

Riffles & Runs

Rogue River Watershed Project Newsletter

Grand Valley State University Annis Water Resources Institute

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Rogue River Stream Search

Donna Stevens - Annis Water Resources Institute

Do you know the quality of the creeks and rivers where you live? The West Michigan Environmental Action Council (WMEAC), Schrems West Michigan Trout Unlimited (SWMTU), the Annis Water Resources Institute of Grand Valley State University (AWRI-GVSU), and many volunteers have been compiling data for the last four years on several creeks in the Rogue River Watershed. These data are useful because it helps us to better determine the quality of the water. To find out a stream's "health", a "Total Stream Quality Score" is determined by collecting and identifying the insects in the stream.

How can aquatic insects be used to determine stream "health"? Certain types of insects in the stream are sensitive to pollution while others are more tolerant. Bugs such as caddisflies, stoneflies, and mayflies thrive in waters that are clean and cool. When pollution enters into a stream it not only effects that isolated area, but also spreads downstream leaving many dead organisms in its wake. The organisms that are better adapted to living in polluted waters will then take over the once rich and diverse habitat.

Would you like to learn more about these aquatic insects? Then come join us for a **Stream Search Team Leader Training day on October 4, 2003** at North Rockford Middle School. The training is scheduled for **9:30a.m.-2:00p.m.** During the training you will learn about these insects and how to identify them. You will get to apply what you know by going to a stream and doing some sampling. **Contact Donna Stevens at 616-331-3789 or stevendo@gvsu.edu if you would like to attend.**



Even the youngest people help with the Rogue River Stream Search Event!

If you aren't interested in the training you can still help out by signing up to be a volunteer at our annual Fall Rogue River Stream Search event. The Stream Search event is free and open to everyone. Over the four years we have had a very diverse age group from 3-70. The event lasts three hours, and lunch is provided by the SWMTU.

This year the **Stream Search will take place on October 18, 2003** at the Rockford Boy Scout Camp located at the end of Rector Road off of Summit Ave. The event will last from **8:45 a.m.-12:00 p.m.**; children under the age of 12 must be accompanied by an adult. Hip boots will be provided for the adults, but children under 12 should come with some kind of water shoe. **RSVP for Stream Search by Oct. 10 to Donna Stevens at 616-331-3789 or stevendo@gvsu.edu.** Come and join us this fall. Bring your family, help the river, and have some fun doing it! 💧



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What is in Your Rogue River Watershed?

Donna Stevens - *Annis Water Resources Institute*

As we all know, the Rogue River Watershed is a region of natural beauty. The watershed supports a very diverse environment, and sometimes it is hard to notice the little things. As this watershed is studied and explored, any neat little things we stumble across we will take note of, conduct research on, and let you know about it through this newsletter.



Farmer's Markets have been around for as long as there has been farming. The produce found at Farmer's Markets tend to have less pesticides and fertilizers, and are usually cheaper than what is found at most grocery stores.

The city of Rockford has started a new tradition. For the past two years every Saturday morning the local farmers bring their produce to the S. Squires St. parking lot for a Farmer's Market. At the market you will find flowers, plants, fruits, vegetables, eggs, and honey. This is a great way to experience the wonderful bounty of the Rogue River Watershed.



Buying vegetables at the Rockford Farmer's Market.

Donald Salmon of Howard City estimates that 700 to 800 people attend every Saturday. This was Mr. Salmon's first year at the Rockford Farmer's Market and he says he'll come back in the future.

Farmer's Markets are an important source of income to farmers, and it also develops a unity within the community. The Rockford Farmer's Market runs every Saturday from 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. The last market will be on October 11, 2003. Next year, look for the Market to open in the month of June.



Rogue River Watershed Council: Seeing our Vision

Andy Bowman - *Grand Valley Metro Council*

Since the formation of our Rogue River Watershed Council at the beginning of this year, we have been working hard on several important projects including the creation and support for a *Rogue River Celebration* held on May 31, 2003; land use planning exercises through the "Blueprint II Framework Process" conducted by GVMC staff; and discussing potential funding for a new "watershed assessment tool" promoting long-range awareness of watershed health. However, behind all this work we are all aware of two very important undercurrents:

- (1) We are all convinced that this is an extremely worthwhile new organization for considering a wide range of watershed issues.
- (2) We must find the best way to structure the organization to both be effective in maintaining a healthier Rogue River and to allow all interested parties (and maybe not so interested parties) to see the value of the council and lend their support if not direct membership.

Therefore, over the next several meetings, we will be investigating the possibilities and working towards adoption of a vision, mission and goals to match the great promise of these earliest stages of forming our watershed council. 💧

If you have good examples or successful models to share with us, please feel free to call Andy Bowman at GVMC at (616) 776-7611 or send them to 40 Pearl NW; Grand Rapids, MI 49503 or e-mail to bowmana@gvmc.org.



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Keeping Nature Nearby

Rhoda deJonge - *Land Conservancy of West Michigan*

You know your land better than anyone. You've built memories on it, changed its landscape, and experienced the awe of the wildlife that lives there. The love you have for your land has crept into your bones. With this love, often comes a great concern for its future. Landowners can now secure the future of the land they love through affordable permanent conservation.

The old fox den, the wood lot with its wildflowers and songbirds, the stream and wetlands you walked along so many times can all be protected. You can have the sense of security in knowing that the land you love will never be developed.

Whatever your motivation, whether out of love for the land, or love for receiving a year-end tax deduction, a conservation easement can be a valuable tool for landowners who wish to protect their private natural land.

A conservation easement is an agreement in which a landowner stays in full ownership of the property, but permanently restricts future development of all, or part, of the land in order to preserve its desirable natural features. The property remains strictly private, provides no public use and can be passed down, bought, and sold. Each easement is tailored to the interest of the landowner and their property. In addition to the personal satisfaction of having permanently saved the land from development, there may be income, estate and property tax benefits available.

Conservation easements are made with a unit of government or, more often, a conservation organization, such as the Land Conservancy of West Michigan (LCWM). These groups are never allowed to use these development rights, and the agreement stays with the property forever.



Marsh Marigold a Native flower species that will be protected by conservation easements.



A field trip to a forest that has a conservation easement.

The LCWM is a local, non-profit, non-government organization who works to 'keep nature nearby'. They have been active in West Michigan for over 25 years. In that time, they have protected over 1,700 acres through conservation easements, the creation of nature preserves, and by assisting local government with land protection projects. All of the LCWM's discussions with landowners are confidential and imply no obligation. They respect private property rights and any decision a landowner makes.

"Love for the land can go a long way."

The LCWM has special concern for land that is part of the Rogue River Watershed. Its unique beauty and history, as well as the increased threat of land development, have peaked their interest in seeing the land in the watershed forever protected.

Love for land can go a long way. This is the primary reason people create conservation easements. When a landowner permanently protects their property, the songs of the birds in the woodlot, the echoing bubble of the creek's ripples and runs, and the wind's whistled path through the rushes, will never be silenced. 💧



If you have questions about this newsletter or the Rogue River Watershed program, please call Nichol Stout at (616) 331-3092 or e-mail her at stoutn@gvsu.edu.



Wandering Through Your Watershed



In the last newsletter the mystery location was the Rockford Community Cabin which is located at 220 N. Monroe Street. The Cabin sits along Rum Creek in Rockford Memorial park. This wonderful piece of history was built in 1937 and has since then been renovated. Can you guess the mystery location to the left?



*Rockford Community
Cabin*

www.rockford.mi.us/discoverrockford/Parks/ParksIndex.htm

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