



Streambank Stabilization at Quarton Lake Pk



DENSO Volunteers remove invasives at Rouge Rescue Day



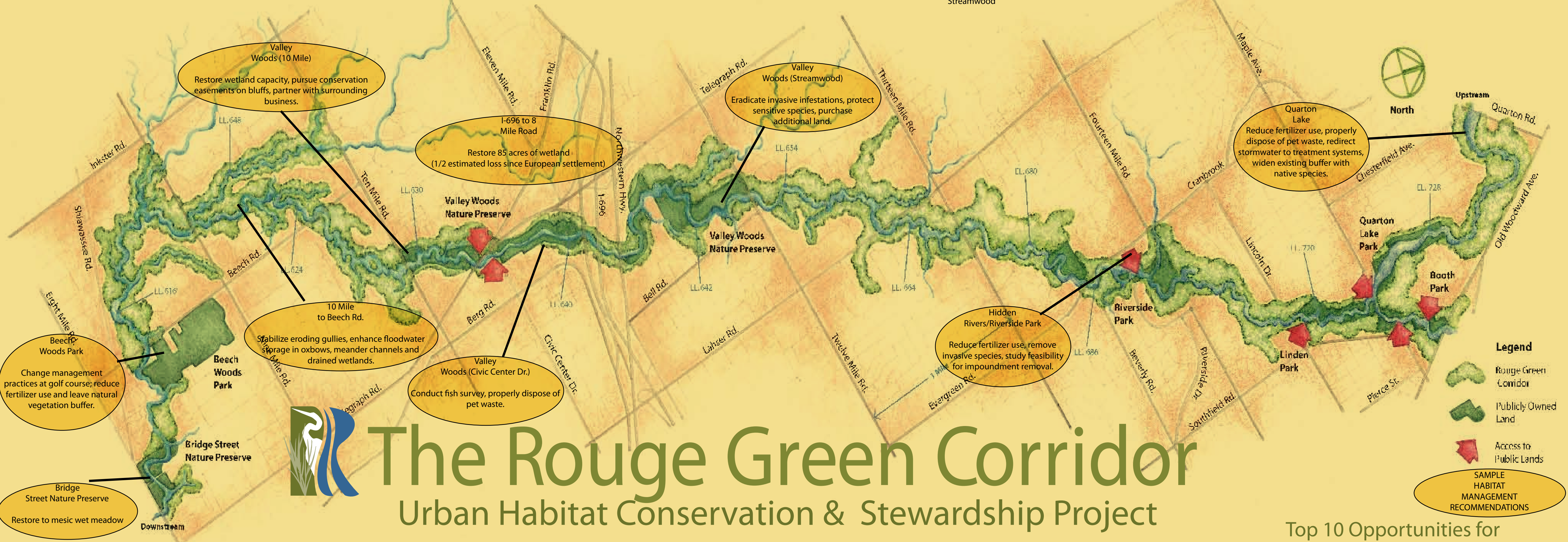
Six Rivers Conservancy workday at Valley Woods at Civic Center



Americorps volunteers remove garlic mustard from Valley Woods at Streamwood



Friends of the Rouge Volunteers at Booth Park Trail



The Rouge Green Corridor

Urban Habitat Conservation & Stewardship Project

Introducing the Rouge Green Corridor: An Ark of Biodiversity

Meandering through the southeast corner of Oakland County, the main branch of the Rouge River paints a green band through neighborhoods and business districts. Over the past 15 years, efforts at improving the river's water quality have paid off. Monitoring in this stretch of the river has shown dramatic improvements in bacteria levels and dissolved oxygen levels, showing that investments in stormwater management and combined sewer overflow facilities are paying off. These accomplishments have inspired your community to give this part of the river a new name — the Rouge Green Corridor. This segment of the Rouge River runs through Birmingham, Beverly Hills, and Southfield.

In the last several years, attention has shifted beyond water quality to focus on stewardship of wildlife habitat. Recent inventories of the Corridor by biologists show that the river and its adjacent woodlands support five kinds of turtles, two kinds of snakes, and seventeen species of mammals. Aquatic invertebrates found in the corridor include flathead and small minnow mayflies and net spinner caddisflies. Several uncommon plant species, including the Special Concern species Twinleaf (*Jeffersonia diphylla*) reside in the Corridor. The Corridor also has the largest and most diverse population of freshwater mussels in the Rouge Watershed. Threats to habitat along the corridor are many and varied, so a concerted effort to inventory and plan for habitat preservation and enhancement is necessary for the long-term viability of the Rouge Green Corridor.

Overview

The Rouge Green Corridor Urban Habitat Conservation & Stewardship Project was conceived as a partnership between Oakland County Planning & Economic Development Services, City of Southfield, Village of Beverly Hills, City of Birmingham, the Southeast Oakland County Water Authority (SOCWA), Oakland County Office of the Drain Commissioner, Friends of the Rouge, the Oakland Land Conservancy, and concerned citizens (collectively, the RGC Steering Committee). The project is partially funded by a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The RGC Steering Committee contracted with ASTI Environmental to conduct a habitat inventory and management plan for the RGC. The Riparian and Aquatic Inventory and Management Plan for the Rouge Green Corridor was finalized on November 28, 2008.

The Riparian and Aquatic Inventory and Management Plan for the Rouge Green Corridor (Habitat Plan) begins with an extensive description of the habitat resources contained within the RGC (based on filed surveys and existing data), describes existing threats to habitat, sets specific restoration goals, identifies habitat target benchmarks for terrestrial and aquatic resources, and lists specific recommendations for conservation and stewardship of habitat in order to achieve those goals and benchmarks. The plan contains a total of 134 recommendations for 11 parks and preserves and other river areas. Some of these recommendations apply to the entire corridor while others apply to specific areas only.



Habitat Restoration Goals

The habitat plan identifies 12 habitat restoration goals and associates each goal with target habitat metrics that can be used to measure the progress and achievement:

1. Connect river and floodplain.
2. Educate and involve residents in riparian corridor stewardship.
3. Expand survey and monitoring efforts.
4. Improve in-stream aquatic habitat.
5. Improve water quality to meet water quality criteria.
6. Manage invasive species.
7. Manage woody debris.
8. Promote the river and the RGC as a recreational asset.
9. Reduce erosion and sedimentation.
10. Reduce flashiness.
11. Restore wetlands.

The entire plan and appendices can be downloaded at:

www.oakgov.com/rgc



Measuring Success

Target habitat metrics for each park, preserve, and river segment were developed based upon generally-accepted measures used to assess the health and quality of habitat. Targets were established based upon preferred, but reasonable, thresholds indicative of a healthy ecosystem and/or regulatory standards. If a site already exceeds the desired minimum, then maintaining that level or better was established as the target. If the minimum desired threshold is not currently met, then that minimum was set as the target.

The following target metrics were established for the RGC as a whole. Metrics for individual parks, preserves, and river segments, which in some cases may be more specific or intended to reach a higher level of quality, are presented in subsequent sections of this report corresponding to those specific areas.

- Amphibian Community: Increase average species count from 2 to 4
- Aquatic Habitat Ranking: "Acceptable" Procedure. 51 ratings
- Bank Stability Index: Improve to, or maintain at, "Stable"
- Fish Community: "Acceptable" (Procedure 51 ratings)
- Floristic Quality Index: Minimum FQI of 20
- Average % native species >75%
- Macroinvertebrate Community: "Acceptable" Procedure 51 ratings
- Richards-Baker Flashiness Index: Halt trend to increasing flashiness
- Wetland Functional Value: "Suitable for Floodflow Alteration"
- Water Quality:
 - Average wet-weather TSS < 80 mg/L
 - Dissolved oxygen > 5 mg/L
 - E. coli bacteria < 130 mg/L

Future monitoring of habitat conditions along the corridor will be required to assess the success of this project.

Top 10 Opportunities for Habitat Stewardship on Private River Corridor Lands

The vast majority of land along the Rouge Green Corridor is in private ownership, such as private residences, condominiums and apartment complexes, and commercial lands such as office complexes and shopping centers.

For habitat management to succeed in the Rouge Green Corridor, stewardship must extend outside the boundaries of publicly owned parks and preserves. Many opportunities and resources for habitat stewardship exist. This "Top 10" list will get you started in improving wildlife habitat on your river land.

1. Leave (or Plant) an Intact, Forested Riparian Buffer
2. Stabilize Steep Slopes with Native Plants
3. Redirect and Capture Storm Water from Roofs, Parking Areas and Driveways. Direct your downspouts to your lawn and/or use rain barrels and rain gardens.
4. Plant Native Species in your Garden
5. Learn to Recognize and Remove Invasive Plant Species
6. Use No-Phosphorus Fertilizer for your Lawn
7. Dispose of Pet Waste Properly
8. Maintain Your Septic Tanks
9. Don't Feed the Geese or Ducks
10. Don't Dump Refuse In The River or Over the Bluff