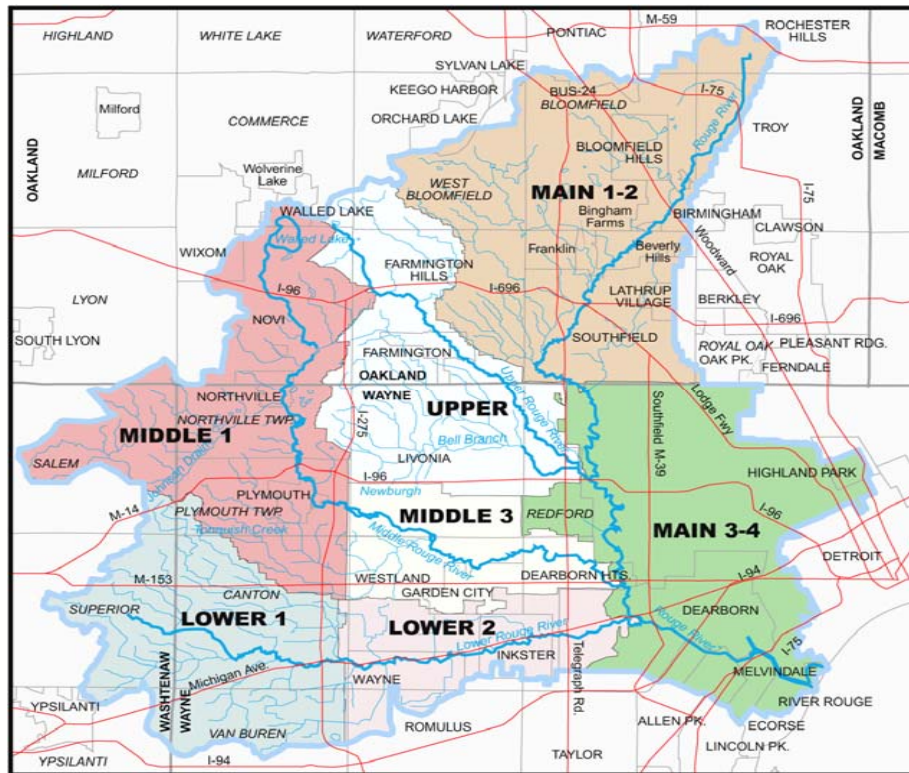


## A BRIEF HISTORY OF FRIENDS OF THE ROUGE

Friends of the Rouge was created in 1986 in response to a demonstrated need to restore the Rouge River. The mission of the organization is to promote restoration and stewardship of the Rouge River watershed through education, citizen involvement and other collaborative efforts, for the purpose of improving the quality of life for the people, plants, and animals of the watershed.

Rouge Rescue is FOTR's oldest and largest event in which thousands of volunteers clean and improve the river every year in June. The Rouge Education Project was created in 1987 to engage K-12 students in real-life science through water quality monitoring. In 1998, the Public Involvement Programs were added to provide the general public the opportunity to participate in volunteer monitoring and hands-on projects to restore the Rouge.



# FRIENDS OF THE ROUGE ANNUAL REPORT TO MEMBERS 2011-2012



**Friends  
of  
the  
ROUGE**

Promoting restoration and stewardship of the Rouge River ecosystem through education, citizen involvement and other collaborative efforts, for the purpose of improving the quality of life of the people, plants and animals of the watershed.

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Michael G. Darga, President  
Cynthia Jones, Vice-President  
Susan Thompson, Secretary  
Alex Roehling, Treasurer

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Sharon Oliver-Merchant

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Anne Naszradi  
Justin Saarinen  
Brandy Siedlaczek  
Steve Weis

## **MAJOR DONORS/GRANTS**

(OVER \$5,000)

Alliance of Rouge Communities

Lush Cosmetics LLC

Hagan Family Foundation

Masco Foundation

DENSO International America

REI, Inc.

Erb Family Foundation

Rouge River National Wet  
Weather Demonstration Project

ITC

### **FRIENDS OF THE ROUGE STAFF**

Karen Hanna, Operations Director  
Sally Petrella, Volunteer Monitoring Program Manager  
Cyndi Ross, River Restoration Program Manager  
Ioannis Kamarinas, Volunteer Monitoring Support  
Cassie Bradley, Rouge Education Project Program Manager  
Erin Cassidy, Rouge Education Project Assistant Program Manager

## **2011 - 2012 Membership Update**

228 TOTAL MEMBERS

Dues totaling \$17,390 for the 2011 - 2012 fiscal year

### **From our President**

On behalf of the Friends of the Rouge staff and Board of Directors, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to all of our members, volunteers, donors, partners, contributors, and Rouge River community leaders for their continued support and dedication.

As we look back on our 26th year, we are reminded that we are not alone in our efforts to restore and protect the Rouge River watershed. As we established new partnerships and strengthened old ones, we recognized that our efforts over the past 26 years have inspired ideas and fueled many consequent successes. We entered into a partnership this year with the River Network, a national watershed group, dedicated to mentoring and assisting organizations like FOTR with their missions. Over the next year, we'll be working with the River Network to make our programs stronger, plan for the future more effectively and be more efficient in our operations.

Our annual events, the Rouge Boat Tour, Rouge Brew and Golf Outing continue to provide a chance for all Friends to gather and celebrate what we find special in the watershed. The Rouge Run, and kayak and canoe trips are highlighting the efforts to establish and enhance recreational routes for paddlers, runners, and walkers. Added this year was a walking tour of Newburgh Lake highlighting the natural and human history of that area of the Rouge watershed.

We have been very fortunate to have continued support from the Rouge River National Wet Weather Demonstration Project, the Alliance of Rouge Communities, and the Erb Family Foundation. Major program sponsors included: ITC, REI, Aristeo Construction, Marine Pollution Control, Waste Management, Coca-Cola, Michigan Poly Supplies, Masco Corporation Foundation, DENSO International America, Arch Environmental Group, Verizon, Henniges Automotive, and the Kinder Morgan Foundation. We thank our partners; University of Michigan Dearborn, Wayne County Department of Environment, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, and our many volunteers who continue to assist us with our programs and provide valuable support and insight.

We would like to extend special thanks to our Best Friends of the Rouge Awardees who have provided outstanding support for our programs: the Alliance of Rouge Communities, and Mathew Mulholland, recipient of our Julie Rose Frentrup Outstanding Volunteer award. A special thanks also to all of our volunteers, who help in making Friends of the Rouge the special organization that it is.

As we enter our 27th year, we look forward to the many exciting projects happening within the Rouge River watershed that Friends of the Rouge is fortunate enough to be a part of. We thank you for your support and look forward to continued success.

## Benthic Macroinvertebrate Monitoring

**Benthic Macroinvertebrate Monitoring** is a method of tracking stream health by assessing the type and abundance of aquatic insects, clams, snails, etc. ("bugs") that live in the streambed. FOTR data is used by the state and local communities. Funding is provided by the Erb Family Foundation.

Volunteers participate in FOTR's monitoring at group sampling events held in the spring and fall (**Bug Hunts**) and a **Winter Stonefly Search**. Experienced volunteers are trained as team leaders to lead at individual sites. Wayne County participates in the program by sampling additional sites.

The **2011 Fall Bug Hunt** brought out 88 FOTR volunteers. Fifty-two sites were sampled including 21 by Wayne County. Most sites scored in the Fair range. Of the 38 sites that have been sampled for three years or more, three sites had above average scores and two had below average scores.



Team Leaders Reggie and Andrew Rodriguez work together to sample



Adult stonefly (Taeniopteryx) hatching at concrete channel

The **2012 Winter Stonefly Search** brought out 73 volunteers and 32 sites were sampled. Fourteen of the 32 sites had stoneflies. Additionally, in March, FOTR member Darrin O'Brien discovered adult stoneflies hatching from the concrete channel in Dearborn. It is amazing to have these sensitive creatures just downstream of the world's largest Combined Sewer Overflow Basin.

The **2012 Spring Bug Hunt** had 83 volunteers and 54 sites were sampled with additional sites done by Wayne County. Most sites had Fair scores. In comparison to past years, four sites scored above average and three below.

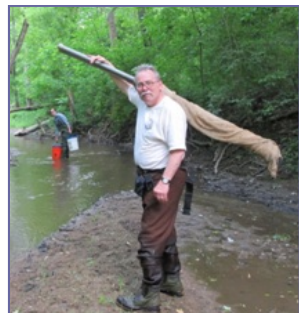
Trend analysis was done for the spring and fall data. In the fall, Johnson Creek, the Middle 1 and the Middle 3 subwatersheds showed a positive trend in scores. The Upper subwatershed showed a decline. In the spring, the positive trends continued for the subwatersheds that improved in the fall and the Main 1-2 subwatershed also showed a positive trend. No subwatershed had significant negative trends in the spring 2012.

### Additional Volunteer Monitoring—Fish

University of Michigan-Dearborn students Robert Muller and Kristina Blott interned with FOTR by conducting a fish survey. After meeting with state and local biologists, they decided to focus

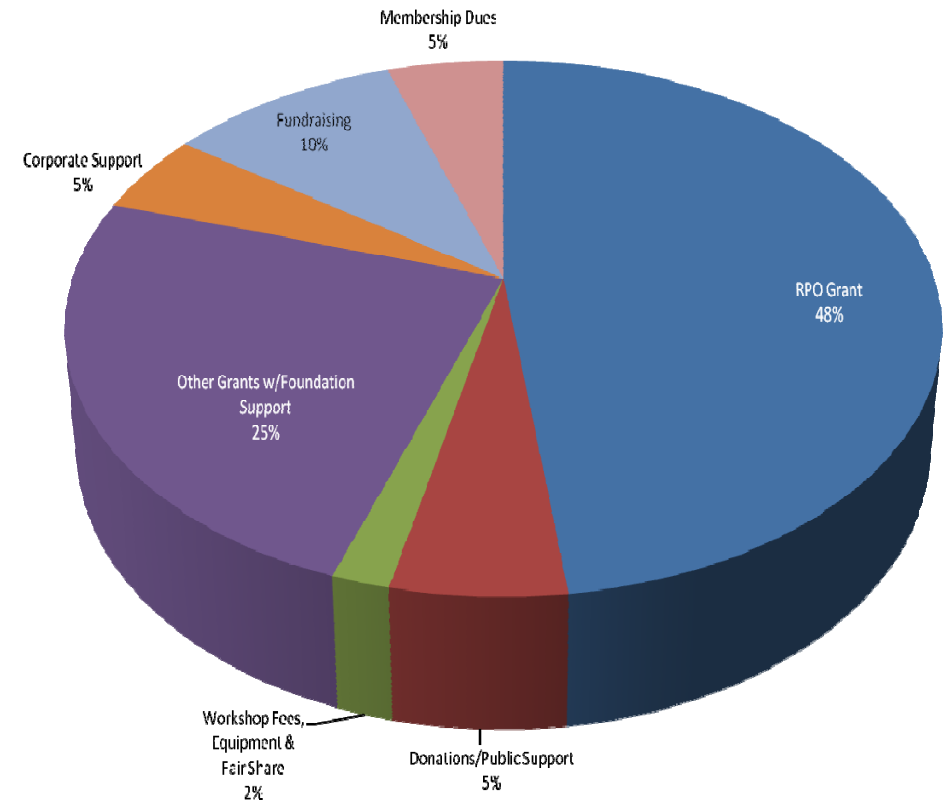


on the reddsides, a minnow found in three Rouge branches that is endangered in the state.



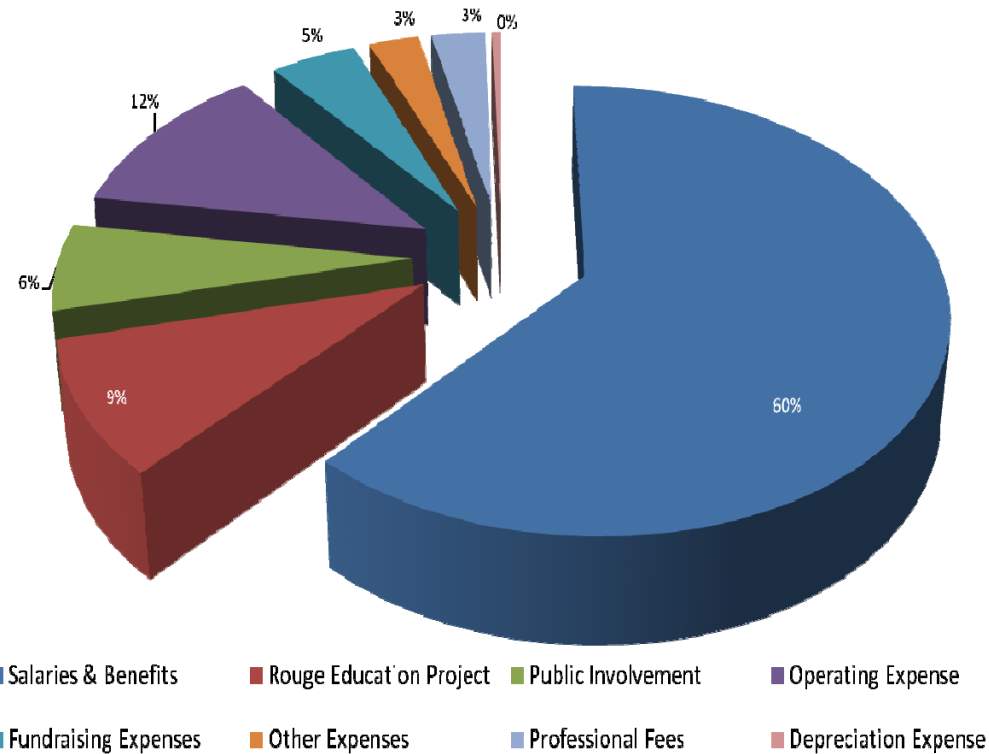
Robert Muller & Kristina Blott

## FOTR 2011 - 2012 REVENUES BY SOURCE



**TOTAL REVENUES - \$ 439,292**

## FOTR 2011 - 2012 EXPENSES BY USE



**TOTAL EXPENSES—\$ 425,194**

## VOLUNTEER MONITORING

Friends of the Rouge offers two opportunities for volunteers to become involved in **Volunteer Monitoring**: a watershed-wide **Rouge Frog & Toad Survey** and the **Benthic Macroinvertebrate Monitoring Program**. Both programs engage volunteers in collecting biological data while raising awareness about the watershed.

### Frog & Toad Survey

**Frog & Toad Survey Training Workshops** take place annually in February and March in locations throughout the watershed. In 2012, four workshops were held in Plymouth Township, Canton Township, Livonia, and Bloomfield Township and 253 people attended. A total of 377 volunteers signed up to survey 293 blocks. Data was received for 163 blocks and volunteers contributed over 2,221 hours.



To help volunteers practice identifying frog and toad calls, one Group Listen was held. On April 20, 2012, 12 volunteers came out to West Bloomfield Woods Nature Preserve despite the cold rain. The walk was held in conjunction with the Detroit Audubon Society and West Bloomfield Township.



Group Listen was not rained out.

The Frog & Toad Survey is funded through the Rouge River National Wet Weather Demonstration Project, Rouge communities, and the Erb Family Foundation.

### Wayne Road Dam Removal Project - Outreach and Education

In October 2011, as part of the Outreach and Education for the GLRI/NOAA funded project to remove the Wayne Road Dam, FOTR embarked on a three day exploratory canoe trip from



Canton to Dearborn. Participants were: Bill Craig, Kurt Kuban, Sue Thompson, Jeff Vallender and Matt Mulholland. The group had to portage over 171 logjams but were able to see great potential as the river is protected within Wayne County Parkland for most of the stretch and has consistently high enough water levels.

In March 2012, FOTR organized a Logjam Opening Class for municipalities and volunteers. Thirty-five people attended this hands on workshop and learned how to open a logjam for canoeing with minimal damage to the environment. Two workdays were held in May with 9 volunteers and in August with 20 volunteers. With some additional help from the City of Wayne and from Marine Pollution Control during Rouge Rescue, over four miles of the river is now open for canoeing.



## River Restoration

The **River Restoration Program** teaches watershed residents how to care for the land to improve water quality and wildlife habitat through hands-on projects and other educational events.

**Projects:** Friends of the Rouge coordinated three restoration projects in the 2011-2012 fiscal year. Native buffer plantings were installed on the banks of Walled Lake, one at Mercer Beach in the City of Walled Lake and the other just east of the beach in Novi's Lakeshore Park. The final planting of the year was a rain garden demonstration planting that provided a hands-on learning opportunity for people who attended a Rain Garden Workshop coordinated in Detroit. The rain garden workshop and planting was held in partnership with the Sierra Club Great Lakes Program.

Date	Project	Location	City	Size (Sq. Ft.)
9/10/11	Native Planting	Mercer Beach	Walled Lake	700
9/14/11	Native Buffer Planting	Lakeshore Park	Novi	1,500
9/24/11	Residential Rain Garden Demonstration Planting	Stahelin Street	Detroit	180

**Educational Events:** Four educational workshops were coordinated in 2011-2012, including three workshops in partnership with the Alliance of Rouge Communities (ARC) and one workshop in collaboration with the Sierra Club Great Lakes Program. The workshops coordinated with the ARC focused on expanding and caring for Native Plant Grow Zones. FOTR and the Sierra Club Great Lakes Program worked to raise awareness of the importance of native plants in protecting water quality at Eastern Market during Flower Day Weekend.

Date	Event	City	Target Audience	Attendance	Funded by
9/20/11	Rain Garden Workshop	Detroit	Homeowners	22	Sierra Club Great Lakes Program
2/23/12	Naturalizing Public Golf Courses in the Rouge River Watershed	Farmington Hills	Golf Course Managers, Land Managers, Municipal Employees	19	Alliance of Rouge Communities
4/17/12	Naturalizing the Home Garden: A Native Garden Design Workshop	Southfield	25 Homeowners	30	Alliance of Rouge Communities
5/19/12 & 5/20/12	Native Plant Promotion and Education at Eastern Market	Detroit	Homeowners	200,000 +	
8/29/12	Grow Zone Maintenance Workshop	Bloomfield Hills	ARC Grow Zone Partners	18	Alliance of Rouge Communities

**Other Events:** A native plant sale was organized by Friends of the Rouge and held at the Farmington Hills Eco-Fest event on June 16, 2012. Just under \$1,000 was raised to support FOTR's River Restoration Programs.

## ROUGE EDUCATION PROJECT

The **Rouge Education Project (REP)** works with teachers and students (K-12) throughout Metro Detroit by incorporating academic goals and objectives directly related to the Rouge River watershed into schools' curricula. While there is a strong focus on science, teachers also are encouraged to extend REP-related lessons across different disciplines (*e.g.*, arts, geography, math, creative writing). The lessons covered are then translated into place-based learning during field trips (1 spring, 1 fall) that allow students, teachers, and interested parents to conduct hands-on water quality monitoring in the Rouge River.



Students from Steppingstone School in Farmington drop a bucket from a bridge to collect a water sample—Fall, 2011



Students from Intercity Baptist High School in Allen Park perform calculations for chemical analyses—Fall, 2011

The success of Monitoring Day(s) is largely due to volunteer support. On field days, students and teachers are teamed up with a College Student Assistant (CSA). CSAs are recruited from local colleges and universities and are trained for up to 23 hours in physical, chemical, and biological monitoring techniques, and then use their training to support field monitoring activities for the school with which they are paired. This year, the REP paired 36 CSAs from eight local colleges with participating schools throughout the watershed. In addition to CSAs, support and partnerships are formed through sponsorship opportunities that include coordination of corporate volunteers teamed with the schools that they support. DENSO International America, General Motors

Corporation, Henniges Automotive, and MWH Americas, Inc. each provided volunteers to assist schools on Monitoring Days in 2011-2012. Both the CSA and Corporate Volunteer programs successfully met the needs of the participating REP schools.

In addition to federal and corporate grants, the REP runs an Adopt-a-School (AaS) sponsorship campaign, which encourages local businesses to donate funds to "adopt" one or more of the participating schools. This year, the AaS campaign brought in nearly \$45,000, which directly supported 19 schools' participation in the REP. Overall, 43 schools and over 3,000 students participated, including 11 schools that were newly recruited to the program.

## REP, cont. — “Rouge in the Classroom”

This year, the REP continued an activity piloted in the 2010-2011 season, called “Rouge in the Classroom.” Rouge in the Classroom offers in-class lessons and hands-on activities for students in grades 4-8, centered on learning about watersheds, land use, pollution, and macroinvertebrate classification. Nine schools participated during the 2011-2012 school year, reaching nearly 600 students.

Rouge in the Classroom will continue two lessons (*Do you know YOUR watershed?* & *Macromania! An introduction to Benthic Sampling*) into the 2012-2013 school year, and is open to all participating REP schools. Schools outside of the REP can request a lesson for their students but are asked to pay a speaker fee.



Students from Stevenson Elementary School in Southfield have fun with the *Do you know YOUR watershed?* activity—Spring, 2012

## RIVER RESTORATION PROGRAM

Friends of the Rouge’s **River Restoration Program** encompasses both Rouge Rescue and River Restoration. Both programs offer opportunities for volunteers to become involved in river clean up and stewardship projects that include native plantings, invasive plant removal projects, stream bank stabilization projects and woody debris management. The River Restoration Program also includes educational events and workshops.

## Rouge Rescue

Each June, Friends of the Rouge, in partnership with Rouge communities and other organizations, brings volunteers together from across the watershed to work toward the common goal of improving the Rouge River through **Rouge Rescue**.

This past year 1,814 volunteers worked to clean and restore the Rouge River at 43 work sites in Detroit and 21 metro Detroit suburbs. Major accomplishments of Rouge Rescue 2012 were the removal of 131 cubic yards of trash, including 2 vehicles, large household items and countless bottles, balls and other debris from the river and surrounding floodplain. The work helps to improve the river’s appearance and connects residents of the watershed to this precious resource.

Rouge Rescue also engaged volunteers in restoration activities that will have long-term benefits to water quality in the river and wildlife habitat, both in-stream and out. Just over 4,000 native plants were installed during Rouge Rescue. Twenty work sites participated in



## Rouge Rescue, cont.

planting projects. Thirteen of them planted stream-side buffers to reduce localized erosion and filter pollutants from rain water flowing over land. An amazing amount of invasive plants were removed from watershed parks and nature preserves. The total sum was nearly twice the amount of trash removed at 200 cubic yards. By removing and treating the invasive plants volunteers help maintain native plant populations and diversity in the watershed.

We had great participation from our corporate partners this year. ITC, Waste Management, Coca-Cola, Marine Pollution Control, Bosch, Aristeo Construction, DENSO, and employees from the Detroit Zoo participated. A detailed report of the event and the work completed at each site is available on the website ([www.therouge.org](http://www.therouge.org)).



Coca-Cola volunteers pull a mattress and other large debris from the River at the Tireman bridge in Detroit's Rouge Park.



Planting native wildflowers to improve water quality behind Henry Ford Community College



A tire comes out of Tonquish Creek in the Holliday Nature Preserve



This resourceful volunteer carries multiple bags of garlic mustard out of the Berberian Woods Nature Preserve.

The River Restoration Program is funded, in part, by grants from the Rouge River National Wet Weather Demonstration Project, the Erb Foundation, REI, the Alliance of Rouge Communities, the Sierra Club, and the Michigan Association of Environmental Professionals and by corporate sponsorships and in-kind gifts.