ROUGE RIVER NATIONAL WET WEATHER **DEMO**NSTRATION PROJECT

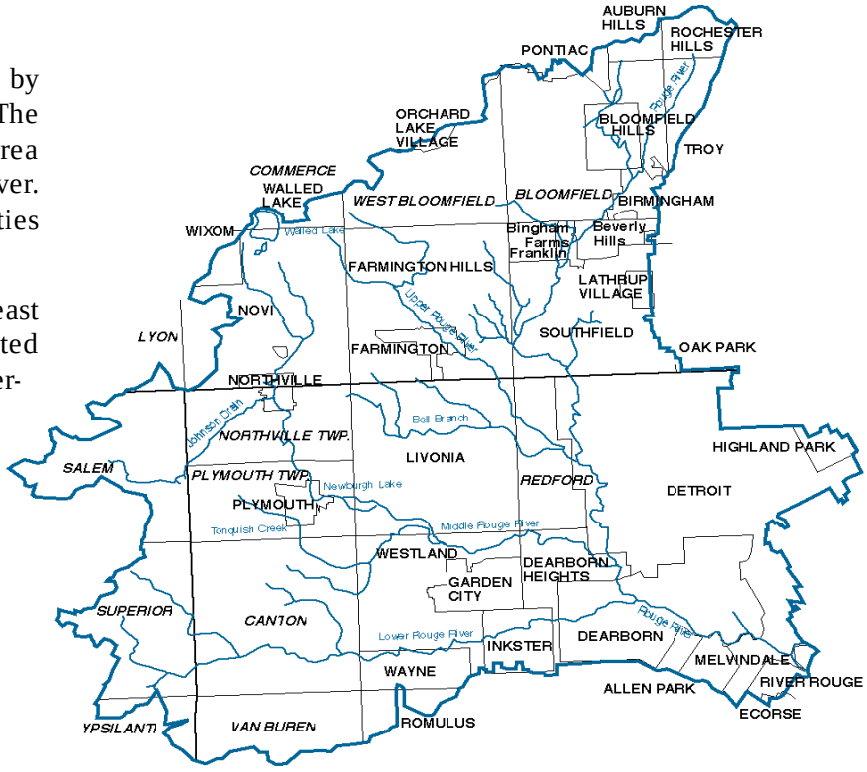
DemoInfo

The Watershed

A watershed is the area of land that is drained by a river system or by a network of river systems. The Rouge River Watershed includes all of the land area and waterways which drain into the Rouge River. The adjacent map shows all of the communities within the Rouge River Watershed.

The Rouge River Watershed, located in southeast Michigan, runs through the most densely populated and urbanized land area in the state. The watershed is approximately 466 square miles in size and includes all or part of 48 municipalities in three counties, with a population of over 1.5 million.

Passing through the city of River Rouge, the Rouge River empties into the Detroit River. The Detroit River is the connecting channel between Lakes St. Clair and Erie.



three counties within the Rouge River Watershed.

Statistics

- More than 50 miles of the Rouge River flows through public parklands, making the Rouge River one of the most publicly accessible rivers in the State.
- There are over 400 lakes, impoundments, and ponds in the watershed.
- More than 50% of the watershed is considered urbanized.
- 25% of the land in the watershed is undeveloped.
- The Rouge River is more than 126 miles in length and is actually four separate branches, the Main, Upper, Middle, and Lower.
- The Rouge River affects the water quality of the lower 20 miles of the Detroit River and Lake Erie.

THE ROUGE RIVER PROJECT
A WORLD CLASS EFFORT
BRINGING OUR RIVER BACK TO LIFE

Friends of the ROUGE

ROUGE RIVER RAP
REMEDIAL ACTION PLAN

History

The Woodland Indians were the first to settle in the Rouge River Watershed (approximately 1700-1850) followed by the French, the British, and finally by Americans. Because the Rouge supplied them with food, water, and a mode of transportation, all these early settlers depended upon the Rouge River for their survival.

The years of 1850-1940 were characterized by immigration, industrial development, and rapid urban growth. However, it was this development and growth that led to the first forms of river pollution. To deal with the increase in population, sewer pipes were built to carry sewage and storm-water which emptied directly to the Rouge River. Similarly, industrial wastes were poured, buried or dumped in the most convenient location, which was often adjacent to or in the river.

Although pollution increased in the 20th century, from 1940 to the present there has been an increasing effort to protect the quality of life along the Rouge River. To protect public health and the environment, the Detroit Wastewater Treatment Plant was built in 1940, and over 50 miles of parkland adjacent to the Rouge River has been acquired for public use. Numerous federal, state, and local regulations have been implemented to protect water quality.

Topography

The topography, or surface features of the region, varies throughout the watershed. The headwaters of the Rouge, primarily in the north and west areas of the watershed are hilly, while the southeast is relatively flat. This difference in topography is a result of glacial activity from the prehistoric period.

Surface Geology/Soils

The Rouge River Watershed is composed of various materials that were deposited during the period of glacial activity. These materials were deposited to form three distinct areas in the watershed: lakebeds, moraines, and glacial outwash.

Lakebeds are a prominent feature in the watershed, forming a large part of the relatively flat and level area in Wayne County and in Southeastern Oakland County. Lakebeds in the Rouge Watershed are mostly composed of fine sands and clay.

Glacial moraines are a prominent feature in the northwestern part of the watershed and are characterized by the rolling and hilly topography common to that area. Moraines are a mixture of clay, sand, gravel, and even large boulders that were deposited during the glacial periods.

Glacial outwash is found in the northeastern portion of the watershed and was formed during the glacial melting period. Distinctive beds of sand and gravel are the main components of glacial outwash.

Pollution Problems

Pollution is a significant problem throughout the Rouge River Watershed. The designated uses for the Rouge River, established by the State of Michigan Water Resources Commission, include:

- water contact recreation
- warm water fishery
- industrial and agricultural water supply
- commercial and recreational navigation (e.g. canoeing)
- general aesthetic

Pollution problems in the Rouge River are severe enough that these uses are limited throughout the Watershed.

This fact sheet was prepared as part of the Rouge River National Wet Weather Demonstration Project, USEPA grant #X995743-02.

If you have any questions about the Rouge River watershed or the Rouge Project, in general, please call the Rouge Hotline at (888) 223-2363 or visit our web site at http://www.rougeriver.com.