Rouge cleanup launched

staff writer

Governmental officials have formed a Rouge River Defense Fund to launch cleanup efforts in the polluted river. The announcement was made at the first gathering in Dearborn of the Rouge River Basin Committee. It is a 60-member body made up of representatives from 47 communities through which the Rouge Blows.

James Murray, chairman of the Michigal Water Rouves Commission, and second the Rouge River, and the capetal stage of the committee of the Rouge River, said he expects to raise \$60,000 in the first year, mostly through volunteer fund-raising and contributions.

A spokesman for Gov James Blanchard said the governor has proposed that the state Legislature direct \$150,000 toward the cleanup this year. Then he said Blanchard made a \$100 pledge of his own.

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Then he said Blanchard made a \$100 pledge of his own.

"The Rouge River is an embarrassment to the state and region unless it's cleaned up," såid David Dempsey, the governor's environmental aide. "It is a

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iost opportunity at present, but it has the potential for being a tremendous asset, for recreational and aesthetic nurroses."

County board seeks Haggerty widening

By Tim Richard stall writer

Oakland County commissioners add-ed 23 unanimous voices to the request for a highway in the Haggerty Road corridor in the west side of the county. At the same time, the county board said a wider Haggerty "does not by itself solve the north-south traffic problem in western Oakland County, nor does it address the need for a therough-fare from 1-275 in Farmington Hills/ Novi north to M-59 and beyond."

Four commissioners were absent when the resolution sailed through the board without discussion last Thursday.

BUT PROSPECTS for action on the

freeway extension — known as M-275—are dim, according to state Sen. Richard Fessler, R-West Bloomfield.
"M-275 is dead," said Fessler, in anterview on the Senate floor fast week. He said James Pitz, director of the Michigan Department of Transportation, didn't put it in state freeway plans.

THE GATHERING was billed as an important step toward winning local support for the cleanup campaign.

Last October the Water Resource Commission, working with the Department of Natural Resources, announced a two-year plan to identify problems and begin to correct pollution.

The Rouge's pollution is attributed mostly to the unlimited discharge of raw sewage, toxic chemicals and overflows of combined drain and sanitary sewers. Research and planning have been begun by the staff of the South-

Pitz and Gov. Blanchard's administration have emphasized improvement and renovation of existing freeways, shying away from new construction such as M-275.

Oxland officials long have complained there is no four-lane, north-south road in the 25-mile expanse between crowded Telegraph and the US-23 freeway in Livingston County.

DESPITE VEHEMENT opposition from environmentalists, local and county officials have advocated M-275, which would link the stub of 1-275 along the Farmington Hills-Novi border to 1-75 near Clarkston.

The former State Highway Commission shot down the project in the late 70s.

sion shot down the project in the late "70s. county board endorsed a plan by Pessler to widen Haggerty Road from two lanes to four and turn it into a limited-access parkway. Their resolution calls for entrance and exit ramps to 9 808 "as an intractiate action to ruline a localized portion of this traffic congestion."

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- David Dempsey Gov. Blanchard alde

east Council of Governments (SEMCOG). Murray said the group secured an out-of-state river consultant for an aer-

ial and close-range examination of the

THE CONSULTANT, George Palmiler of Montpeller, Ohlo, has bid \$1.5
million for a project to remove debris
and cast-offs from the river, assuring
the first flow without interruption.
Palmiter said that if his bid is accepted, he could probably complete the
first phase, through portlons in Wayne
County, by this summer.
Palmiter has done similar "river restoration" projects in other parts of the
country, including Berrien County's
Gun River, He said his methods work
'remarkably well' and are environmentally sensitive.

"I don't dig anything up. You wouldn't know that I had been there except that the river runs so well."

MURRAY SAID no "one source" is

MURRAY SAID no "one source" is-committed to funding the proposal. That increases the need for the special Rouge River Defense Fund. To implement the plan, he said, vol-unteer labor would be needed. Murray announced plans to desig-nate next June 7 "Rouge River Day," a day of cleanup and recreational activ-ties to bring attention to the 125-mile river.

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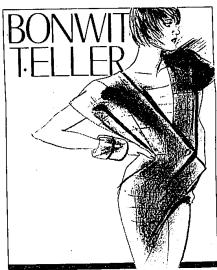
"We want to get the communities behind this so we can break the cycle of
degradation affecting the Rouge River," Murray said.

The effort is being planned in conjunction with parks and recreation departments in Wayne, Oakland and
Washtenaw counties. Recreational activities would be focused along the 30some miles of parkland along the river.

TO HELP IN fund raising and planning, officials said a "Friends of the Rouge" group would be formed. It will be made up of residents and interested conservation and environmental groups.

Officials agreed cleanup efforts likely will become routinely planned events.





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