

# Riffles & Runs

Watershed Project Newsletter

Grand Valley State University Robert B. Annis Water Resources Institute

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## Rogue River Watershed Builds Momentum

Andrea Vander Woude

### Section 319 Watershed Grant

The Robert B. Annis Water Resources Institute (WRI) of Grand Valley State University and the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council (GVMC) are the new recipients of a Section 319 Watershed Management Planning grant for the Rogue River Watershed. This is one of the largest watersheds that the Michigan Department of Environmental Water Quality (MDEQ) has awarded a 319 grant to. The 319 grant provides a unique opportunity to approach water quality, assessment procedures, public education, and information dissemination at a greater scale.

### Rogue River Watershed

The Rogue River Watershed is 167,625 acres in size and shares its boundaries with Kent, Ottawa, Newaygo, Muskegon, and Montcalm counties. The watershed is widely recognized for its cold water tributaries that provide a trout fishery and an abundance of wildlife habitat. It also offers a large variety of recreational activities for many residents from the Grand Rapids metro area.

### Land Management Plan

WRI and GVMC are devising a plan to keep this natural river accessible.

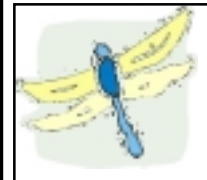


White water on the Rogue River.

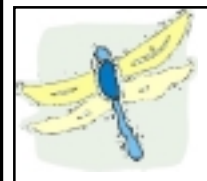
Presently, the most significant threat to the watershed is uncontrolled urban sprawl. Urban development has the potential to impact the surface and groundwater supply by adding impervious surfaces (parking lots, paved surfaces) that accelerate erosion, sedimentation, and loss of aquatic habitat. There is also an increase in individual septic systems that has resulted in aquifer contamination, health hazards, and degradation of the water quality. WRI's goal is to evaluate all of the important factors that affect the Rogue River Watershed and then supply recommendations for the implementation of a land management plan.



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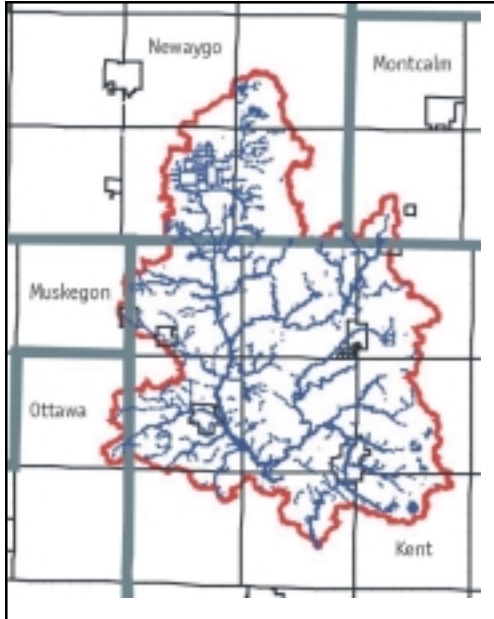


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## Watershed Managed by Teamwork

Building partnerships is the key to an effective watershed management plan. The **Rogue River Watershed Advisory Committee (WAC)** was established for this purpose. This committee brings together local officials and conservationists to assist with the development of the management plan. The members of WAC are:



Rogue River Watershed

**Grand Valley Metropolitan Council (GVMC)**  
**Grand Valley State University**  
**Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ)**  
**West Michigan Trout Unlimited**  
**City of Rockford**  
**Kent County Drain Commissioner**  
**Kent County Road Commission**  
**West Michigan Environmental Action Council (WMEAC)**  
**Algoma Township**  
**Plainfield Township**  
**Cedar Springs**

## Career Day at Kellogsville Elementary

On November 17, 1999, the project staff for the Rogue River Watershed Project participated in Career Day at Kellogsville Elementary. Third and fifth grade students were eager to learn about environmental careers and how scientists and engineers study the Rogue River at the Robert B. Annis Water Resources Institute. Mia DeBruyne (Rogue River Project Engineer) and Andrea Vander Woude (Rogue River Project Manager) described their typical day at work and educated the students by building a historical model of the Rogue River.

The river model focused on runoff commonly associated with the Rogue River. This included sedimentation from development, oil and gasoline from roads, agricul-



tural chemicals and landfill impacts. Students were able to visualize the progressive contamination of the river water and were fascinated by the adverse affects that humans have on our river systems. Students also learned that they could make a difference in their water quality. 💧

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# Building Watersheds from Blueprints

Andy Bowman

So why is the Grand Valley Metro Council involved with a Section 319 Watershed Management Plan for the Rogue River? The answer is simple: a watershed is a regional entity. Seldom do watersheds fit neatly into the government boundaries of townships, cities, or counties. Watersheds are usually made up of many municipal authorities, each having their own basket of important local concerns. GVMC being an organization made up of many municipal and county jurisdictions is well suited to assist in coordinating the activities of many municipal organizations.

Metro Council has an even more compelling reason to be involved with watershed planning. Since the water cycle is distributed throughout our landscape it is an important indicator of the



Rogue River

conditions of our habitat. It tells us about the many practices and activities we conduct within our built community and shows us a direct relationship between our use of land and our natural environment.

Our use of land has been changing significantly over the last several decades. Since the post-World War II building boom in this country, we have chosen to disregard more traditional forms of city building. The distinction between “the country” and “the city” has become blurred. This has resulted in ever increasing segments of our population moving out into “the country” and bringing the amenities of the city with them.

The way we build our cities, towns, and suburban developments is the focus of an important document created in the early 90’s and adopted by GVMC in 1994 as the Metropolitan Development Blueprint. The “Blueprint” made decision-makers throughout the region aware that we are becoming another “unlivable” metropolitan area overrun with unrelated suburban developments sprawling across the countryside at the expense of everyone and to the benefit of few. The “Blueprint” offers us a different vision for our future which involves changing the “business as usual” nature of developing our communities.

The “Blueprint” seeks to change the patterns in which we have been placing our growing population for decades. Instead of planning and zoning for broad uses across unexamined landscapes, then hoping each development receives local approval, we should start with our healthy communities and steer development to fit in. Surprisingly, most people want this to occur, but they still build and buy homes in the country because that’s where homes are being built. If the settlement pattern doesn’t change, neither will our sprawl.

The first step in changing the process of sprawling development involves regionalism. Without looking at what we are doing as a region, we are likely to keep the same development procedures. Thus, destined to keep creating the same cumulative effects. However, regionalism does not happen by simply saying it must. Michigan has clearly staked its future on a home-rule structure of land use regulation. We must work within this constraint in generating regional planning. Therefore, GVMC is taking two very important steps in regionalism: (1) creating REGIS, a regional system of storing and mapping data so we can see what we are all about regionally, and (2) establishing sub-regional planning entities as a first step toward forging a regional perspective in the planning process. 💧

# **NOTICE**

## **PUBLIC KICK-OFF MEETING**

**A Rogue River Watershed Project Kick-Off event is planned for February 17, 2000 at the Rockford City Hall from 7:00 to 9:00 PM. This event will be hosted by the Robert B. Annis Water Resources Institute of Grand Valley State University and Grand Valley Metro Council.**

### **Reasons to attend:**

- Learn about the Rogue River Watershed Project**
- Meet the Rogue River Watershed Project Staff and Stakeholders**
- Become a Watershed Steward**

**For further information please contact : The Robert B. Annis Water Resources Institute, Grand Valley State University, One Campus Dr. , Allendale, MI 49401 /or/  
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