

Riffles & Runs

Rogue River Watershed Project Newsletter

Grand Valley State University Annis Water Resources Institute

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A Personal Perspective

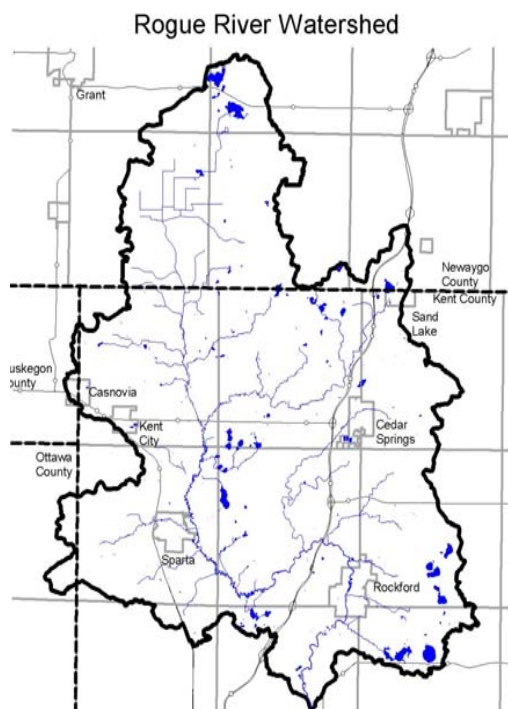
Nichol Stout - Annis Water Resources Institute

Working in the Rogue River Watershed, I have grown to love its beauty and its character. Amid the hustle of everyday life it is always calming and refreshing to walk along the banks of the river and notice the important things: children catching their first fish, familiar tunes of songbirds, and the splashing sound of fish as they make their way up the mighty river. I am sure that most of you have experienced these feelings and events in the watershed. Through the *Riffles and Runs* newsletter, we have tried to capture these feelings and events with pen in hand and paper ready.

The hard work and dutiful efforts of the people involved in the Rogue River Watershed project have given us many events to write about. Although the Rogue River Watershed project is almost over, these events will continue to occur and help to secure the beauty of the watershed for generations to come.



The Rogue River Watershed is being managed for future generations.



Being that this is the last issue of the *Riffles and Runs* newsletter, I wanted to present an overview of what is to come in the future, what is presently being done, and past efforts in the watershed. I hope that as you read this newsletter you will be as overwhelmed and eager, as I am, about what has been done in the watershed and what is left to do.

I want to take a moment to thank all of the partners and volunteers who have helped to make this project successful. Your job isn't over yet. The Rogue River Watershed Council is just getting started and your help is needed, so get your waders on and I will see you in the river!



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Rogue River Watershed Council

Andy Bowman - Grand Valley Metro Council

X-ray Vision. The Rogue River Watershed Council has put itself in the “x-ray machine” to more closely examine what it is, what it can be, where it is, and for whom the council is intended. Certainly everyone involved in the organization has some idea what it is and who it is serving, but these ideas don’t always match one-to-one. Significant assumptions can be made which in turn can lead to misunderstandings between members, or perhaps worse, a failure to communicate with potential members and other participants.

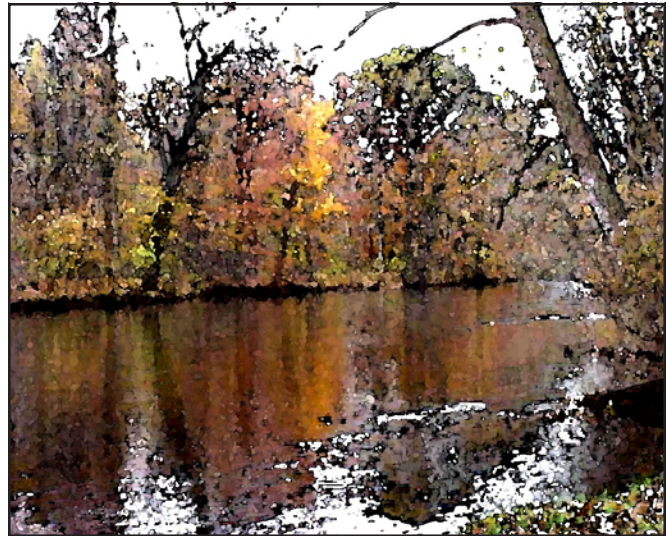
Several months ago, the Rogue River Watershed Council invited representatives from four other watershed organizations currently functioning in various parts of Michigan. A panel was held at the Algoma Township Hall and approximately 20 interested persons from the Rogue River Watershed Council and another area-wide initiative known as the Lower Grand Project¹, gathered to ask very specific questions of the panelists.

Double Visions. Interestingly, each of the watershed councils represented on the panel had differing visions of themselves related to their unique conditions and circumstances. Perhaps the youngest council, the Muskegon River Watershed Assembly, is also one of the largest, covering 150 governments over 9 counties. Their vision has been developed in a relatively short period of time through the active involvement of local foundations. The Muskegon River Watershed Assembly is moving towards an ongoing non-profit organization to establish educational and scientific initiatives throughout the watershed.


The oldest organization, the Pere Marquette Watershed Council, on the other hand, is more like a “river association” made up of 70% riparian owners. There is little government involvement and much of the work done in the watershed is on a project-by-project basis.

Another organization with a similar name is known as the “Friends of the Rouge” and is in a heavily urbanized area near Detroit covering 48 municipalities over 3 counties. This watershed supports a population of 2 million people and has received much of its funding from donations totaling \$400 million. This group had significant private sector involvement, but lamented its lack of citizen and governmental participation.

Finally, the Clinton River Watershed Council, also from Southeast Michigan, got their start from the coordinating efforts of local governing officials who saw the need to combine their activities to help preserve a rapidly disappearing resource. Though spending many of their years in planning and programming, they are now rethinking the services which they offer local officials and hope to augment educational and technical services.



A watercolor painting of the Rogue River in the fall.

Rogue Vision. With so much “vision” to choose from out there, the Rogue River Watershed Council has concluded that they need to establish their own unique vision and establish a sense of mission to meet that vision. Consensus thus far is forming around a vision which anticipates a clean and healthy river capable of providing high quality recreational opportunities and maintaining a diverse flora and fauna throughout the watershed. It is our intention to establish this organization with the purpose of promoting better development practices throughout the watershed, more respect for the complete river system, and a broad understanding of the importance of all water resources within the watershed. 

If you would like to share your personal vision of the Rogue River and its watershed, or if you would like to get more involved in the work of the watershed council, please contact Andy Bowman at 616-776-7611 or visit our website at www.gvmc.org.

¹ Lower Grand Project is an initiative of the Grand Valley Metro Council, which involves a much larger watershed perspective for that portion of the Grand River running from Eaton County to Lake Michigan. For more information, go to www.gvsu.edu/wri/isc/lowgrand or to GVMC’s website at www.gvmc.org.

Nothing is rich but the inexhaustible wealth of nature. She shows us only surfaces, but she is a million fathoms deep.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Water Temperature and the Soil

Rhoda DeJonge - Land Conservancy of West Michigan

What makes a river cool? If we are speaking from a temperature standpoint, the answer would undoubtedly be...the soil.

You may have heard the Rogue River referred to as a cool-water system. This comes to mind especially when that icy tingle still shocks your fingertips as they dangle into the river on a warm fall day.

Large portions of the Rogue River Watershed have especially porous soils that maintain the cool temperature of the river. When rain falls, it first hits the vegetation on the ground, be that trees, crops, shrubs or grasses, and then slips slowly down and into the soil. The rainwater then trickles down through the porous soil layers finally to become cold groundwater. Many of the small streams that spill into the Rogue River begin here, in the icy springs fed by groundwater. The cool water is integral for the survival of many Rogue River species such as trout, which enjoy the greater amount of oxygen that is found in colder water, as it also provides the optimum environment for their reproduction.

Now, let's look at this water system again, but instead with an impervious surface like clay-packed soil or a paved parking lot on top of porous soil. In this case, the rain sprinkles down

onto the vegetation, then to the pavement, and is not allowed to percolate down into the groundwater. Instead, all the water slips and slides along the sun-warmed surface, and pours straight into the stream, without waiting in the cooling system of groundwater deep below the surface. The water stays warm, creating a much different environment for fish and other aquatic species.

The Land Conservancy of West Michigan (LCWM) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) hope to work with interested members of the community to protect the land in the watershed with these important soils. These non-profit, non-government organizations will be contacting people whose land contains these porous soils, and will provide them the opportunity to use tools that may assist them in voluntarily keeping their land natural. By limiting development on their land, families can maintain the rural and natural character of the community, protect their soil and in turn, benefit the health and temperature of the Rogue River. Often, there are tax benefits that landowners may receive for their efforts.

In the future, the LCWM and TNC also hope to educate and assist local officials and landowners with Best Management Practices (BMP's) to maintain these soils and other important natural resources. This includes offering planning and zoning assistance to ensure the future of this community will contain growth, not only of parking lots and houses, but of public green spaces as well.



Rainwater runs off heated roads and parking lots, which are referred to as impervious surfaces.



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.




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A Spring Cleaning

Nichol Stout - Annis Water Resources Institute

This spring two Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be installed to reduce sediment pollution in the watershed. What are BMPs? They are structural, vegetative, and managerial practices implemented to control nonpoint source pollution. Partners involved in this work are the Kent County Road Commission and the Schrems West Michigan Trout Unlimited.

The Kent County Road Commission is proposing to install a box culvert on Ritchie Avenue where two twin culverts now exist. The current structures restrict the flow of Becker Creek under the road resulting in a build up of sediment. This sediment covers the stream bottom, which is important habitat for fish and aquatic insects. A box culvert will allow the creek to flow freely under the road eradicating the sediment accumulation at the road crossing.

The Schrems West Michigan Trout Unlimited is proposing to work on a site located along the Rogue River. With the help of the landowner, the group will stabilize an eroding bank, which is adding sediment into the river. Volunteers will be needed to plant vegetation that will stabilize the sediment on this steep bank. If you would like to become involved in this "spring cleaning event," please contact us! 



Staff from the Natural Resource Conservation Service assessing the eroding bank on the Rogue River.



Wandering Through Your Watershed



<http://www.rosiesdiner.com/>

Welcome back adventurers! In the last newsletter, the mystery location was Rosie's Diner. Jerry Berta, a local Rockford artist, opened Rosie's Diner on July 5, 1991, to a very enthusiastic public. On February 1, 2002, Tammi Fitzgerald became the new owner of Rosie's Diner. This is the only place in the world where there are four classic diners, hence the name Dinerland. Stop on in and enjoy a burger at a classic diner in your own watershed!

Thanks for wandering through your watershed. I hope through your travels you have come to realize that a watershed deals with more than just a river, but all of the land, homes, and businesses within the area.



A Township Perspective

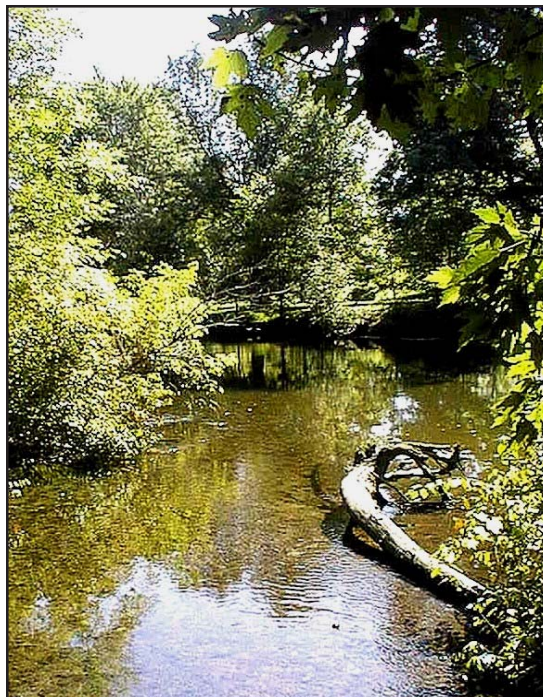
Fran Gilcrest - Algoma Township

Algoma Township sits entirely within the Rogue River Watershed. The natural features of Algoma Township contribute to its attraction as a rural community. Rolling hills, natural tributaries and streams, forests, lowlands, wetlands, and open fields contribute to the quality of life of Algoma Township residents.

To protect these natural resources, the Rogue River and its tributaries have been designated a Natural River by the State of Michigan. The Natural Rivers Act regulates the land along the river body, which also includes such factors as land use, development, maintenance of vegetation, and placement of signs.

The river has also been recognized as a high-quality fishing stream. Due to its natural beauty, the river is highly prized as a prime location for residential development. Development does not only occur on country roads or next to towns. It is occurring all over the township. Because of this development, more public education is needed. New and current residents, developers, planning commission members and board members need to learn how to respect and care for the land, streams, and wetlands.

This is where the Rogue River Watershed Project comes into play. Many organizations and agencies including township officials are involved in the project. Algoma Township has been involved in the project for four years and is now a member of the Rogue River Watershed Council. The Rogue River Watershed Council focuses on awareness, education, and action. By identifying the areas that have the greatest threat, we can educate



The Rogue River flows through Algoma Township.

and make the public aware of the concerns. A plan of action can then be developed to improve and protect the Rogue River Watershed, as well as maintain and improve water quality and environmental conditions. The efforts of the Rogue River Watershed Council will help to keep Algoma Township a beautiful place to live and play for current and future generations. 💧



Rogue River Farming Best Management Practice Award

Donna Stevens - Annis Water Resources Institute

Shrems West Michigan Trout Unlimited and the Annis Water Resources Institute are giving two Rogue River Watershed Farming Best Management Practice (BMP) Awards to deserving farmers in the Rogue River Watershed.

The intent of the Rogue River Watershed Farming BMP Award is to recognize farmers that have helped to protect water quality in the Rogue River and its tributaries. This award will help identify important, heroic, and often overlooked efforts made by members of the Rogue River Watershed Community. We hope to heighten awareness and pay appropriate tribute to those farmers leading the way in environmental conservation.

The winners of the Rogue River Watershed Farming BMP Award will be announced January 31, 2004. The award is a sign that can be displayed on the farmer's land. For more information about the Rogue River Farming BMP Award, please contact Nichol Stout at 616-331-3092 or stoutn@gvsu.edu. 💧

It is difficult to say what is impossible, for the dream of yesterday is the hope of today and the reality of tomorrow.

- Robert Goddard

Stream Search Overview

Shawn Wessell - West Michigan Environmental Action Council

Stream Search, a program of the West Michigan Environmental Action Council (WMEAC) started in 2000, continues to be a successful volunteer biological monitoring project with an excellent response by the community. In the process of this project, we have identified streams of excellent quality in Kent County, have alerted local governments to the information provided by the project, and offered them information about their streams and watersheds. We have also advanced the stewardship and skills of members of our Adopt-A-Stream program, and created a team of experienced biological monitoring volunteers. We have also generated interest and ongoing involvement of citizens, townships, and municipal governments in the care and oversight of their streams.

Stream Search data has been collected on the Rogue River and its tributaries for the last three years. The data that Stream Search volunteers collect gives us valuable information on the condition of our local streams. Some of the data we collect includes: stream temperature, water clarity, the conditions of the stream banks, and macroinvertebrate (aquatic insects) diversity. This information is helping to identify which streams are being degraded over time and helps to identify possible causes such as nutrients, sedimentation, or stormwater. We hope this information will also help citizens impact the future health of streams by providing basic data essential in gaining funding for restoration projects and educating property owners.



Volunteers identifying insects on Rum Creek.

I would like to thank our wonderful volunteers for all of their hard work and dedication. None of this would be possible without them. I look forward to another fun and successful year of monitoring and invite you to join us. 💧

Shawn Wessell, Project Coordinator, 616-451-3051

Project Partners:

*Jim Dunn, Grand Valley State University, and students
Rogue River Watershed Project and Watershed Council
Izaak Walton League
City of Grand Rapids Environmental Protective Services
Annis Water Resources Institute, GVSU
Schrems West Michigan Trout Unlimited*



Rogue River Celebration

Donna Stevens - Annis Water Resources Institute

On May 31, 2003 the Dwight Lydell Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America and the Annis Water Resources Institute of Grand Valley State University hosted a Rogue River Celebration at Parkside Elementary in Rockford. This Celebration was geared toward children and families.

Each booth at the fair dealt with a different aspect of the Rogue River Watershed. Everything was covered from bio safe cleaners to live snakes. There were thirty-two booths in all and over 100 volunteers! Thank you to all of the participants and volunteers for making the fair a huge success!

The Rogue River Watershed Council is working to make this celebration an annual event. This event is for children of all ages who want to discover the amazing attributes of the Rogue River Watershed. 💧



This boy received a certificate of completion for visiting all thirty-two booths at the Rogue River Celebration.


Improvements to the Rogue River Watershed

Nichol Stout - Annis Water Resources Institute

After this spring, there will be a total of seven improvements implemented in the watershed. These improvements target sediment and thermal pollution in the watershed. These two pollutants are affecting the watershed by decreasing suitable habitat for fish and aquatic organisms.

To reduce the effects these pollutants are having on the river system, the Annis Water Resources Institute of Grand Valley State University has been working with the Newaygo County Road Commission, Kent County Road Commission, and the Schrems West Michigan Trout Unlimited. With funds made available through the Clean Michigan Initiative, these partners

have stabilized seven hundred feet of bank along the Rogue River, replaced a failing culvert with a box culvert, and improved two road stream crossings. Work will be done this spring to replace a twin culvert with a box culvert, and stabilize another eroding bank along the Rogue River.

The hard work of the partners and volunteers involved in implementing these practices has made this project a success. In the future, the Rogue River Watershed Council will work with these partners in implementing additional practices in the watershed to control these pollutants. These projects, along with education of homeowners, local decision-makers, developers, and agricultural producers, will help to protect the Rogue River Watershed from further degradation. 

Before



These culverts were broken and partly blocked.

After



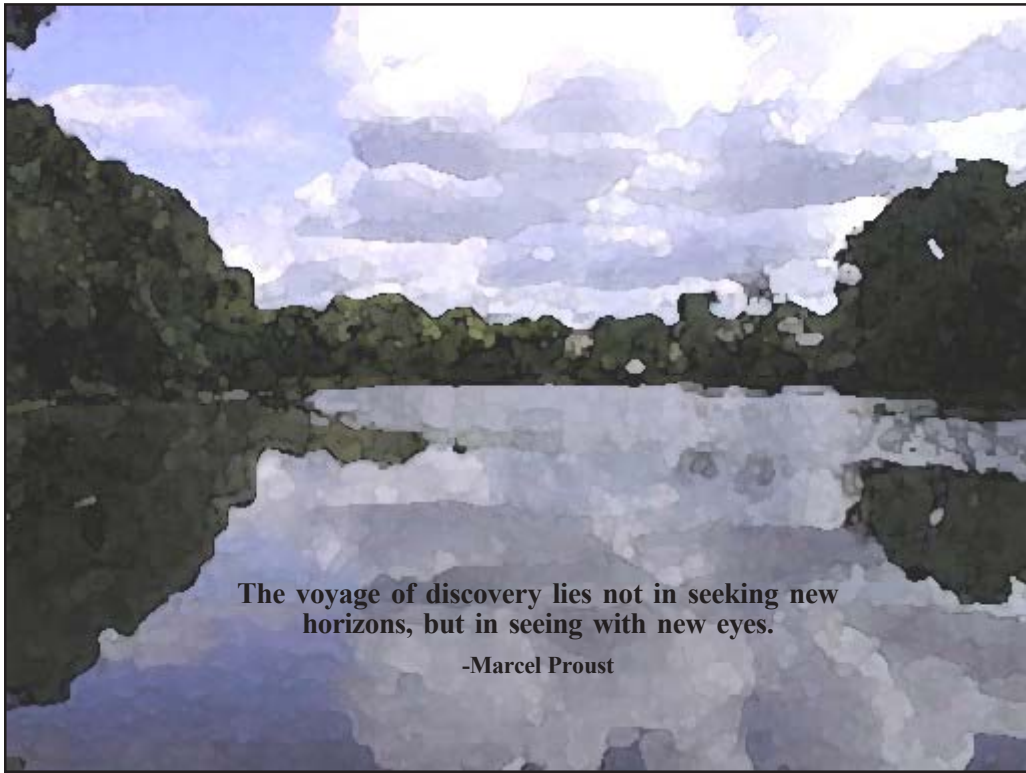
The three cement culverts were replaced with a box culvert allowing the stream to flow freely.



This river bank was being severely eroded by fisherman.

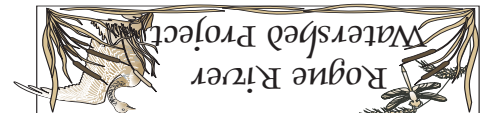


The river bank was graded and stabilized with rip rap and seeded.



The voyage of discovery lies not in seeking new horizons, but in seeing with new eyes.

-Marcel Proust



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