

8 steps to a renewed Rouge

IT HAS TAKEN millions of people several hundred years to turn the Rouge River into an open sewer. Cleaning it up, we hope, can be done more quickly and with fewer people.

Here's what needs to be done if we are to reclaim the Rouge.

ONE: Every individual living and working in the Rouge River basin must be part of the cleanup, not part of the problem. This means you. Don't dump bottles or shopping baskets, motor oil or motorcycles into the river. If your house backs onto the river, make sure you aren't polluting it with pesticides, septic tank overflows and garbage from backyard barbecues.

TWO: Cities and townships must enact tougher ordinances to control pollution. Then, the cities and town-

ships must actively enforce those ordinances. This means you, Mr. Mayor, city council members and township board members.

THREE: Each city and township, this year, should check the quality of the water in the Rouge and its tributaries at two points — where it flows into the community and where it flows out. Is the pollution level higher after the water leaves your community? If so, local officials have a problem they must address.

FOUR: Community, school, church and civic groups should "adopt" a portion of the waterway and pledge to clean it up every year. These groups, in turn, should link with other organizations to take responsibility for larger sections of the river.

FIVE: City or county governments in

Wayne and Oakland counties are responsible for the 185 combined sewer outlets in the Rouge River basin. Faulty and overloaded overflows are major, massive polluters. Local governments must immediately examine every overflow and begin a program to fix or replace every one that is defective. In some cases, this will be the responsibility of the local governments. In other cases, the responsibility will fall on the Wayne and Oakland counties.

SIX: State government must willingly act as a coordinator for these cleanup efforts. And the state must be ready to provide, a.) the money to do the job, b.) the expertise and manpower of the Department of Natural Resources, and c.) the full weight and power of every state agency available

correct to situation. All this starts with Gov. Blanchard and the new chief of the DNR.

SEVEN: All new business and residential developments in the Rouge basin must be evaluated in terms of how each will affect the river. Are sewers in the area adequate for the development? Is it too close to the flood plain?

EIGHT: Our Congressmen and U.S. Senators must make federal money available to help police polluters and pay for cleanup efforts. The condition of the Rouge, after all, is not a local problem. Other downstream states and Canadian provinces have a direct interest in seeing the Rouge revitalized.

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DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Neil and Eileen Hintz enjoy the view along a section of the Rouge River that flows past their back yard in Beverly Hills. A cleaner Rouge could provide

recreational and scenic opportunities for many of the 1.5 million people who live in the Rouge River Basin.