

ROUGE GREEN CORRIDOR IDENTITY DEMONSTRATION PROJECT
Oakland County



This project was undertaken to create and promote a unique identity for a segment of the Rouge River called the Rouge Green Corridor. Carlisle/Wortman Associates worked with three communities - Beverly Hills, Birmingham, and Southfield - and staff from Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services, Southeast Oakland County Water Authority, the Drain Commissioner's Office, and others to create a community-based planning and communications "branding" package for the river. The package is made up of an identifying logo, a public education poster, and a Powerpoint presentation. These materials were then used to demonstrate how other communities could promote, protect, and enhance river corridors, in and outside of the Rouge River watershed, as a unique community asset.

Discovering Your Community's Natural Asset

The Rouge Green Corridor

Introducing the Rouge Green Corridor
Meandering through the southeast corner of Oakland County, the main branch of the Rouge River paints a green band through neighborhoods and business districts. This urban river, with clear water flowing over smooth rocks and just-shady wooded banks, has changed since the time of European settlement, but still provides a haven for wildlife and people to enjoy.

Over the past 15 years, efforts at improving the river's water quality have paid off, inspiring your community to give it a new name — the Rouge Green Corridor. This segment of the Rouge River, and its tributaries, runs through Birmingham, Beverly Hills, and Southfield. To introduce you to this valuable natural resource, this poster describes the Corridor's history, and how it's changed over time, and gives you an opportunity to find out for yourself the beauty of the Rouge Green Corridor through a self-guided tour.

This endeavor is part of a larger program called Stormwater Phase II of the Clean Water Act. The Act requires certain municipalities to minimize stormwater pollutants in surface waters like the Rouge River. To accomplish this, the communities have joined forces and developed a Watershed Management Plan for this portion of the Rouge River, called the Main 1-2 Subwatershed Management Plan. One goal of the Plan is to increase awareness of the river's value in our lives. Another goal is to maximize each community's assets related to the river. The Watershed Management Plan is available for review in your community's office.

How the Rouge Green Corridor Was Formed
Fourteen thousand years ago, the Ice Age pressure of the Rouge River flowed to the southeast, glazing the front of a continental ice sheet and associated glacial ridges. Around 13,000 years ago, the ice melted back and branches of this glacial river system broke across the ridge to the southeast to form the Rouge watershed. For the next 5,000 years, three early branches of the Rouge in Oakland County emptied into a series of vast glacial lakes that were formed by advances and retreats of the glacial ice.

The formation of the Rouge Green Corridor stems from all the land forms of the modern river valley. Barriers and bluffs were formed when the ancient glacial lake beds drained. Other land forms, such as the reduced remnants of the river valley and terraces, were created in response to rising lake levels. Today, river flows a meandering path. Some of the bluffs have been abandoned by the river, creating a distinctive subglacial land form called an oxbow.

The Way It Is Today
As the land was cleared for agriculture, and then later for homes, businesses, roads, and parking areas, a good deal of the porous soils were covered up by impermeable surfaces, or hard surfaces that water can't penetrate. Instead of soaking into the ground, much of the water became surface flow or runoff. Instead of a slow, constant flow of cold, clean water, our rivers receive high volumes of water over a short period of time — or flash floods. As the water moves over hard surfaces, it picks up pollutants from cars or chemicals on the pavement. As the water flows, it carries the water, making it suitable for certain aquatic species. The force of high volumes of stormwater speed directly to streams and erodes the banks of the stream, displacing bank vegetation and creating wildlife habitat.

The Rouge Green Corridor has not been as impacted by urbanization as some other stretches of the Rouge. The main reason for this is that the existing vegetation along the river corridor was left in place as the area developed.

Discovering Your River – A Self-Guided Tour
This self-guided tour identifies several locations for you to enjoy in the Rouge Green Corridor. The tour is designed to highlight special features along the corridor that everyone in the family can enjoy. Each point has something unique to offer, to be sure to visit as many sites as you can. You'll learn a lot about this hidden treasure, and have fun in the process!

Points along the tour described below have access to trails. Whether it's a paved or wheelchair trail, remember to stay on the path. Keep your dog on a leash and be a good river steward by picking up any trash on the path.

Valley Woods Nature Preserve in Southfield
Where to park: Park at the Historic Burch Park lot in Birmingham.

Lincoln and Booth Parks in Birmingham
Where to park: Park at the Historic Burch Park lot in Birmingham.

Riverside Park in Beverly Hills
Where to park: Limited parking is available at this park, which is located on Riverside Drive just west of Ferguson Road.

What to see: The park offers habitat and viewing opportunities for many species of birds, including herons, hawks, woodpeckers, and kingfishers. Cows can often be seen at the surface of the water, along with turtles sunning themselves and a variety of other small aquatic creatures. Flower plantings of native shrubs have more lakes that include greenery, Michigan fish and bird species, and American crows, juncos, and other birds.

What to do: The park offers habitat and viewing opportunities for many species of birds, including herons, hawks, woodpeckers, and kingfishers. Cows can often be seen at the surface of the water, along with turtles sunning themselves and a variety of other small aquatic creatures. Flower plantings of native shrubs have more lakes that include greenery, Michigan fish and bird species, and American crows, juncos, and other birds.

What to see: In the spring, look for several species of migratory birds, such as waterfowl (22 species), tree swallows, and spotted sandpeeps. Look for the many species of wildlife and native plants. Also view two types of stream bank stabilization methods to reduce erosion. The methods include "hard engineering" (stone and boulders) and soft engineering (logs and vegetation) in Booth Park.

To learn more about the Rouge Green Corridor's history and recent events, visit www.rougegreen.com and click on the "Rouge Green Corridor" link.