

January 31, 2023



Hello Friend,

Happy 2023! Thanks to your support, on and off the River, 2022 was a year of wonderful impact for a better Rouge River.

Friends of the Rouge is growing in step with increasing community engagement to meet pressing, local, environmental issues that impact your River and community: water pollution, habitat loss, flooding, heat, and inequitable access to green spaces.

2022 Highlights Include:

- **over 650 Rouge River outreach, action & education events**
- **over \$2.8 million in earned media to spread Rouge River awareness**
- **over 8,300 area residents, from over 100 unique communities, engaged in programming**
- **over 10,600 hours of river and environmental education**
- **fish monitoring at a record 54 sites includes collecting fish for PFAS testing by Wayne State and The Ecology Center**



Student River Education at Goudy Park, Wayne, July 2022

You make all of this and more possible. You are warmly invited to explore the *2022 Marketing & Community Engagement Report*. Your feedback is valued and you are welcome to reach me directly at ledwards@therouge.org.

Thank you. And here's to another wonderful year of working together for your hometown River!

Sincerely,

Lara Edwards

Lara Edwards, Development Director



Crain's 2022 Notable Leader in Sustainability
Marie McCormick, Executive Director, Friends of the Rouge

2022 Marketing & Community Engagement Report

Engaging Community—Action, Advocacy & Education

Over 8,300 Metro Detroit volunteers, from over 100 unique communities, engaged with Friends through advocacy, education and action including: river side student education; frog, toad, bug and fish monitoring; invasive species removal, river clean-ups, logjam opening, trail building, rain garden creation and maintenance, tree plantings, and River recreation. Together, with thoughtful supporters like you, we are a movement creating positive change for a more vibrant environment and Rouge River community.



Image: (Left) Detroit Resident and angler in training, Antonio Cosme, takes notes on how to collect Rouge River fish for PFAS study; (Right) Mom & son volunteer at a rain garden in Plymouth.

Earned Media Reach



In 2022, Friends of the Rouge continued engagement with Robar Media in collaboration with watershed groups in Southeast Michigan for enhanced exposure and attention to the work of making a better Rouge River possible. The Ad Value Equivalency, or earned media, for this attention was valued at a record \$2.8 million. Friends of the Rouge continues to be a regional and state recognized authority on the Rouge River and the environment in Metro Detroit. Above left: Friends of the Rouge Executive Director talks with WXYZ about the Lower Rouge River floodplain tree planting project. Highlights of news coverage are included on page 7.

Year	Media Hits	Impressions	Earned Media
2022	86	306.5 million	\$2,840,000
2021	64	98.5 million	\$911,890
2020	69	231.73 million	\$2,140,000
2019	178	212.4 million	\$1,960,000

Partners in Advocacy and Boots-on-the-ground solutions

A better River takes a village. In 2022, Friends of the Rouge collaborated with over 260 community partners. From houses of worship to universities, neighborhood associations to national nonprofits, the work of building a more vibrant future is complex and done best with a wide net of community participation, reflective of the most diverse and populated watershed in the State.



Images: Friends of the Rouge 2022 Partnerships with (Top) Outdoor Afro Detroit at paddling event; (Bottom Left) Wayne State University for monitoring; (Bottom Right) University of Michigan, and Michigan Department of Natural Resources electroshocking for fish.

The Inaugural Heart of the Rouge: A Benefit on the Banks event



Image: At the Heart of the Rouge event—held at the Phoenix Mill, a restored, former, all-woman's factory—special guests included the American Rosie the Riveter Association.

You made the first 2022 Heart of the Rouge a success! Over 350 Friends, community partners, elected officials and party-goers enjoyed this celebration of your hometown River.

The summer evening at the Phoenix Mill in Plymouth included a live fish-netting demonstration, sparkling music from the Michigan Philharmonic Jazz Trio, wonderful eats & drinks, perfect weather, and special guest Rosie the Riveters. And, thanks to you, \$52,000 was raised for vital year-round River programming!

Community Impact Spotlight: Sacred Grounds scores a win for the triple bottom line!

The Team: National Wildlife Federation, Sierra Club Michigan Chapter, National Fish & Wildlife Foundation with six Detroit houses of worship and Friends of the Rouge

The Problem: Loss of green space, high impervious surface coverage, aging infrastructure, and heavy rains, all exacerbate stormwater runoff in Detroit. Stormwater drainage fees, at \$678/impervious-surface-acre, can be a financial burden for aging houses of worship with large property and shrinking congregations

The Solution: A nonprofit partnership through the Sacred Grounds program with houses of worship, that engages these special community anchors and supports faith leaders and congregations to create new rain gardens—for more wildlife habitat, new trees, less stormwater and lower drainage fees

The Impact: Increased community pride and beauty, new wildlife habitat, less local flooding, and lower drainage fees! In 2022, 10 new gardens were completed that keep 63,554 gallons of stormwater from flooding the



Image: Volunteers install a new rain garden at Bethany Lutheran in Detroit, July 2022.

sewer and street *every time it rains*. For participating churches, the new gardens will reduce their drainage fee and water bill—dependent on their garden—by an estimated \$500-\$3,500 annually. A win for the environment, community and the bottom line.

Website Reach

In 2022, the Friends of the Rouge website experienced a 7% increase in users and a 10% increase in sessions over 2021.

The most heavily used webpages at therouge.org included wildlife information pages, Master Rain Gardener information, and the Online Rouge Store for native plant, rain barrel and home rain garden consultation purchases.

2023 will see a full redesign of the website to optimize usability, enhance aesthetics, lower bounce rates, and provide clearer calls to action.

Friends of the Rouge

HOME ABOUT NEWS & EVENTS OUR WORK WATER TRAIL STORE GET INVOLVED DONATE

DONATE NOW BECOME A MEMBER

Learn How to Listen for Frogs and Toads Training Workshops

Part I: Intro to the watershed, wetlands, frogs & toads - Sat. Feb. 11: 10-11:30 AM

Part II: Survey Instructions - Sat. Feb. 25: 10-11:30 AM

LEARN MORE & REGISTER

Year	Users	Sessions	Bounce Rate	Session Duration
2022	62,000	86,900	66.67%	1m 29s
2021	58,000	79,000	61.58%	1m 36s
2020	48,000	67,000	60.27%	2m 8s

E-news & Email Communication Reach

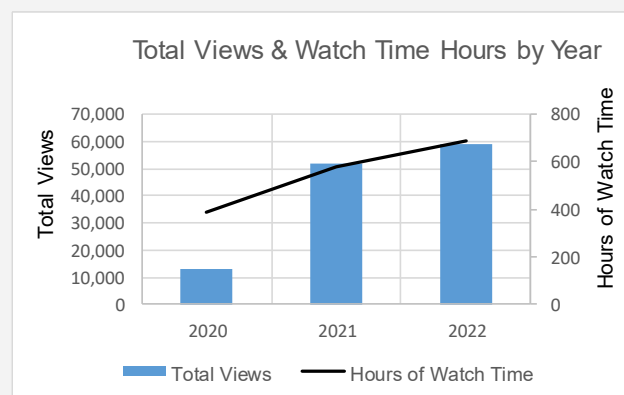


Image: The Rouge Rundown Earth Day edition included opportunities to make a difference during Earth month: volunteer projects, free education and giving.

The Rouge Rundown, Friends of the Rouge's bi-monthly e-newsletter grew its audience in 2022 by 7% over 2021 and remains the most effective online communication tool to reach and engage Friends, volunteers, members and donors. Program participants cite the e-newsletter as a main method for hearing about opportunities to act for a better Rouge!

Bi-monthly E-Newsletter Reach		
2022	2021	2020
8,545	7,999	7,400

YouTube Channel Reach



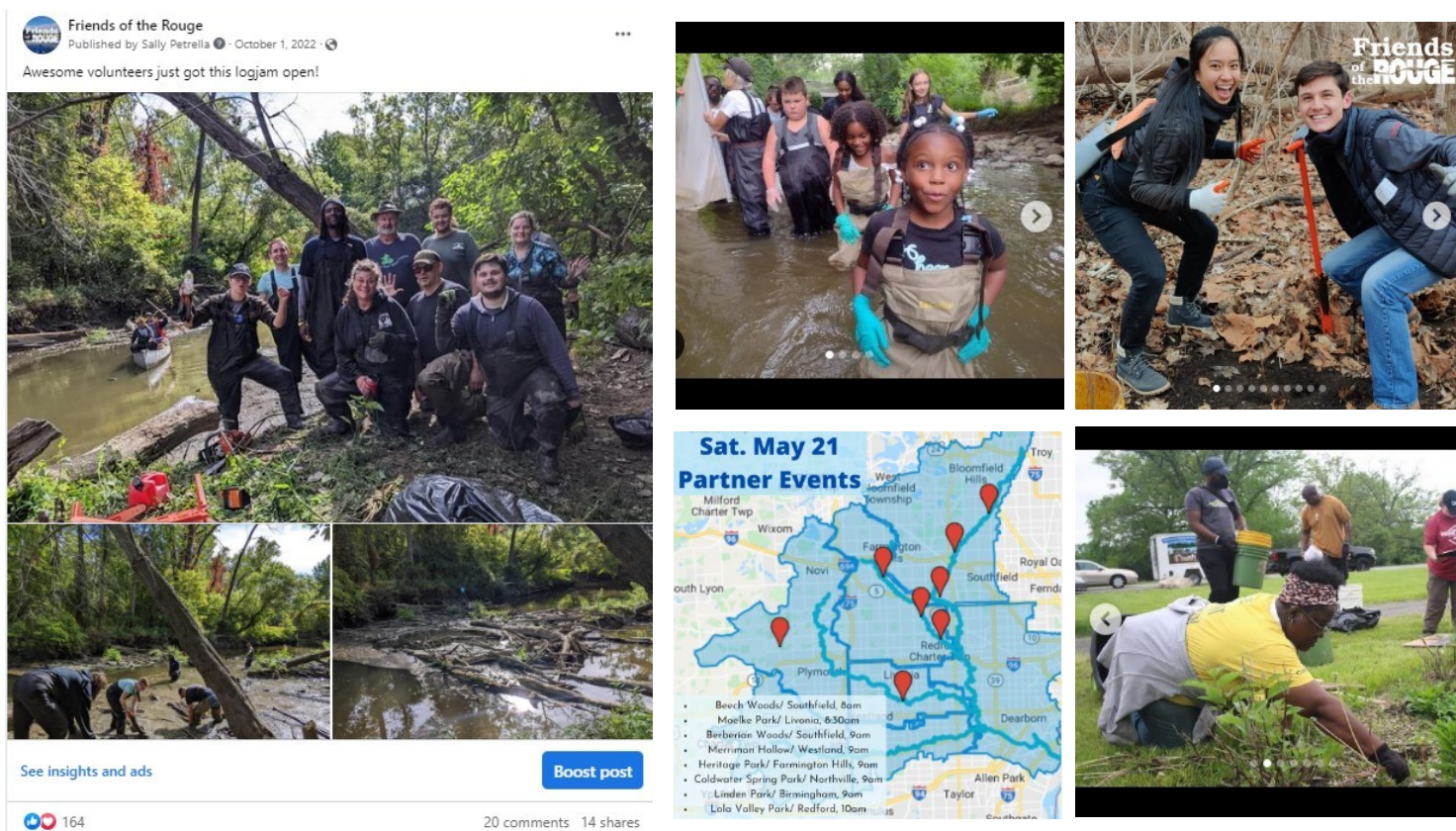
YouTube viewership grows as Friends of the Rouge continues to create new, live, online, free, educational opportunities! Once created, videos including: frog calls, rain garden classes, school teacher trainings, and news coverage, become a free and permanent resource for the public on the Friends of the Rouge YouTube Channel—@FriendsoftheRouge

Images: (Top Left) YouTube video "Pollinators 101" - original education content with FOTR Landscape Designer, Matthew Bertrand; (Top Right) YouTube video views & watch time vs. year; (Bottom Left) YouTube video of Fox2 Detroit News coverage—celebrating National Canoe and Kayak Day with FOTR Trails Manager, Herman Jenkins.

Engaging the Community via Social Media

In 2022, Friends of the Rouge leveraged social media to share event information, news stories, event photos and recaps, impact stories, fundraisers, River facts, and sponsor recognition.

Friends of the Rouge “followers” grew on Instagram, Twitter and Meta (Facebook); reach grew on Instagram but declined on both Twitter and Facebook. Friends social media strategy for 2023 includes funding and planned reach growth in all social media channels. The largest social media audience continues to engage via Facebook—56% of whom are ages 55 and older. In 2022, Instagram grew in reach and followers to capture a younger demographic—62% of whom are between the ages of 25-44.



Facebook Metric	2022	2021	2020	2019
Followers	15,194	14,430	14,276	12,654
Reach	743,213	967,337	999,389	500,956
Impressions	NA*	1,325,578	1,375,116	680,523
Likes	14,762	14,244	13,822	12,701

Instagram	2022	2021	2020
Followers	1,346	1,059	600
Reach	15,296	13,770	10,290
Impressions	75,833	89,862	12,118

Twitter	2022	2021	2020
Followers	715	654	529
Impressions	46,716	90,271	63,429
Mentions	153	184	98
Retweets	213	189	63

Images: From 2022—(Left) Logjam workday Facebook post; (Middle Top to Bottom) Student monitoring & partner events Instagram posts; (Right Top to Bottom) Tree Planting & Rouge Rescue Instagram posts. *Meta tracking changed in July 2022. Impression data is not available in a comparable format; FOTR may stop tracking this metric in 2023.

2022 News Coverage: Select Highlights

November 10, 2022

Expedition Detroit: [The Rouge River: Detroit's Greatest Outdoor Exploration Opportunity](#)

October 31, 2022

The Rock: [Henry Ford Health Systems, Featuring FOTR Rain Gardens](#)

October 7, 2022

Great Lakes Now: [Great Lakes Moment: Rouge River Revived](#)

September 27, 2022

The Detroit News: [Local students dive into water-related issues at Detroit River Water Festival](#)

June 6, 2022

Great Lakes Now: [Great Lakes Moment: Rewilding Metropolitan Detroit](#)

June 1, 2022

Downtown News Magazine: [Safer winter roads but at a cost to water quality](#)

May 14, 2022

WXYZ Detroit: [Rouge Rescue to host Backyard Fair & Native Plant Sale](#)

May 7, 2022

Hometown Life: [Water levels in Wayne County streams, yards higher than normal. Here's why](#)

May 5, 2022

The Detroit News: [Beneficial rain gardens help manage water on your property](#)

April 21, 2022

Fox 2 News Detroit Coverage: [Friends of the Rouge Working to Plant Thousands of Trees](#)

March 11, 2022

Civic Center TV: [Friends of the Rouge's Exec. Director Marie McCormick Wants to Protect the Rouge River](#)

February 17, 2022

Crain's Detroit Business: Commentary: [Metro Detroit needs combined approach to fight sewer overflows](#)

February 17, 2022

The Detroit News: [How \\$1B in federal aid for Great Lakes will clean up 9 areas in Michigan by 2030](#)

January 12, 2022

Fox 2 News Detroit: [Rouge River Winter Stonefly Search](#)



Image: Fox 2 News: Friends of the Rouge Trails Manager, Herman Jenkins and paddlers with reporter Veronica Meadows at the October 18, 2022 Haunted Paddle Kayak & Canoe Trip

Thank you Jack! See you on the River in 2023!