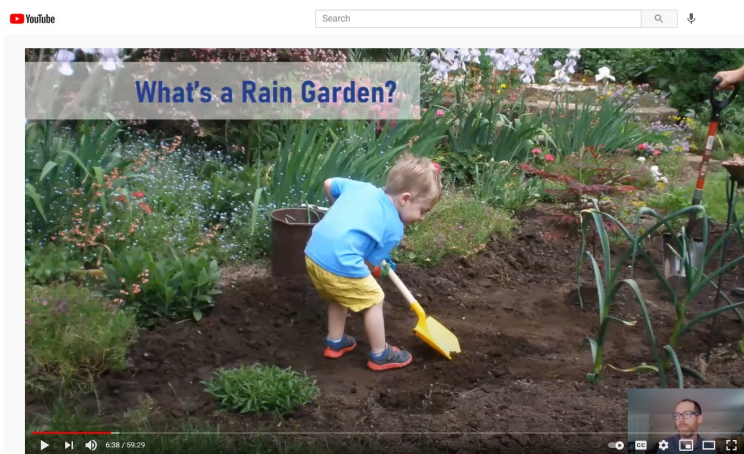


Image: Master Rain Gardener Course YouTube video

Instagram & Twitter—Engaging the Watershed via Social Media

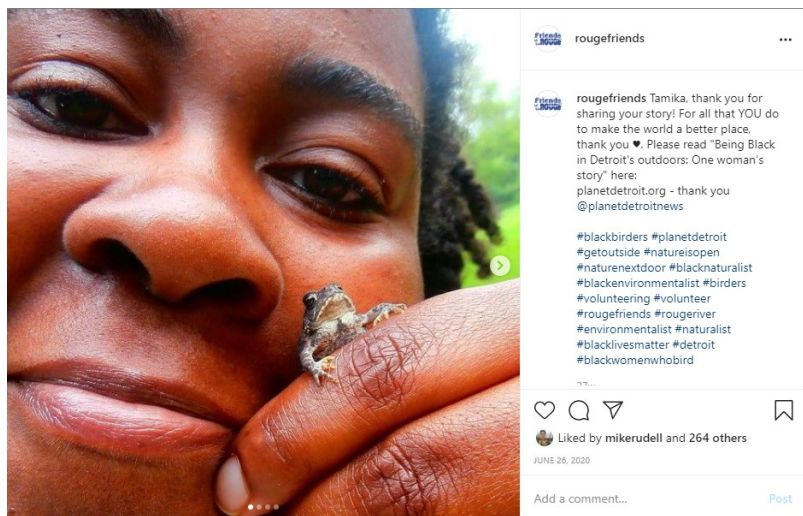


Image: Instagram post of Friends of the Rouge volunteer, Tamika Jaja

2020	Instagram	Twitter
Reach	10,290	NA
Impressions	12,118	63,429
Followers	600	529
Mentions	22	98
Retweets	NA	63

In 2020, Friends of the Rouge began expanding its presence in Instagram & Twitter. The goal is to reach a broader age, racial and ethnic demographic across the watershed. Friends of the Rouge looks at both Instagram and Twitter as a mechanism to better engage the incredibly diverse population of Southeast Michigan residents in local river education and action.

Highlights of Recent News Coverage

December 22, 2020

Detroit Free Press: [Rouge River tributary turns slime green after city conducts sewage dye test](#) by Slone Terranella

December 2, 2020

The Blade: [Despite progress, Detroit River and Lake Erie at a 'defining moment'](#) by Tom Henry

November 10, 2020

modelD: [Warrendale community garden offers a connecting space in a year of social distancing](#) by Kate Roff

September 9, 2020

Metromode: [Connecting Dearborn with the Rouge River](#) by Patrick Dunn

August 9, 2020

Fox2 Detroit —The virtual Rouge Cruise

August 9, 2020

WXYZ Detroit—On the Rouge River with Jennifer Ann Wilson & Sally Petrella

July 13, 2020

Hometown Life: [Friends of the Rouge Secures Substantial Grant from EGLE](#) by Ed Wright



July 2020

Northville Matters: [Rain Gardens Absorb Rain, Avert it from Rouge River Tributaries](#)

May 2, 2020

Fox 2 Detroit: [Annual Rouge Rescue event moves online as restoration efforts adapt to COVID-19](#)

May 7, 2020

Planet Detroit: [Friends of the Rouge ED Marie McCormick on how the nonprofit is coping with the pandemic](#) by Nina Ignaczak

April 15, 2020

Environmental Monitor: [How Citizen Scientists Track the Life Returning to Michigan's Rouge River](#) by Jack Nissen

March 6, 2020

WXYZ Channel 7—Keenan Smith Interviews Sally Petrella about Toad and Frogs