

# Riffles & Runs

Rogue River Watershed Project Newsletter

Grand Valley State University Annis Water Resources Institute

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## Rogue River Watershed Through Time

Andrea Vander Woude

### Who named the Rogue River?

A topographer named James A. Morrison named the Rogue River after the Rouge River in the southeastern side of the state. After recording the new name for the river it was misspelled as the Rogue River. Even today, the confusion still exists between the Rogue River and the Rouge River.

### When was the Rogue River watershed created?

The Rogue River Watershed with its lakes, rivers, and tributaries was formed about 12,000 to 15,000 years ago during the last glaciating period. Rice Lake became the headwaters that drained into the Rogue River. In the 1900's, this lake became dry and is now used for farm production. Today, many cold-water tributaries and springs flow from the dry Rice Lake bed to feed the Rogue River.


### What economic resources did it supply?

The waterways have supplied many economic resources for the community. In the northern portion of the watershed, the agricultural lands have been farmed for the past 100 years. Lumbering was also a popular industry throughout the 1900's, with many saw



Rockford Dam in 1906.

Photo courtesy of Rockford Area Historical Museum.

mills that lined the river in the Rockford area. The Rogue River became polluted over time from the intense farming and lumbering. Today, the Rogue River still struggles to sustain its natural beauty with the increase in urban sprawl. However, many waterways within the Rogue River Watershed are still considered a pristine resource by nature enthusiasts. 



### Concerned About Our Kent County Streams?

Page 2



### Natural Rivers Act Of 1970

Page 2



### Land Use Planning In Nature

Page 3



### Kickoff Event At Rockford United Methodist Church

Page 3

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## Concerned About Our Kent County Streams?

Tom Cary

Recently, the West Michigan Environmental Action Council, an environmental advocacy and education organization with a 30 year history in the region, received funding to perform biological monitoring on the streams of Kent County. This project is called Kent County Stream Search.

Through Stream Search, we have committed to collecting biological samples from at least 35 stream sites in the county each spring and fall. Many of these sites lie in the Rogue watershed as well as the Thomapple, Flat, and Grand Rivers' watersheds.

This collection, to be performed by volunteers, termed "volunteer monitoring" is important because the state environmental agencies collect stream data on a very infrequent or a response basis. Without this regular biological information, we do not know if the quality of our area streams is improving or degrading. With your help, we feel we can begin to get the community support to improve and better protect these valuable resources.

## Natural Rivers Act of 1970

Nichol Stout

In Michigan, many river habitats remain unspoiled. Forests and wetlands still remain along waterways despite the fact that urbanization is increasing. Rivers have been able to maintain their natural beauty because of the Natural River Act of 1970.

The Natural River Act allows the state to enforce protection techniques to preserve habitat, water quality, and the scenic values of the streams. The Natural Resource Commission establishes these techniques by having zoning districts along the river. In these zoning districts land uses such as agriculture, forestry, recreation, residence, industry, commerce, and

**To make Stream Search happen we need you!**


You can help by either...

1) Attending training on ***April 29***  
AND lead a stream monitoring group on ***May 6***,


**OR**

2) Assisting trained volunteers on ***May 6*** in monitoring the streams



If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions, please contact *Tom Cary* at 616-451-3051 or [wmeactc@iserv.net](mailto:wmeactc@iserv.net). 

other uses may be encouraged, regulated, or prohibited. Preserving natural vegetation along the river and setbacks from the riverbanks for construction of buildings are the two most beneficial protection techniques.

The mainstream of the Rogue River in Kent County from 20 mile downstream to where it intersects the Grand River is designated a Natural River. Barkley, Cedar, Duke, Rum, Shaw, Spring, and Stegman Creek are protected tributaries under the Natural River Act of 1970. These streams are protected because they provide coldwater in the Rogue River system enabling cool-cold water species, such as trout, to survive. 

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## Land Use Planning In Nature

Andy Bowman

Land use planning is a complicated environmental tool essential to managing watershed quality. Most citizens, including those who sit on planning commissions, do not get involved with the relationship between human perceptions and the way their communities are developed. Often times planning commissioners and other interested citizens go through an involved planning process which leads to a schematic map of land uses arranged in a theoretically desirable way. Then, policy-

makers and regulators, who are often the same individuals involved in the planning process, enact regulations determining how their community is built. This process seems to be a simple and straightforward way to develop communities. However, we are only regulating the use of land instead of the pattern of development.

Community land use patterns reflect our behavioral patterns. Everyone has a set of perceptions, behaviors, and beliefs about ourselves both individually

and collectively. These attributes play themselves out in the form of housing, transportation, business, and community decisions. When we adopt policies and regulations that alter land use patterns, we also adopt a set of rules that conflict with the very nature of who we are. This is not to say that we are subject to our instinctual basis for community formation and are powerless to

change. Regulations and policies are what we rely on to ensure fairness and equity. For such rules to be effective, we must recognize that land use planning requires us to go against our nature, alter certain beliefs, and adopt new perceptions about our communities and ourselves. The question is, can we see the need and embrace the change? 💧

## Kickoff Event At Rockford United Methodist Church

Nichol Stout

Despite threats of a winter storm, on February 17 people gathered to learn about the Rogue River Watershed Project and voice their concerns. Increasing development pressure, pollution, and erosion problems were some of the worries expressed by the public. The meeting was held to provide the public with an opportunity to meet the Project Staff and Stakeholders that are working to develop a Land Management Plan for the Rogue River Watershed.

Guest speaker Glenn Blackwood, host of the television show Fly Fishing with Glen Blackwood, urged the audience to become interested in the Rogue River Watershed because it is a unique resource. The Rogue River Watershed offers a



Fly fisherman on the Rogue River.

natural beauty that is only a short drive from the second largest metropolitan area in Michigan. To exist together, everyone must be involved in protecting this magnificent resource. 💧

## Ways To Protect Your Watershed

- \* Get to know your watershed through information and education.
- \* Minimize use of harmful contaminants that are added to your water supply.
- \* Keep track of household water use to increase water efficiency.
- \* Maintain your septic system.
- \* Store and dispose of contaminants properly.
- \* Maintain riverside buffer strips; plant a tree.
- \* Prevent and correct erosion problems.
- \* Protect, enhance, or create wetlands.
- \* **Get involved in the Volunteer Monitoring Program** ( see “Concerned About Our Kent County Streams?” Page 2).
- \* **Get involved in a Rogue River Watershed clean-up on June 3.**



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