



Friends of the Rouge

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therouge.org
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Board of Directors Prospectus

Friends of the Rouge (FOTR) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that was founded in 1986 to raise awareness about the need to clean up the Rouge River – the most urbanized and polluted river in Michigan. The Rouge River Watershed encompasses 467 square miles, 127 river miles, four major branches, 400 lakes, impoundments, and ponds, and includes over 1.35 million people in three counties (Oakland, Washtenaw, and Wayne). Over four decades, Friends of the Rouge has evolved from an all-volunteer non-profit with one annual cleanup to a multi-million dollar organization with a professional staff of twenty, hundreds of members and donors, thousands of volunteers, and year-round programs.

We advance our mission to restore, protect, and enhance the Rouge River watershed through stewardship, education, and collaboration and envision a future where a clean and vibrant Rouge River is the center of our community. Our work at the confluence of community and the environment:

- **Restores:** Actively working to reverse damage
- **Protects:** Safeguarding natural resources, ecosystems, and biodiversity
- **Enhances:** Improve accessibility, sustainability, and connection with the community

Friends of the Rouge Programs:

- **Monitoring:** Monitoring activities involve collecting data on the health of the Rouge River. This data supports conservation and advocacy efforts, while also engaging the community in understanding river health through bug hunts, fish seining, frog and toad surveys, etc.
- **Restoration:** Restoration activities leverage FOTR's technical expertise to support the health of the watershed through nature-based solutions such as rain gardens, green stormwater infrastructure, and habitat restoration. These efforts improve water quality, reduce flooding, support native flora and fauna, mitigate stormwater run-off and combined sewer overflows, reduce erosion, improve oxygen, conserve land, and strengthen biodiversity.
- **Trails:** Trails activities focus on the development, maintenance, and activation of recreational trails on land (greenways) and in the water (blueways). These efforts increase access to (sub)urban nature, integrate blue and green infrastructure along the Rouge River, teach key outdoor skills, and leverage community partnerships for maximum impact.
- **Education:** Education can be found in all FOTR programs, but is built on the legacy Rouge Education Project (REP), which provided environmental science learning to students through classroom instruction and hands-on experience. Future efforts will focus on experiential learning, STEM exposure, and environmental stewardship training for people and property.

About the Board of Directors

The Friends of the Rouge Board of Directors supports our mission by setting direction, providing oversight and philanthropic support, ensuring financial and ethical accountability, participating in strategic planning, fundraising, committee functions, and advising on program priorities. Current standing committees include Executive, Finance, Membership, and Fund Development. While we have had a legacy as a working board, given the growth and professionalization of the organization, we aim to function as a fiduciary and fundraising board. Bylaws provide for fifteen directors serving three-year staggered terms creating five vacancies per year. Directors may be re-elected for a maximum of two terms; board elections are held annually by electronic and printed ballot for all current Friends of the Rouge members.

Nomination & Election Process and Timeline

Candidates for Friends of the Rouge Board of Directors self-nominate. The online Nomination Form is available on the Friends of the Rouge website therouge.org. The Membership Committee, composed of three board directors and staffed by the executive director and the director of development, reviews applications and interviews and selects candidates to stand for election. FOTR members then vote to elect board directors, which is then confirmed by a board vote.

Nominations will be accepted through October 9, 2026. Nominations will be reviewed on a rolling basis; early submissions are encouraged. Interviews will be scheduled as nominations are received. Following the election, new directors will begin their terms on January 1st, 2027, and receive a board orientation in January 2027.

Timeline

- Deadline for nominations: October 9, 2026
- Nominee review, interviews, and steps: Late August – Early November
 - a. Nomination submitted
 - b. Meet with director of development
 - c. Meet with executive director and board director(s)
 - d. Membership Committee review and approval
 - e. Members Vote
 - f. Board Votes
- Selected candidates announced: November 8, 2026
- Member Voting Period: November 9 – December 9, 2026
- Board of Directors Meeting and Vote: December 9, 2026
- Notification to candidates of election results: December 10, 2026
- Onboarding: December 2026 – January 2027
- New directors take seats: January 1, 2027

Responsibilities

Directors are expected to fulfill the dual role of [fiduciaries](#) and funders, attend and participate in board meetings, serve on at least one additional standing committee, attend FOTR programming and events as they are able, and serve as FOTR ambassadors to the community.

Expectations of Board Directors Include:

Board Participation

- Attending board meetings; six meetings are held over the course of the calendar / fiscal year (January 1 to December 31). Board directors may be excused from up to two of the six meetings per year. Meetings typically last two hours.
- Attending committee meetings; Active participation in at least one additional committee, meetings typically are held three or four times a year and usually last 1 – 1.5 hours. Active participation in board committee meetings is an essential responsibility of all directors to contribute their expertise and perspective to advance FOTR's mission. Committee meetings are held virtually and scheduled in coordination with members. Consistent attendance is expected, as each member's engagement directly impacts the committee's effectiveness and progress.
- Meetings are held both in-person and via video conference (e.g., Zoom, Google Meet) and accessible via conference calls. To fully participate in board meetings, directors are expected to have reliable communication tools, be present, and collaborative for effective participation.
- Reviewing materials in advance of board meetings. Materials are shared via email.
- Engaging in board and committee discussions; listening and asking questions; making motions and decisions consistent with FOTR's mission, personal conscience, convictions, and ethics; supporting majority decisions once issues are decided by the board.
- Maintaining the confidentiality of the board's executive sessions; speaking for the board or FOTR only as authorized.
- Suggesting agenda items for board and committee meetings; ensuring that significant policy matters are addressed.
- Complete assigned tasks from committees, meetings, or individual assignments and respond to board communications promptly to ensure effective collaboration and decision-making.
- Volunteering to fill officer roles and chair committees as vacancies arise.

Fiduciary Responsibility

- Exercising prudence and sound fiscal practice in the control of funds.
- Reviewing financial statements; helping the board fulfill its fiduciary responsibilities to maintain a stable and forward-looking organization
- Abiding by all relevant laws and regulations, FOTR mission, bylaws, and policies.
- Abiding by the Conflict-of-Interest Policy (COI) to avoid conflicts of interest, or the appearance of conflicts that might compromise the board or the organization and disclose possible personal conflicts to the board.

Fundraising

Directors play a critical role in supporting FOTR's fundraising efforts. While directors are not expected to be expert fundraisers, each is expected to actively contribute to **building a culture of philanthropy**.

- Place Friends of the Rouge in your **top three philanthropic priorities**.
- Make a personal meaningful **annual gift** to Friends of the Rouge.
- Consider a **significant gift** during your three-year term. A significant gift is typically a leadership annual, major, principal, or planned gift commitment made toward a resonant FOTR priority in conversation with FOTR development/leadership.
- Support and **participate in fundraising efforts**, regardless of prior experience.
- Leverage personal and professional **networks to identify potential** donors, sponsors, or partners.
- Champion FOTR's mission in the community to **raise awareness and support**.
- **Thank donors and supporters** to help build lasting relationships.

- Demonstrate leadership and commitment through **active fundraising engagement**, which encourages external support.
- Maintain an active **Friends of the Rouge membership** throughout your board service.

Time Commitments

Most board directors can expect to spend **4-8 hours per month** on board work, with some months fewer than 4 hours. You may also be expected to attend in-person board meetings or retreats.

- **Board Meetings:** 2-2.5 hours six times per year
- **Committee Meetings:** 1-1.5 hours up to four times per year
- **Meeting Preparation** (Board and Committee Meetings): 1-2 hours per month
- **FOTR Programs and Events:** 2-4 hours per month
- **Mission Advancement, Outreach, & Fundraising:** 3-5 hours per month

Additional Information

The following documents may be viewed on the FOTR website:

- [FOTR Board Recruitment Prospectus](#)
- [FOTR Mission, Vision, Values](#)
- [FOTR 2024 IRS 990 Tax Form](#)
- [FOTR Bylaws](#)
- [FOTR 2025 Annual Report](#)
- [FOTR Strategic Plan 2025-2030](#)
- [FOTR Sample Board Meeting](#)
- [FOTR Conflict of Interest Policy](#)

Friends of the Rouge Board of Directors FY2026

Officers

President: Myra M. Tetteh, Ph.D., Wayne County Department of Health, Human & Veterans Services

Vice President: Brandy Siedlaczek, City of Southfield

Secretary: Susan Thompson, Wayne County Department of Public Service

Treasurer: Carol Snodgrass, CPA

Member-At-Large: Mike McNulty, ITC Holdings

Directors

Jessica Eiland Anders, Ballmer Group

Ian Bernstein, Environmental Consulting & Technology, Inc.

Paul Draus, Ph.D., University of Michigan-Dearborn

Erma Leaphart, Retired, Sierra Club

Dave Norwood, Canton Township

Gerry VanAcker, Retired, Detroit Zoological Society

Questions

For questions about nominations, or if more information is needed about the board or Friends of the Rouge, please contact Andrew Berg, Director of Development, at 734-927-4908 or

aberg@therouge.org