

Rouge Rescue targets Bingham for help

By Wayne Peal
Staff writer

Like its two predecessors, Rouge Rescue '88 will rely on community spirit and elbow grease.

Friends of the Rouge, the volunteer agency planning the event, hopes more communities — and elbows — get involved this time around in cleaning up the meandering river that drains two dozen communities in southeastern Michigan.

Rouge Rescue '88 is scheduled for Saturday, June 4. Friends of the Rouge seeks volunteers who are willing to spend the day cleaning the

polluted and junk-laden river. It wants to double the 2,100 people who attended last year's event.

"WE'RE LOOKING for more than 4,000 people," said executive director Bonnie Anderson, of Birmingham.

Friends of the Rouge will step up recruiting efforts in Bingham Farms, Garden City, Lincoln Park and River Rouge, Anderson said.

Friends of the Rouge will unveil plans for Rouge Rescue '88 Friday in the Radisson Plaza Hotel, Southfield.

Birmingham, Farmington, Farmington Hills and Southfield were among Oakland cities that partici-

pated in this year's Rouge Rescue.

Participating high schools include Detroit Country Day, North Farmington, Southfield and Troy Athens.

"WE'RE LOOKING at involving all riparian property," Anderson said. "That means all communities within the river's path."

The 2,100 who participated this year hauled away more than 2,000 cubic yards of debris and cleared 72 log jams during the one-day event.

Official community participation was up, however, as municipal employees removed dead trees, slumps and other debris before and after the one-day volunteer event.

According to Friends of the Rouge, the river won't be fully cleaned until communities build new sewers. Combined sewer overflow, including waste as well as storm water, is considered the main reason the Rouge continues to be polluted.

The group has also applied for a \$30,000 National Science Foundation grant to expand its classroom program. Students from 16 area high schools are helping monitor water quality at various points along the Rouge.

"We've got everybody back, plus we hope to include 16 more high schools this year," Anderson said.

Friends of the Rouge estimates parts of the river could be reopened for swimming and boating over the next 20 years.

But they admit it won't be easy.

A recent Michigan Department of Natural Resources report indicated water quality has barely improved over the past 13 years, despite a wave of environmental laws.



Executive director Bonnie Anderson and other Friends of the Rouge are planning for Rouge Rescue '88. The third annual event will be held Saturday, June 4.

"We took a survey in 1973 and, last year, we duplicated it," DNR water quality specialist Jim Bredin said. "We found there's been little change since 1973."

Separate DNR and Wayne County Health Department studies confirm bacteria levels in the river are hazardous to swimmers, Bredin said.

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