

Rouge River Water Festival at Cranbrook Institute of Science

Michele Arquette-Palermo, Cranbrook Institute of Science

The Rouge River Water Festival at Cranbrook Institute of Science, held September 14-16, was a rousing success. Nearly 1,300 participants enjoyed a half-day of hands-on watershed ecology and awareness activities. Twenty-five schools from 10 different Oakland County Rouge communities attended the annual event. All Oakland County schools had live video feed of various presentations over the three-day event, while Cranbrook had a camera in one of the presentation spaces. This video feed was sent to the Oakland Intermediate School District (ISD), allowing any Oakland ISD classroom a glimpse of the festival. It is our hope to increase the number of virtual feeds for future festivals.



Presenters came from many organizations covering a multitude of water topics including: Affects of Acid Rain on pH, The Music and Magic of Water, The Trip of a Drip, Dirt Doctors, Frog and Toad Orchestra, Salmon Run, Ecosystems in a Cup, Ice Age Origin of the Rouge Watershed, Storm Water Action Team, Zebra Mussels, and Why Couldn't the Turtle Cross the Road. The final day of the event was a true water festival in that the water cycle was quite evident as water fell from

the sky in the form of rain! The rain plan was executed and the lesson of water prevailed. As they exited, many teachers requested a return trip next year. Cranbrook has applied for a grant to repeat the festival and expand it to include a public event for 2006.

This newsletter is sponsored by the Rouge River National Wet Weather Demonstration Project, the Main 1-2 Subwatershed Communities and the Oakland County Drain Commissioner's Office. Please call the Environmental Unit at (248) 858-0958 with questions or inquiries.

Waterside Living

Waterside Living

Maintaining Your Septic System: Special Considerations for Riparian Properties

Brandy Bakita, City of Southfield and Meghan Bonfiglio, Bloomfield Township

The Main 1-2 Subwatershed lies within the headwaters of the Rouge River, where some of our residents are served by private septic systems. Septic systems collect and dispose of wastewater for residential property. When a septic system is properly located, adequately designed, carefully installed and properly managed, you will have a waste disposal system that is simple, economical, effective, safe, and environmentally sensitive.

A septic system is made up of both a septic tank and a drain field. The septic tank, usually made of reinforced concrete, is buried and watertight. Untreated household waste (human waste and gray water) is deposited into the tank. The septic liquid is distributed from the tank into the surrounding soil, which constitutes the drain field. Maintenance of private septic systems is the responsibility of the homeowner; therefore treatment and disposal of wastewater should be one of the primary concerns of any homeowner in an unsewered area.

Failing septic systems are a significant contributing source of pollution in our watersheds. Unfortunately, septic systems are often neglected and not routinely maintained after the initial installation. A malfunctioning system can contaminate our waterways and groundwater supply, which is especially important for riparian landowners due to their close proximity to the water. Poorly maintained and failing septic systems can cause serious problems. Sewage from overloaded systems can pond on the ground near the drain field or back up into buildings. Failing systems can contaminate ditches, creeks, lakes, and shallow drinking water supplies potentially endangering people and wildlife.

If you have further questions regarding your septic system please contact the Oakland County Health Division at (248) 858-1312.

Rouge Creature Feature: Great Blue Heron

Amy Ploof, Oakland County Drain Commissioner's Office

Have you seen one of these lately? Great blue herons are the large grayish-blue heron seen wading in shallow water in streams, rivers, and lakes. Great blue herons are mainly active in the mornings and at dusk when fishing is best. They are solitary predators, preferring to hunt



and feed on fish, frogs, and other small animals. Herons nest in colonies, usually building their stick platform nests in trees in lowland hardwood swamps. Like many species in the Rouge River Watershed, it is sensitive to pesticides, herbicides, and changes in its environment. So remember, your actions impact the home of the Great Blue Heron and many other creatures.

Table of Contents

- 1 Maintaining Your Septic System: Special Considerations for Riparian Properties
- 1 Rouge Creature Feature: Great Blue Heron
- 2 Water Conservation: Every Drop Counts
- 3 How to Have a Green, Healthy Lawn
- 4 Rouge River Water Festival at Cranbrook Institute of Science

Rouge Main 1-2 Subwatershed Partners: Auburn Hills, Beverly Hills, Bingham Farms, Birmingham Hills, Bloomfield Hills, Bloomfield Twp., Farmington, Farmington Hills, Franklin, Lathrup Village, Lyon Twp., Novi, Oak Park, Orchard Lake, Pontiac, Rochester Hills, Southfield, Troy, Walled Lake, West Bloomfield Twp., Wixom and Oakland County Drain Commissioner's Office

Presorted
Standard
U.S. Postage
PAID
Bloomfield Hills, MI
Permit #40