



Friends  
of the **ROUGE**

2022  
**ANNUAL REPORT**

## F R O M T H E D I R E C T O R

Dear Friends,

As winter draws to a close, the rain garden outside my home office window softens into warm browns, fuzzy gray and burnt orange—the colors of seasonal senescence. A moment in the year for reflection and hibernation. Somewhere in the thick organic duff I imagine a dormant Mourning Cloak, tucked away behind loose bark or in fallen leaves. Or perhaps swaying on a hollow stalk dangles a beautiful Swallowtail tucked in their pupa, or chrysalis, as winter sets in. A beautiful, yet dangerous time for these delicate creatures—and somehow comforting to passively observe.

At Friends of the Rouge, we consider the mission to be ‘true north,’ guiding our daily actions envisioned at a high level through the work of our strategic planning. This past year (and really every year) those of us in the trenches of grassroots environmental work consistently weave our daily work with a persistent tension between sobering and celebratory.

We bear witness to the sobering gravity of the climate crisis—of increased precipitation patterns, more frequent flooding, antiquated infrastructure, and see how that directly affects our Rouge neighborhoods. And at the same moment we have reason to celebrate victories in federal prioritization through the Justice40 Initiative which aims to address decades of underinvestment in disadvantaged communities. The initiative will bring resources to our Rouge communities most impacted by climate change, legacy environmental pollution and lack of access.

This dialectical dilemma is constantly at play in accomplishing our mission and fueling the necessary passion, fortitude and grit that bind us to roll call. This is the reality of collaborative, inclusive, meaningful watershed work.

This year we celebrate victories like ‘wins’ for equity in access. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars have permeated communities across the nation—with the ‘trickle down effect’ finally affecting the Rouge River communities. Many years of collaborative work have led to seven of the planned universally accessible multi-use trailheads along the Lower Rouge River Water Trail to be shovel ready—and fully funded to start construction next year. As a major bonus, we also will see the second phase of the two decades long-planned Rouge Gateway Greenway (a mile path connecting the Henry Ford to the University of Michigan-Dearborn campus in Dearborn) come to fruition. With two bridges measuring over 150’ and 200’ in length, this complex project provides the missing piece to a regional non-motorized puzzle that will eventually connect all the way to Fort Street Bridge Park in Southwest Detroit—literally paving the way for people to ride their bike or walk unobstructed from Northville to Detroit.

And despite all the celebration, we face sobering realities about the presence of PFOs/PFOa in the Rouge. PFOs and PFOa are members of a lab-made chemical group called per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). Our partnerships with the Ecology Center via their Healthy Fish Healthy Communities and Wayne State University Healthy Urban Waters have confirmed the presence of these chemicals in local Rouge fish. We were able to hire local anglers to collect fish tissue samples for the two studies. Earlier this year, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) issued a do not eat fish consumption advisory in the lower Rouge—a devastating blow to a half century of clean up efforts made in our urban watershed.

Yet, despite setbacks from emerging contaminants, President Biden announced a \$1 billion investment from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law which will significantly accelerate cleanup and restoration of the Great Lakes. An estimated \$100 million will be dedicated to cleaning up industrial legacy contaminants (heavy metals, mercury, PCBs, etc.) in the main stem of the Rouge. These dollars, paired with continued reinvestment in the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), currently support around 18 different habitat restoration projects in various stages of implementation in the Rouge watershed alone. Friends of the Rouge support these efforts as key stakeholders in the Rouge River Advisory Council—the Public Advisory Council overseeing the implementation of Area of Concern (AOC) projects. Additionally, we support public engagement, outreach and education efforts—and sit on the AOC

Statewide Public Advisory Council Environmental Justice and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Subcommittee. EGLE and EPA have made strides in their organizational commitments to furthering justice, equity and inclusion—with the formation of the Subcommittee and shifts in their funding framework to name a few. This year we were awarded a subcontract to plant over 13,000 native trees (13 different species) in the lower Rouge River subwatershed area roughly covering Wayne, Westland and Inkster land that overlaps with Wayne County Parks. In the spring and fall we planted nearly 9,000 of the trees, with plans to plant the remainder in the spring of 2023. We worked with over 360 volunteers who contributed over 1,360 hours.

For the first time in the history of our organization, we held a land-based fundraiser deemed “Heart of the Rouge” where we widened the tent for over 350 volunteers, members and supporters to celebrate the remarkable recovery of the Rouge in stark juxtaposition to the dark history of our river and the birth of the automobile. We stood together at the Phoenix Mill in Plymouth—formerly a woman-only staffed manufacturing facility rife with the history of our nation—and the history of our Rouge. We cannot tell the story of this river without the story of the automobile, of the arsenal of democracy and the important role it played in securing the freedoms we enjoy today as Americans. That day we reflected on the sobering and celebratory nature of that moment as witness to the remarkable resilience of the people, our community and the river that threads all of us together—regardless of our backgrounds.

Our incredible team of dedicated and knowledgeable staff work daily to meet the challenge of our mission—and to continually celebrate even the smallest of wins. Over the last few years, our team has grown from a small-but-mighty team of six in 2017 to a team of fifteen in 2022, with plans to expand to nineteen in 2023. Part of growth includes growing pains—and we have worked to holistically address the employee experience and compensation structure. Beyond having a meaningful role aligned to our organizational values, we’ve identified additional areas to improve that experience, including a focus on work/life balance, career advancement and the continued development of a diverse and inclusive workplace. This year we implemented a new salary structure that mirrors other similarly sized nonprofits—including a full upgrade to healthcare and paid time off benefits.

The words of Maya Angelo strike me as I have spent the last few weeks reflecting on the last year: “we delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty.” While some parts of the past year—past years—have been challenging both personally and professionally: and challenging to our River and our organization. We have begun to see brilliant wings emerge in the springtime of the environmental movement. So much hope lands on these wings.

While just a snapshot of the past year, we hope you will find this Annual Report a more detailed account of the incredible work accomplished in 2022.

*Respectfully,*

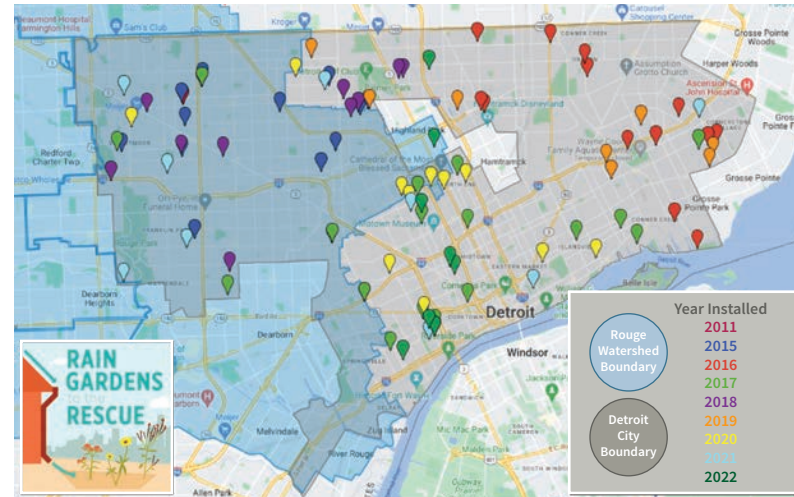
Marie McCormick, Executive Director

THE MISSION OF FRIENDS OF THE ROUGE IS TO  
RESTORE, PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE ROUGE  
RIVER WATERSHED THROUGH STEWARDSHIP,  
EDUCATION AND COLLABORATION

## 2022 Numbers At A Glance

Read on over the following pages for detailed outcomes of all our Restoration programs!

Total Volunteers .....	2,385
Total Hours.....	5,970
Total Events .....	166
Total Stormwater Storage Created (gallons) .....	72,480
Total Area of New Rain Gardens (sq. ft.) .....	12,150
Native Plant Sales .....	10,750
Rain Barrel Sales .....	185



## Restoration

FOTR's Restoration Programming continued to grow and expand in 2022. Our Restoration team coordinated 166 educational events and hands-on workdays that engaged 2,385 people in Rescuing the Rouge every day. Volunteers contributed 4,480 hours building 36 new rain gardens, maintaining 34 existing rain gardens, planting 9,062 trees, controlling invasive shrubs, cleaning up trash, and helping to make our 2 native plant and rain barrel sales a success. An additional 1,490 hours were spent learning about rain gardens, pollinators, rain garden maintenance, the Rouge River and more. The Outcomes of 2022 Restoration Program Table provides a list of outcomes achieved through the restoration programming in 2022. A few highlights of the work follows. A big thank you to all who helped make this work happen!

### Soaking Up the Rain

Thirty-six (36) rain gardens created this year are keeping up to 72,500 gallons of rainwater from entering sewer systems in Detroit, Highland Park, Redford Township, Farmington Hills, Plymouth, and Plymouth Township. This is critical to prevent pollution, caused from combined sewer system overflows during times of heavy rain and snowmelt in Detroit, Highland Park, and Redford Township, which results in a slurry of raw sewage and other pollutants spewing into the river. In Farmington Hills, Plymouth and Plymouth Township the rainwater capture helps to reduce the surge of flow to the river during rainy weather when untreated runoff is piped directly to the river through the storm sewer. *(continued)*



*Opposite page: Girl Scouts of Fellowship Chapel Planting Trees at Inkster Park  
This page: Lower Rouge Reforestation project tree planting at Inkster Park*

These rain gardens have replaced 12,150 sq. ft. of lawn with beautiful gardens full of native plants that soak up rain and provide food and homes for butterflies, bird and other important life as well as provide calming and restorative space for people right in their own front yards.

Rain gardens were funded by grants from the Fred A and Barbara M Erb Family Foundation, the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation and the US Forest Service. We sincerely thank them for their support.

**Reforesting the Lower Rouge**

A new initiative begun this year was an effort to reforest the Lower Rouge Parkway. FOTR served as contractor to the Alliance of Rouge Communities (ARC) in partnership with Wayne County Parks to plant tree seedlings along the Lower Rouge from Canton to Dearborn. This spring, 355 volunteers helped plant over 8,900 bare-root native tree seedlings across 44 acres of Wayne County Parkland, 36 of which were open areas. This was a huge undertaking that took a lot of planning. Over 20 workdays were organized to plant this large number of trees across such a large tract of land. The tiny trees were protected with plastic tree tubes, which will be collected within the next two years. The scope of work also called for weed mats to be placed around the trees during installation, however, supply chain issues prevented this from happening. The project will carry over into 2023 where we will install another 4,400 seedlings to complete an 80 acre coverage area, monitor the survival rate, and place the weed mats. The reforestation project received a lot of attention from the press, including live segments on WJBK (Fox 2) and WXYZ (Channel 7). This project is part of a larger project funded by a more than \$4 million U.S. EPA Great Lakes Restoration grant to the ARC.

The reforestation project will have decades-long impact as the trees grow and provide a plethora of benefits improving the health of the river: providing shade during warm summer months, managing billions of gallons of stormwater, providing habitat, taking in nutrients—the list goes on and on. The trees will also reduce carbon, improve recreational experiences within the park (paddling, hiking, birdwatching, etc.), and so much more.

*Opposite page, left and right: Volunteers at PARC removing weeds at PARC rain garden workdays. Top middle: Volunteers assemble a rain barrel at the Detroit Rain Barrel Workshop. Opposite page, bottom left: Students from U of M Dearborn and Salina are shown how to plant large trees at Dearborn's Lapeer Park. Bottom middle: Rain Gardens to the Rescue participants with their garden build in Highland Park. Bottom right: Volunteers planting trees on Earth Day at Venoy-Dorsey Park.*

**TREE PLANTINGS ----- 9,162**

Lower Rouge Reforestation Project, seedlings.....	8,934
South Dearborn (contracted), 2" caliper balled & burlap .....	100
South Dearborn, 2" caliper balled & burlap .....	42
Installed as part of rain garden installations.....	86



**RAIN GARDEN INSTALLATIONS - 36**

Residential/Community Rain Gardens, Detroit .....	14
Houses of Worship, Detroit .....	7
School, Redford Twp. ....	4
Non-profit, Detroit, Highland Park, Plymouth.....	7
Public/Municipal, Plymouth, Plymouth Twp.....	2
Fee-for-Service (1 residential, 1 corporate) .....	2

**RAIN GARDEN MAINTENANCE WORKDAYS - 54**

Redford Township .....	5
Canton .....	5
Northville .....	3
Salem .....	1
Southfield .....	1
Plymouth .....	36
Plymouth Township .....	3

**EARNED REVENUE**

Consultations .....	38
Rain Barrel & Native Plant Sales.....	2

**EDUCATIONAL EVENTS AND TRAINING COURSES ----- 40**

Green Your Neighborhood Public Forum .....	1
Master Rain Gardener/Rain Gardens to the Rescue 5 Part Training Courses .....	10
Pollinator 101 Workshops.....	3
Rain Barrel Workshops.....	2
Rain Garden 101 Workshops.....	3
Rain Garden Design Workshops & Community Input Sessions .....	2
Rain Garden Tours.....	3
Rouge River Revived Pannel Discussion .....	1
Sacred Grounds Workshops .....	2
Schoolcraft College Speaking Engagment.....	1
StormWater Specialist Training 12-Part Workforce Development Training Course .....	12





## Monitoring for Change

### Bug Hunts

FOTR monitors aquatic insects, clams, snails and more that live in the bottom of our streams, because their presence or absence is linked to water quality. Volunteers participate in group sampling events in the spring, fall, and winter. Trained volunteers collect the bugs from the river and lead teams on monitoring days. Additional sites are sampled by Wayne County, Susan Thompson and Schoolcraft College. FOTR data is provided to the state through MiCorps and to local communities to track restoration progress.

**2022 WINTER STONEFLY SEARCH:** The “Stonefly Refresher” had 34 attendees including veteran volunteers and team leaders and many new volunteers. The January 22 Stonefly Search had sixty-five volunteers who sampled 23 sites in 12 teams. Additional sites were sampled by teams of FOTR staff, Wayne County and Sue Thompson. Stoneflies were found at thirteen of the 33 sites (39%). All thirteen sites had slender winter stoneflies (Capniidae).

Three sites also had Perlodids. We continued to participate in the Salt Watch program. Most sites had acceptable levels of chloride but seven sites had levels toxic to aquatic life. The program was funded by the Alliance of Rouge Communities.

**2022 SPRING BUG HUNT:** The Spring Bug Hunt had 73 attendees who sampled 19 sites in 14 teams. The plan had been to sample 27 sites but the 1.1 inches of rain that fell overnight prohibited Team Leaders from being able to safely enter the water and sample at many sites. Some sites were moved upstream where water levels were safer. Additional sites were sampled by teams of FOTR staff, Wayne County and volunteers. Sites averaged in the fair range and the middle subwatersheds continued to show significant positive trends. The program was funded by the Rouge communities of Beverly Hills, Farmington, Livonia, Novi, Plymouth, Southfield, Troy, Plymouth Township and Washtenaw County.



**2022 STREAM HABITAT ASSESSMENTS:** The Michigan Clean Water Corps (MiCorps) awarded FOTR a maintenance grant for stream habitat assessments. These assessments had been done as part of the Spring and Fall Bug Hunts and FOTR wanted to move them to separate days. FOTR Monitoring and Education staff and interns spent two days conducting the surveys at four sites to develop a protocol based on MiCorps materials. Following that, a training for volunteers was held on Sept. 10 with nine attendees. Volunteers were recruited from the list of Bug Hunt Team Leaders. Volunteers were only available on weekends so FOTR used interns and staff to conduct surveys of an additional eight sites to reach a total of 12.

**2022 FALL BUG HUNT:** The Fall Bug Hunt on October 15 had 89 attendees that sampled 30 sites in 16 teams with additional sites sampled by FOTR staff, Wayne County and volunteers. A total of 46 sites were sampled. Site scores showed 78% of sites stable, 11% improving and 9% declining. Johnson Creek and the Middle 3 had significant positive trends and the Lower 1, Main1-2 and Upper subwatersheds all had significant negative trends. Testing for chloride showed some Upper, Middle and Main sites with toxic levels, pointing to some other source than road runoff. The program was funded by the Rouge communities of Beverly Hills, Canton Township, Farmington, Livonia, Novi, Plymouth, Southfield, Troy, Plymouth Township, Washtenaw County and MiCorps.

*Opposite page: Day campers at STREAM Kids learn to seine for fish. This page, top left: Volunteers training to become Bug Hunt Team Leaders. Top right: UM Student Olivia Williams and DNR Fisheries Biologist John Buszkiewicz survey for fish at Fair Lane Estate.*



In May, Cooperative Institute for Great Lakes Research Summer Fellow, Isabelle Horvath, presented a poster on her project to examine FOTR’s benthic macroinvertebrate data and land use. Areas with high poverty had lower Stream Quality Index scores.

### Frog & Toad Survey

The Frog & Toad Survey is a listening survey in which volunteers track frog and toad presence through listening surveys. Survey Training Part I was held on February 12 with 48 attendees and Part II on February 26 with 44 attendees, all virtual. Sue Thompson and Kathy Ableson assisted with the training and four veteran volunteers shared their experience and advice: Marla Moiseev, Barbara Siepierski, Diane Rushlow and Bill Bialkowski. A group listen was held in West Bloomfield on April 29 and veteran surveyor Maggie Laster shared the survey and her experience. A total of 173 volunteers signed up to survey 181 survey blocks.

A new Survey123 online app was developed so that surveyors could input their data in real time. It was introduced part way through the survey season and 24 surveyors tested it. The testing led to several improvements and the app will be introduced to all surveyors in 2023.

Eighty-seven surveyors submitted data for a total of 133 survey blocks and contributed 429 hours of time. An average of 2.8 species was heard per block. The data was used to help create a nature preserve and protect wetlands. The survey was supported by Bosch and WM.

### Fish Monitoring

FOTR greatly expanded fish sampling in 2022 with additional techniques, sites and parameters through three new partnerships. The Ecology Center asked FOTR to join a project to train local anglers to collect fish for PFAS testing.

FOTR engaged six local anglers in collecting fish in the Rouge and Huron at 15 sites. Wayne State University's (WSU) Healthy Urban Waters program asked FOTR to assist with a five year study of emerging contaminants in the Lake Huron to Lake St Clair corridor. FOTR collected fish at six sites and provided them to WSU staff who collected serum and tissue and collected chloride data at eight sites. FOTR also supported University of Michigan Master's student Olivia Williams in surveying sites for fish using electroshocking and seining at a total of 58 sites. In addition to identifying and measuring fish, each site was tested for temperature, pH, conductivity, chloride, dissolved oxygen, nitrates and turbidity. The sampling included 22 sites supported by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy.



**Freshwater Mussel Surveys**

Freshwater mussels, often called clams, are some of the most threatened creatures in North America and only ten species have been found in the Rouge in recent years. After finding three new species in 2021, including two listed ones, FOTR returned with state biologists to survey two sites on the Middle Rouge to check for any listed species. Shells of the state endangered lilliput were found, but no new species.



**European Frog-bit Monitoring**

In a partnership with the Oakland County Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area, FOTR surveyed a total of 229 ponds, lakes and wetlands sites for European Frog-bit through a two year project to determine if this aggressive, non-native floating plant is expanding beyond where it was first found in Novi. Sam Davis took over surveys from Jackie Heikilla and was assisted by interns Miriam and Cooper. They found frog-bit in three creeks in Novi and participated in manual frog-bit management in Novi. They also assisted Michigan State University in identifying and removing invasive red swamp crayfish from ponds in Livonia.

**STREAM Kids**

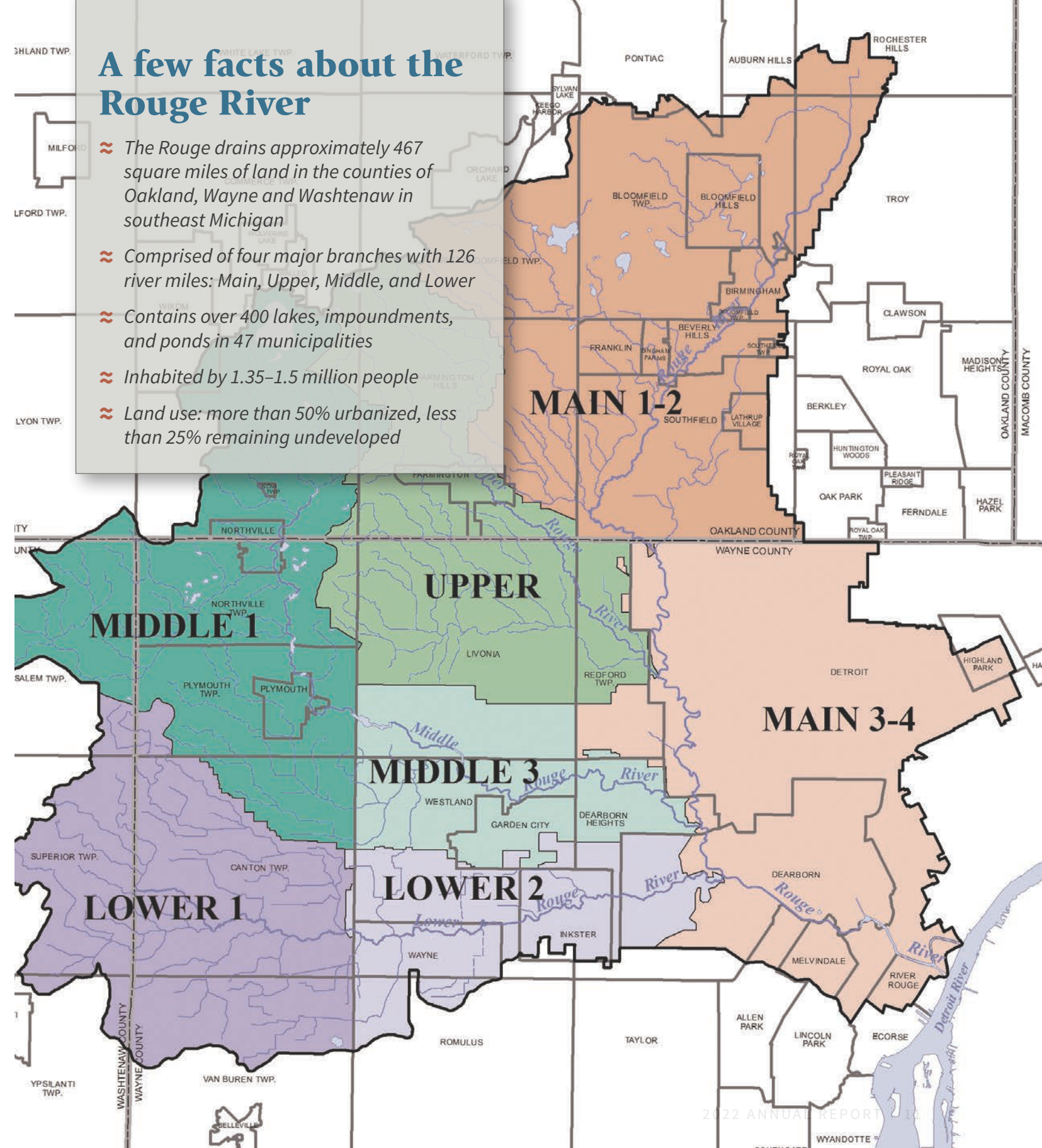
FOTR held our second STREAM Kids event in July in partnership with Trout Unlimited (TU). Designed to engage girls in science at an age when they often turn away from it (middle school), TU engages kids with fly fishing related activities in and along the river. FOTR engaged 22 day campers from the city of Westland Day Camp in bug and fish sampling at Goudy Park while TU taught fly casting and tying and stream surveys. Most of the students had never worn waders in a river before.



*Top: Joe Rathbun teaches FOTR staff and interns to identify and measure freshwater mussels. Middle: Angler Jerrad Jankowski collects a fish for PFAs testing as Ecology Center's Jeff Gearhart looks on. Bottom: Wayne State students look for bugs.*

**A few facts about the Rouge River**

- ≈ The Rouge drains approximately 467 square miles of land in the counties of Oakland, Wayne and Washtenaw in southeast Michigan
- ≈ Comprised of four major branches with 126 river miles: Main, Upper, Middle, and Lower
- ≈ Contains over 400 lakes, impoundments, and ponds in 47 municipalities
- ≈ Inhabited by 1.35–1.5 million people
- ≈ Land use: more than 50% urbanized, less than 25% remaining undeveloped





## Rouge Education Project

The Rouge Education Project (REP) is a school-based environmental education program involving elementary, middle, and high schools from across southeastern Michigan. Students perform hands-on scientific exploration of the Rouge River to determine overall stream health; including the evaluation of chemical, biological, and physical parameters of water quality. Students are further encouraged to take action to restore and protect the river based on their results.

The REP worked with a total of 1,262 students and 31 teachers from 13 schools throughout Metro-Detroit in 2022. Monitoring events occurred throughout the spring and fall thanks to the amazing and dedicated teachers that make this program possible.

The Project also continued collaboration with partner organizations such as the Aerokats and Rover Education Network, which is part of the international GLOBE program, that provides students with a kite (“Aerokat”) and water quality probes (aquatic “Rover”) equipped with sensors to continue measuring atmospheric and surface water data on-site. A new partnership with the

Environmental Health Research-to-Action group based out of the University of Michigan-Dearborn allowed us to lead a water quality monitoring and atmospheric data collection day to help high school to recent graduate-aged students shape research projects based on environmental issues discovered in their area. One group focused their research on high nitrate values in the Lower Branch of the Rouge River that were found during our data-collection day.

In addition, an in-person Summer Institute was held to train or refresh new and returning teachers in water quality monitoring protocol for the Rouge Education Project. We also held a separate training at the Farmington STEAM Academy centered on getting additional water quality monitoring probes into the hands of teachers and their students to inspire student-led research projects.

### Other Educational Initiatives

Our Education Programs continue to grow and with that FOTR was able to see an addition of staff to help support both our Education and Monitoring programs for the first time in several years.



Outreach efforts are expanding: we continued work reaching governmental officials, drafting a “Welcome to the Watershed” packet for incoming electees spotlighting issues and potential solutions. Our presence at events is becoming more proactive than reactive—evaluating where we should be vs. the usual places we are invited. As part of this, a team of volunteers will be trained to represent us at tabling events, taking on the role of a FOTR Ambassador! We continue to build the Speakers Bureau: a clearinghouse on our website for a group of talented experts willing to give mission-aligned presentations to meet the demand for localized watershed presentations and programming. We are also looking forward to deepening our relationship within all communities in the watershed including schools/districts and existing and potential partner organizations, ultimately hoping to identify numerous existing community assets that can assist us in meeting our mission.



*Opposite page: Environmental Health Research-to-Action students run a total phosphate and nitrate test as part of their Community Science Day with Friends of the Rouge*  
**This page, left:** An EHRA student reads the total phosphate result at Ford Field in Dearborn. **Right:** Students from Clippert Academy (top) and Coolidge Elementary School (bottom) search for bugs in the river as part of their monitoring day.



## Recreation

Friends of the Rouge and community stakeholders are spearheading an effort to establish a world class water trail and connect a network of new and existing greenway trails on the Lower Rouge River. The 29-mile Lower Rouge River Water Trail and will span 10 cities from Canton to River Rouge. The Rouge Gateway Greenway will increase access to Wayne County Park assets like Hines Park for Lower Rouge communities and connect to a larger network of planned and existing trails including the Joe Louis Greenway, Downriver Linked Greenways, Iron Belle Trail, and the Great Lakes Way.

In 2022, The Friends of the Rouge Lower Rouge River Water Trail Leadership Committee advanced critical built environment projects that will bring new greenway trail connections and universally accessible launch infrastructure on the Lower Rouge River.

Friends of the Rouge secured a grant from the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, and courted American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding through Wayne County Economic Development to support construction of Rouge Gateway Greenway Phase II. The \$6.8M trail design incorporates two pedestrian bridges and traverses along the river from an existing trail at the confluence of the Main and Lower stems of the Rouge to the Henry Ford Museum. The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation grant will also support design development and construction documents for Rouge Gateway Greenway Phase III.

The Inkster Project Team, comprised of Friends of the Rouge, the National Kidney Foundation of Michigan, Inkster Task Force, and Wayne County Parks, and the City of Inkster were able to secure a grant through the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan to support design development of a universally accessible kayak launch in Wayne County Park's Inkster Park. Wayne County Parks is working to build the launch design into planned improvements for Inkster Park in 2023. Wayne County Parks is also planning the installation bookend of universally accessible launches at Venoy Dorsey Park for 2023.

Friends of the Rouge also continued its work with the Fort Rouge Gateway Partnership (FRoG Group) and received grants from the Marathon Foundation and the Gordie Howe International Bridge Company Community Benefits Program to complete construction documents and permitting for Phase II of the Multi-purpose Trailhead at Fort Street Bridge



Park, Detroit's only access point to the Lower Rouge River Water Trail. The park improvements will more than double the usable greenspace, expand the fishing and observation deck, and install a universally accessible kayak launch in a protected cove. Friends of the Rouge secured a grant from the Gilbert Family Foundation that represents 30% of the funds needed for construction. This gift will also help Friends of the Rouge expand its capacity and programming with the planned onboarding of a Trails Program Assistant in 2023.

The City of Dearborn has revived its vision and plans for accessible launch infrastructure at Dearborn Hills Golf Course and Ford Field Park. This is a popular route and the Ford Field Park Pond is a great space for beginning paddlers to practice and learn a few tips. For the past two years, Motor City Canoe and Kayak Rental has provided livery services at Ford Field Park, offering canoe and kayak rentals and shuttle services for paddlers with their own vessel.

Fort Street Bridge Park Phase II coupled with planned improvements at the Multi-purpose Trailheads at Kessey Fieldhouse, in Melvindale and Belanger Park, in River Rouge, will create shorter and more modest paddle trips on the historic industrial channel of the Lower Rouge Water Trail. Design development and construction documents were also completed for renovations to the existing boat launch at Kessey Fieldhouse. The City of Melvindale received ARPA funding from Wayne County Economic Development and Congresswoman Rashida Talib's Office Community Projects FY23 funding for construction of the Universally Accessible launch. It is anticipated construction will begin in 2023.

Friends of the Rouge also continued its logjam management



efforts on the Lower Rouge River. Utilizing the "clean and open method," Friends of the Rouge coordinated three volunteer workdays to remove floating wood and trash from logjams and open a 6-8ft path so the logjam is passable by canoe or kayak. In 2022, Wayne County Parks was instrumental in opening significant stretches of the Lower Rouge River Water Trail by remediating many of the water trail's largest logjams. The water trail now boasts open stretches from Goudy Park in Wayne to Venoy Dorsey Park in Westland, and Dearborn Hills Golf Course to the open water of the Main Branch concrete channel. Managing logjams is key to sustaining an open and safe water trail.

Friends of the Rouge also worked to up the fun meter and increase its efforts to share the community benefits of a safe and accessible Rouge River. The Lower Rouge River Water Trail Leadership Committee hosted 8 paddle trips in 2022, including its annual National Canoe Day Celebration at Ford Field Park, the end of Winter Paddle Trip, and an open water Birding Paddle event in partnership with Detroit Audubon. Paddlers identified 14 different species of birds on this trip around the shoreline of Newburgh Lake. Friends of the Rouge also worked with the National Kidney Foundation, Beaumont, the City of Dearborn, and the Downriver Delta Community Development Corporation to host its first ever Haunted Paddle Trip. The trip convened over 50 paddlers, some in costume, to paddle a spooky Rouge. Paddlers were greeted at the end with Halloween treats, a chance to make smores, and a carved pumpkin giveaway.

The Trails Program worked with community organizations and municipalities on the trail to bring its Dry Dock Pop Up exhibit to over two dozen sites in 2022. The Dry Dock Pop Up features a canoe, an interactive terrain model of the Rouge Watershed, youth crafts, and educational signage detailing trails plans. The Dry Dock Pop Up exhibit was featured at community farmers markets, the Inkster Task Force Easter Egg Drop, the Detroit River Water Festival, We're Fixin' to Fish, and Westland's Blues Brews, and BBQ. The Dry Dock Pop Up exhibit has proven to be a great space to meet people where they are and share fun facts about their local urban river, and the community and health benefits of outdoor recreation and trails.

*Opposite page, top: Paddle trip with Outdoor Afro Detroit in Dearborn. Middle: Spring Paddle Trip in Dearborn. Bottom: Volunteers and FOTR staff remove woody debris from a log jam in Dearborn. This page: Participants launching from Dearborn Hills Golf Course for the Haunted Paddle trip in Dearborn.*





# Advocacy

*In 2022, Friends of the Rouge built upon our efforts to guide public knowledge about important issues in the watershed. We continued our service on councils, committees and participation in events where FOTR can lay the framework for mission driven, meaningful advocacy and lobbying to educate and advise on issues in line with our work. This work lives within the legal framework of a nonprofit, and is informed by extensive research and guided by examples set by other nonprofits which operate effective and legally acceptable practices.*

*We advocate for the health of our watershed, the Rouge River and its tributaries, and all those (both the human and nonhuman) who live here, and value the rich diversity of our watershed—and see that as a key factor in advancing our mission and deepening our work in the communities we strive to serve.*

*As FOTR continues to grow in this role and seeks opportunities for both personal and professional development, we are encouraged and honored by the reception and level of trust the public places on us.*

*Highlights of our advocacy efforts over the past year include:*

Executive Director Marie McCormick presented virtually to state and federal legislators at Great Lakes Week in Washington DC.

Executive Director Marie McCormick elected to the Michigan Environmental Council (MEC) Board of Directors with continued service on the Policy Advisory Committee, advising MEC staff on member groups' responses to legislative issues related to water.

Maintaining an active role in the Rouge River Advisory Council (RRAC) that serves as the Public Advisory Committee (PAC) for the Rouge River Area of Concern (AOC). This group oversees large-scale habitat projects meant to delist the Rouge as an AOC. The FOTR Executive Director was elected to Chair in January 2022, leading a complete revision of the bylaws and serving on the Statewide Public Advisory Council's EJ-DEI Subcommittee advocating for diversity, equity and inclusion practices within the AOC program.

Signed onto a variety of letters to support federal initiatives including the following:

- Continuing implementation of the new SRF funding provided by the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act
- Urging Congress quickly come to an agreement on a final fiscal year 2023 appropriations package that enhances the federal government's support for Great Lakes restoration and clean water priorities
- Requesting that the Administration fully fund the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) at no less than \$425 million in the President's Fiscal Year 2024 Budget request
- Stood with Healing Our Waters—Great Lakes Coalition to support S.4136, the Water Resources Development Act of 2022 (WRDA), and its provisions which will serve to strengthen the resiliency of our communities and restoration of the Great Lakes
- Supported U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA") and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers ("Corps") proposed a rule to revise the definition of "waters of the United States" (86 FR 69372) under the Clean Water Act ("CWA")

# Membership Increases

*We're proud of how FOTR membership has grown over the last 5 years!*

- 2018 — 288 households
- 2019 — 300 households
- 2020 — 488 households
- 2021 — 568 households
- 2022 — 668 households



# 2022 Fundraising Events

HEART OF THE ROUGE  
**\$51,942**

REP BACK-TO-SCHOOL CHALLENGE  
**\$1,578**

YEAR-END APPEAL  
**\$75,185**

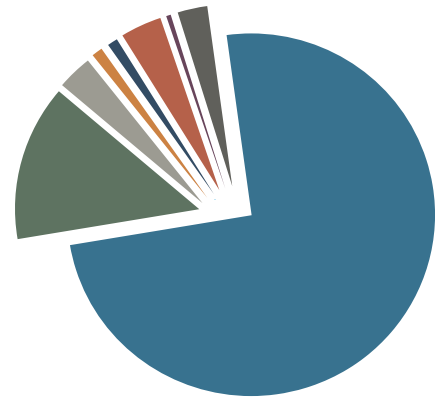
EARTH DAY APPEAL  
**\$3,004**

NATIVE PLANT & RAIN BARREL SALES  
**\$55,160**

# Fiscal Year 2022

JANUARY 1 - DECEMBER 31

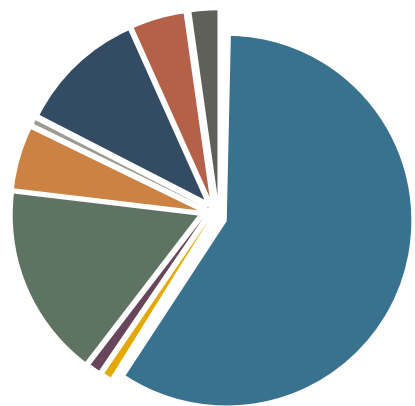
TOTAL REVENUES = \$4,650,764



Government Grants	\$ 128,113	2.5%
Foundation Support	\$ 3,490,769	75%
Other Grants	\$ 651,280	14%
Corporate Support	\$ 142,406	3%
Community Support	\$ 45,358	1%
Membership Dues	\$ 41,968	0.9%
Fundraising	\$ 177,247	3.5%
Other Revenue	\$ 3,622	0.1%
Gain on Investments	\$ -29,999	

TOTAL REVENUE BY SOURCE \$4,650,764 100%

TOTAL EXPENSES = \$1,516,603



Salaries and Benefits	\$ 892,237	60%
Education	\$ 9,660	0.5%
Monitoring	\$ 13,436	0.9%
Restoration	\$ 251,424	16%
Trails	\$ 82,092	5%
Outreach/Advocacy	\$ 1,510	0.1%
Operations	\$ 163,664	11%
Fundraising	\$ 68,413	4.5%
Other (including Depreciation)	\$ 34,167	2%

TOTAL EXPENSES BY USE \$1,516,603 100%



## FUNDERS

- Aaron Companies
- Alliance of Rouge Communities
- Altria Group, Inc.
- Ann Ivory Studios
- Atwell Group, LLC
- Beaumont Health
- The Block Foundation
- Bosch Community Fund
- Buddha's Light International Association
- Burns & McDonnell
- Cardno now Stantec
- Carmeuse
- City of Farmington
- City of Livonia
- City of Novi
- City of Plymouth
- City of Southfield
- City of Westland
- Cleveland-Cliffs Foundation
- Comcast
- Community Financial Credit Union
- Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan
- DTE Energy
- DTE Energy Foundation
- Edward C. Levy Company
- Environmental Consulting & Technology, Inc. (ECT)
- Fred A. and Barbara M. Erb Family Foundation
- First Merchants Bank
- Fleis & VandenBrink
- Garden Club of Dearborn
- Giffels Webster
- Gilbert Family Foundation
- Grissim Metz Andriese Associates
- Hubbell, Roth, & Clark (HRC Consulting)
- Huron River Watershed Council
- Inland Lakes Landscaping Corporation
- Interlake Maritime Services, Inc.
- ITC Holdings
- KLA Foundation
- M. J. Electric, LLC
- Marathon Petroleum Company LP
- Margaret Dunning Foundation
- Marine Pollution Control
- Mercedes-Benz Financial Services
- Michigan Association of Environmental Professionals
- Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE)
- Michigan Environmental Council
- Michigan First Foundation
- Michigan State University
- Midwestern Consulting LLC
- MKSK
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- National Kidney Foundation of Michigan
- National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
- Northville Township
- OHM Advisors
- PEA Group
- Plymouth Township
- ProCom LLC
- Pure Oakland Water (POW)
- Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation
- Research Analysis & Consulting
- Restoration 1
- Robert Bosch, LLC
- SHARE Detroit
- Six Rivers Regional Land Conservancy
- The Skillman Foundation
- SmithGroup
- SubCom
- The Funders Network
- Tonquish Creek Institute
- Tonquish Lodge #23, Independent Order of Odd Fellows
- True Cut Tree Care LLC
- TSP Environmental
- University of Maryland College Park
- University of Michigan - Dearborn
- US Ecology
- Utility Lines Construction Services
- Village of Beverly Hills
- Washtenaw County Water Resources Commission
- Wayne Metropolitan CAA
- Wayne State University
- Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority
- WM
- Womens National Farm & Garden Association: Bloomfield Hills Branch

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 Michigan Nonprofit Association  
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 Michigan Radio  
 Michigan Sea Grant—Water School  
 Michigan State University Extension  
 Michigan State University Tollgate Farm & Education Center  
 Michiganese Natives  
 MKSK  
 Moosejaw  
 Morgain MacDonald Consulting  
 Motor City Canoe & Kayak Rental  
 Motor City Magnet Fishers  
 MotorCities National Heritage  
 My Community SPEAKS  
 National Kidney Foundation of Michigan  
 National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)—Bay Watershed Education & Training Program (B-WET)  
 National Wildlife Federation  
 Natural Community Services  
 Near Perfect Media  
 Northville Township  
 Norwayne Community Citizens Council  
 Oakland County Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA)  
 Oakland County Water Resources Commission  
 OHM Advisors  
 Parallel Solutions, LLC  
 PEA Group  
 Penske Truck Leasing  
 PFAS Alliance  
 Phoenix Mill Events  
 Pierce Middle School, South Redford Schools  
 Planet Detroit  
 Plants for Ecology  
 Plymouth Arts and Recreation Complex  
 Plymouth Coffee Bean

Plymouth District Library  
 Plymouth Pollinators  
 Plymouth Rotary AM  
 Plymouth Rotary Club  
 Plymouth Township  
 Plymouth Township Environmental Leadership Commission  
 Plymouth-Canton Educational Park  
 Polyplastics  
 Pure Oakland Water  
 River Network  
 Riverside Kayak Connection  
 Rivian  
 Roosevelt High School  
 Rouge River Advisory Council  
 Rouge River Water Trail Leadership Committee  
 Salem Township  
 Save Hines Park  
 Schoolcraft College  
 Share Detroit  
 Sidewalk Detroit  
 Sierra Club of Michigan  
 Six Rivers Regional Land Conservancy  
 SmithGroup  
 Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG)  
 Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy  
 Southeast Michigan Partners for Clean Water  
 Southeast Michigan Stewardship Coalition (SEMIS)  
 Southwest Detroit Business Association  
 Southwest Detroit Economic Solutions  
 Southwest Detroit Environmental Vision  
 St. Mary's Church (Wayne)  
 St. Suzanne Cody Rouge  
 Community Resource Center  
 Stage Nature Center  
 State of Michigan—Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE)  
 State of Michigan – Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS)—Division of Environmental Health  
 State of Michigan—Department of Natural Resources (MDNR)  
 State of Michigan—Department of Transportation (MDOT)  
 State of Michigan—DNR  
 Outdoor Adventure Center  
 Steppingstone School  
 Sustainable Business Network of Detroit (SBND)  
 TDM  
 Tenneco  
 The Greening of Detroit  
 The Henry Ford  
 The Roeper School  
 The Stewardship Network  
 tmsr Design Delivery, LLC  
 Trout Unlimited

Troy High School  
 UAW Local 600  
 United States Army Corp of Engineers  
 United States Environmental Protection Agency  
 University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science  
 University of Michigan Ross School of Business SE Mi Alumni  
 University of Michigan—School of Information  
 University of Michigan—School of Environment and Sustainability  
 University of Michigan—Dearborn  
 University of Michigan—Dearborn—Environmental Interpretive Center  
 UPrep Schools  
 US Ecology  
 Varroc Lighting  
 VegMichigan  
 Village of Beverly Hills  
 VO Greater Detroit Church  
 Wade Trim  
 Washtenaw County Parks & Recreation  
 Washtenaw County Water Resources Commission  
 Wayne County Department of Public Service—Environmental Services Division  
 Wayne County Parks  
 Wayne County Sustainability Advisory Committee  
 Wayne Metro Quality Housing Incubator  
 Wayne Regional Educational Service Agencies  
 Wayne State University—Donna Kashian Lab  
 Wayne State University—Healthy Urban Waters  
 Wayne State University—Office of Campus Sustainability  
 Wayne State University—Transformative Research in Urban Sustainability Training  
 We Fixin' to Fish  
 WeSpire  
 West Bloomfield Library  
 West Bloomfield Parks & Recreation  
 West Outer Drive Civic Association  
 Westland Great Futures Summer Camp  
 Wildlife Habitat Council  
 Windy Rock Farm  
 WXYZ Detroit Channel 7  
 Youth Volunteers Corp (YVC)  
 Plymouth  
 Ypsilanti Community Utilities Authority  
 Ypsilanti Native Plant Nursery  
 ZF Group

# YOU Create a Better Rouge River!

Thank you, **FRIEND**, for the amazing impact you made possible in 2022!



**6,995** volunteers took action for a better Rouge River and more vibrant future



**72,480** gallons of water removed each time it rains, by new rain gardens for less pollution and flooding



**1,520** school students experienced a one-of-a-kind Rouge River water quality education



**423** advocacy and outreach events to raise a collective voice for your Rouge River



**37** Lower Rouge Water Trail events to trail build, explore and connect with nature

**13,100** square feet of grass transformed into new songbird, butterfly and pollinator habitat



**19,873** native plants, **9,162** trees and **285** rain barrels for a more vibrant watershed



**3,526** hours of river monitoring at **519** sites for bugs, frogs, toads, fish and invasive species



**10,601** hours of river education for the public—caring people like YOU



**1** Heart of the Rouge event to celebrate YOUR Rouge River!



## STAFF

Executive Director Marie McCormick  
Operations and Membership Assistant Cara Beld  
Senior Restoration Coordinator Matthew Bertrand  
Education Manager Erin Cassady  
Education and Monitoring Assistant Sam Davis  
Restoration Landscape Architect and Mentor Brian Devlin  
Development Director Lara Edwards  
Restoration Assistant Dallas Ford  
Restoration Assistant Michael Grady  
Operations Director Karen Hanna  
Restoration Coordinator Jaclyn Heikkila  
Trails Manager Herman Jenkins  
Restoration Assistant Eli Lowry  
Restoration Coordinator Renato Marimon  
Restoration Assistant Rosina Newton  
Monitoring Manager Sally Petrella  
Restoration Manager Cyndi Ross

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