

Thanks to you, 2021 was an amazing year of community engagement, impact and growth. Friends of the Rouge is making gains in reach, revenue, staff size and programs to meet the needs of the Rouge River and the communities that we serve.

Last year, Friends of the Rouge empowered residents from across Wayne, Oakland, and Washtenaw counties to address the greatest environmental challenges of today: flooding, pollution, habitat loss, heat and equitable community access to green spaces. Through social media, virtual, and in-person platforms, caring people like you were offered a record number of opportunities to make a difference for a healthier Rouge River.

Highlights include:

- over 180 Rouge River action & education events
- completion of 18 month DEI internal audit & training, beginning recommendation implementation
- over \$900,000 in earned media
- piloted green workforce training program
- over 6,000 area residents, from over 60 communities, directly engaged in rain garden creation, river monitoring, student river science, log jam opening, tree planting, trail creation & river recreation

Your support makes all of this and more possible; your partnership for a cleaner and more vibrant Rouge River is dearly valued.

We invite you to take a look at how together, we are stewarding a better future.



2021 WINNER!

Engaging the Community—Action, Advocacy & Education!

In 2021, to maximize reach, Friends of the Rouge continued to offer environmental education via online formats for participants’ ease and safety coupled with a return to in-person, outdoor volunteer engagement. **Over 6,000 area residents engaged online or in-person with Friends of the Rouge at one of the almost 200 advocacy, education and action events held for the public!**

Community Engagement	2021	2020
Total Volunteer Hours	9,229	4,542
Total Education Hours	3,871	3,881
# of Volunteers who engaged at least twice	559	315



Image: Volunteering with a smile at a community rain garden in Detroit, summer 2021.

Spotlight: A Look at the Plymouth Arts & Recreation Complex Rain Gardens



Image: Ford Engineers install a rain garden at Plymouth Arts & Recreation Complex, summer 2021 , for cleaner water and a healthier Rouge River!

The Site: The Plymouth Arts & Recreation Complex (PARC), in the heart of Plymouth, MI

The Problem: Stormwater pollution into the nearby, highly-impaired, Rouge River creek & neighborhood flooding from the giant, crumbling, PARC parking lot

The Solution: Hundreds of volunteers from across Metro Detroit and dozens of awesome employee teams from area businesses transformed over 20,000 square feet of asphalt into a state-of-the-art rain garden demonstration site!

The Impact: Cleaner water, new butterfly & songbird habitat *and*, the new rain gardens that keep **over 225,000 gallons of stormwater from flooding area streets, the sewer and the Rouge River every time it rains!**

Earned Media Reach



In 2021, engagement with a third-party marketing firm in collaboration with the three other watershed groups in Southeast Michigan continued. **The regional media partnership enhances exposure and regional and statewide attention to the work of making a better Rouge River possible.**

Since the spike coinciding with the 50th anniversary of the “Rouge River burn” in 2019, media hits have declined. Friends of the Rouge however, continues to be a regional authority on the Rouge River and the environment in Metro Detroit. Above left: Friends of the Rouge Monitoring Manager Sally Petrella talks with WXYZ reporter Brett Kast about the environmental impacts of the wide-scale Metro Detroit flooding in June, 2021 on the Rouge River.

Year	Media Hits	Impressions	Earned Media
2019	178	212.4 million	\$1,960,000
2020	69	231.73 million	\$2,140,000
2021	64	98.5 million	\$911,890

Website Reach

In 2021 the Friends of the Rouge website experienced a **20% increase in users** and **18% increase in traffic over the same period in 2020.**

This growth mirrors growth in programming and volunteer opportunities offered in 2021 as well as a continued emphasis on dynamic & engaging marketing to reach the public—including the use of Google Ads.



Image: therouge.org

Year	Users	Sessions	Bounce Rate	Session Duration
2020	48,000	67,000	60.27%	2m 8s
2021	58,000	79,000	61.58%	1m 36s

E-news & Email Communication Reach



Image: Rouge Rundown “above the fold” photo from a Friends of the Rouge Water Trail event at a Westland elementary school.

In 2021, Rouge Rundown, Friends of the Rouge’s bi-monthly e-newsletter, continues to be an essential communication tool to reach the most deeply engaged “Friends”, volunteers, members and donors and share opportunities to learn, take action and make an impact for a better Rouge!

Bi-monthly E-Newsletter Reach	
2021	2020
7,999	7,400

Facebook Reach

Friends of the Rouge used Facebook to reach its broadest audience. Facebook was an essential tool to reach community groups, residents, Friends of the Rouge members, volunteers and the Metro Detroit community.

Facebook Metric	2021	2020	2019
Reach	967,337	999,389	500,956
Impressions	1,325,578	1,375,116	680,523
Likes	14,244	13,822	12,701
Followers	14,430	14,276	12,654

Image on right: Facebook post from July 2021—Camp Inspire’s young women scientists take a break from a day of Rouge River science to snap a group photo.

Friends of the Rouge

July 15, 2021 · 🌐

These girls from Camp Inspire STEAM Program & Camp braved the mosquitoes and participated with Friends of the Rouge and Trout Unlimited’s Great Lakes Program in STREAM Girls and got to learn about the river, its bugs and fish and how to fly cast and tie a fly at Inkster Park on the Lower Rouge.

12,004

People reached

297

Engagements

Boost unavailable

YouTube Reach

As Friends of the Rouge expands live, online, educational opportunities and content, YouTube reach grows! Once created, 2021 content like: frog calls, rain garden classes, school teacher trainings, news coverage, was added to the Friends of the Rouge YouTube Channel as a free and permanent resource for the public.

Date	2021	2020	% increase
Views	51,927	13,015	299%
Hours of Watch Time	581.4	385.2	51%
Impressions	294,034	62,228	373%



Image: *Great Lakes Now: Coastal Wetlands Virtual Field Trip*; Friends of the Rouge Executive Director, Marie McCormick, sits down with *Great Lakes Now* to talk about the importance of Coastal Wetlands.

Instagram & Twitter—Engaging the Watershed via Social Media



Images: Friends of the Rouge @RougeFriends Instagram posts, 2021

Friends of the Rouge began expanding its presence on Instagram & Twitter in 2020 to reach a broader age, racial and ethnic demographic across Metro Detroit. Both social media platforms grew in 2021 and are expected to do so again in 2022!

Instagram	2021	2020
Impressions	89,862	12,118
Reach	13,770	10,290
Followers	1,059	600

Twitter	2021	2020
Impressions	90,271	63,429
Followers	654	529
Mentions	184	98
Retweets	189	63

Website Reach: Online Store



Image: In-person plant/rain barrel pick-up day in Redford, summer 2021. Friends shopped the “same-day” plant sale & engaged with FOTR staff.

Friends of the Rouge brings clean water tools to Metro Detroit through its Online Store!

Rain garden plants, rain barrels and compost barrel sale orders were collected through therouge.org for specific customer pick-up dates. Sales were advertised via social media, web ads, print mailings & the e-newsletter.

Beyond these sales, the online store offers Southeast Michigan residents year-round, at-home rain garden consultations.

Year	Impressions*	Media Reach*	Rain Barrels Sold	Native Plants Sold	Sale locations
2021	465,544	245,493	234	9,390	Beverly Hills, Redford, Livonia
2020	407,892	180,120	412	3,850	Plymouth, Dearborn, Plymouth Twp., Livonia

* via all promotional channels

The Rouge Cruise— Funding Year-Round Essential Programming



Image: After a COVID-19 hiatus in 2020, the 2021 Rouge Cruise was back in-person for an evening aboard the Diamond Belle on the Rouge River!

Thank you for making the 2021 Rouge Cruise a success! You make year-round action and education for a better river possible!

Your caring sponsorship support raised \$38,000 for: hands-on student river STEM education; frog, toad, bug, fish & invasive species monitoring; new community rain gardens; trails creation and recreation on and along the Lower Rouge River. Thank you for partnership. Thank you for the impact that you make. And thank you for choosing to make a difference with Friends.

2021 News Coverage: Select Highlights

December 21, 2021

Channel 7 Action News—Fat, Oil & Grease in Holiday Cooking

November 9, 2021

Model D: [This nonprofit coalition is leveling up public understanding of Detroit’s water infrastructure](#)

October 24, 2021

Crain’s Detroit Business : [Small Business Spotlight: Restaurants, nonprofits and more thrive and expand reach by turning to tech](#)

October 5, 2021

La Explosiva Detroit Radio: [Friends of the Rouge Interview en Español](#)

August 10, 2021

Fox 2 Detroit: [‘We’ve arrived,’ Experts see climate change’s hand prints all over Detroit’s summer of severe weather](#)



Image: Fox 2 News: Friends of the Rouge Trails Manager, Herman Jenkins, shares paddling opportunities on the Rouge River

July 14, 2021

Fox 2 Detroit: [Rain gardens in parking lots can reduce flooding and pollution](#)

July 8, 2021

The Detroit News: [Storms push 10B gallons of sewage into Michigan waterways. Here’s where](#)

June 22, 2021

Fox 2 News Detroit: [National Canoe and Kayak Day](#)

May 15, 2021

WWJ, Detroit: [Interview with River Restoration Assistant, Jaclyn Heikkila, about Rouge Rescue](#)

May 8, 2021

Wiki.ezvid.com: [5 Great Groups Preserving Trails & Parks For Future Generations](#)

April 21, 2021

The Detroit News: [Go green at home to celebrate Earth Day](#)

March 27, 2021

WXYZ Detroit: [Registration now underway for annual Rouge River Spring Bug Hunt](#)

February 26, 2021

TV20 Detroit – WMYD: [Sally talks Frog & Toad Surveying](#)

February 12, 2021

Fox 2 News Detroit: [Road salt is not good for our waterways](#)
more at: therouge.org/in-the-news/