

Riffles & Runs

Rogue River Watershed Project Newsletter

Grand Valley State University Annis Water Resources Institute

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What is the Natural Rivers Program?

Steve Sutton, Natural Rivers Program


Michigan residents are fortunate to be surrounded by more than 36,000 miles of rivers and streams. Cold water trout streams make up 12,500 miles of the rivers and streams. We are also fortunate that Michigan has many programs focused on the protection and enhancement of those river resources. One program is the Natural Rivers Program, which is part of the Fisheries Division, within the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

In 1970, the Natural River Act was passed into law. The new law authorized the DNR to develop a system of Natural Rivers in the interest of the people. The purpose of the Natural Rivers Act is to preserve and enhance a river's value for: aesthetics, free-flowing condition, recreation, boating, historic value, water conservation, floodplain, and fisheries and wildlife habitat.

Since 1970, 1,698 miles on fourteen rivers or segments of rivers have been designated a part of Michigan's Natural River System. The Rogue River was designated a Natural River in 1973, along with the Betsie and Two Hearted rivers. The Rogue system currently has 132 miles designated under the program, with roughly 42 miles of mainstream and 90 miles of tributary being protected. Designated tributaries include Spring, Duke, Big Cedar, Becker, Stegman, Shaw, Rum, and Barkley Creeks.

The Natural Rivers Program is effective as a management tool because of its use of development standards and the programs influence on private, as well as public, lands. Because all lands,

public and private, within the Natural River district (300 feet on either side of the Rogue) are included in the designation, a seamless corridor of protected land is the result.

For more information regarding the Natural Rivers Program, please visit our web site at www.michigandnr.com under Fishing or contact Nichol Stout for a detailed brochure about the program. 

The Natural Rivers Program is part of the Habitat Management Unit within Fisheries Division of the Department of Natural Resources. Steve Sutton is the Natural Rivers Program Manager and shamelessly plagiarized from the works of other NR staff. Steve can be reached at 517-241-9049 or suttonsl@michigan.gov



Cedar Creek is designated a Natural River.



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What is in Your Rogue River Watershed ?


Nichol Stout

As we all know, the Rogue River Watershed is a landscape 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.

The Ottawa Indians settled in the Grand River Valley, which includes the Rogue River Watershed, in 1741¹. The name Ottawa comes from the Algonquin word "Adawe" meaning "to trade" and originates from their role as traders. Maple sugar was one of the many items that the Ottawa Indians traded.

Native Americans had a process for making maple sugar as early as 1609². As winter started to turn into spring, the Ottawa Indians would move their whole families into a spot in the forest where there would be

plentiful sugar maple trees. These spots were later called "sugar camps". The Ottawa Indians would make V-shaped slashes in the tree trunk and collect the sap. The water was boiled away from the sap by dropping hot rocks in the containers made of either hollowed out logs or clay.

The Ottawa Indians established two sugar camps in what is now Algoma Township in Section 28 and Section 33³. The sugar camp in Section 28 was along an unnamed creek that runs into the Rogue River and in Section 33 along the Rogue River. 



¹ <http://www.dickshovel.com/otta.html>, First Nations Histories

² <http://www.massmaple.org/history.html>, Massachusetts Maple Producers Association

³ Finney, Kevin R., 2001. A map of a portion of the Rogue River including Plainfield Township 1800 to 1838



Do You Have a Stream or River Nearby?

Patricia Pennell, West Michigan Environmental Action Council

The Rogue and its tributaries are a unique and valuable resource in your community, providing natural beauty, wildlife habitat, recreation and more. These streams and the river need our help to protect and preserve them.

Do you have a stream or river nearby that you care about? If so, you have an opportunity to do it some good. West Michigan Environmental Action Council's (WMEAC) Adopt-A-Stream program can assist you in becoming the caretaker of your stretch of living water. Learning about your stream and how to protect it is an enjoyable activity that will have a positive effect on the health of your waterways for generations to come.



You can become a caretaker of your stretch of living water.


"A lake is the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It is earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature."

Henry David Thoreau



How to get involved:

- Organize a group of people. Try to enlist about ten people per mile of stream. Pick group leaders.
- Pick a section of stream to adopt.
- Decide the level of participation that your group will commit to. There are four levels of participation, involving biology studies, stream clean-ups, stream enhancement projects, and other activities.
- The group leaders submit a work plan to WMEAC of the year's planned activities.

Group leaders and members participate in training opportunities and events offered by WMEAC. WMEAC has support staff, equipment to loan, a reference library, and can assist in determining strategies for your group to set and accomplish goals. 

If you are interested in adopting your stream, please contact WMEAC at 616-451-3051, rivers@wmeac.org, 1514 Wealthy SE Suite 280, Grand Rapids, MI 40506

Improving Your Land For Wildlife

Steve Utic, Natural Resource Conservation Service

Landowners in the Rogue River Watershed will be interested to know that there is professional assistance available from USDA to help bring wildlife onto their property. "Many people have different opinions about how to attract wildlife, but they don't always have an understanding of what different wildlife species need to survive in an area" says Steve Utic, of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. "Most people seem to think that planting trees on their property will attract animals, but depending on how those trees are spatially arranged within the landscape, this is not always the case".

In order to bring a greater level of understanding to landowners on how to attract and hold wildlife on their property, USDA has developed a program available to them to do just that. Called the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program or WHIP, this service puts landowners in touch with a resource professional who visits the land with the owner, discusses the goals the owner has for the land, and then helps to put together a wildlife habitat management plan. This technical assistance is available free of charge, and there is also the possibility that USDA may be able to provide financial assistance to put the plan in place on the land.

This program makes a lot of sense for the rapidly changing countryside of Kent County. It educates landowners



"I go to nature to be soothed and healed, and to have my senses put in tune once more." John Burroughs


Wandering Through Your Watershed



Do you know where this picture was taken in the Rogue River Watershed?



Landowner in wildflower planting providing wildlife habitat.

on what makes sense for wildlife when it comes to planting trees, shrubs, grasses, or food plots. It makes use of existing good habitat and helps landowners connect habitat types with each other so the landscape is not so fragmented. It also can provide financial incentives to plant vegetative cover next to stream corridors, which helps to intercept possible pollutants and provides shade to keep water temperatures cool. 

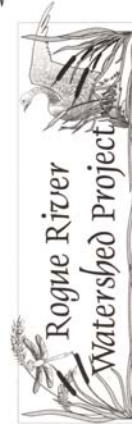
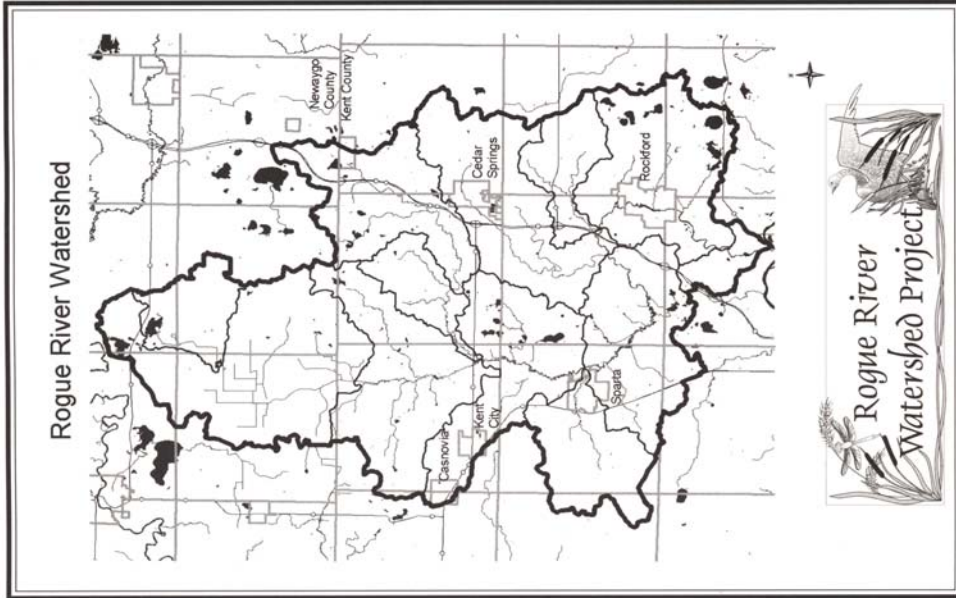
Landowners interested in receiving technical assistance through this program should contact either the local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service at 616-942-4111, extension 3; or the Kent County Conservation District at 616-336-8868. Your request will be forwarded on to a resource professional for assistance.



I love to get out into the watershed and explore! To include you in my exploration there is going to be a picture from a location in the watershed featured in each newsletter. Guess the location in the picture and the answer will be provided in the next newsletter with some interesting facts about the site. Let the investigation begin!

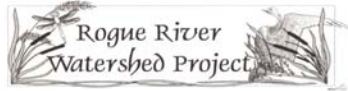


If you have questions about this newsletter or the Rogue River Watershed program, please call Nichol Stout at (616) 895-3092 or email her at stoutn@gvsu.edu.



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