

Cleaning the Rouge - An Observer & Eccentric survey

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|---|------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Are you aware of both the volunteer and government efforts to clean up the Rouge River by the year 2005? | Yes 72% | No 28% | | | |
| 2. Would you be willing to participate in a volunteer cleanup effort on the Rouge River? | Yes 27% | No 73% | | | |
| 3. How would you respond to this statement? The Rouge is an important natural resource that must be cleaned up. | Strongly Agree 71% | Agree somewhat 20% | Disagree somewhat 5% | Strongly disagree 5% | Don't know 8% |
| 4. How likely will it be that cleanup efforts on the Rouge will be successful? | Very likely 15% | Somewhat likely 49% | Somewhat unlikely 12% | Very unlikely 5% | Don't know 19% |
| 5. How likely would you be to use the river for recreational purposes if cleanup efforts are successful? | Very likely 11% | Somewhat likely 19% | Somewhat unlikely 13% | Very unlikely 48% | Don't know 9% |
| 6. How much would you be willing to pay in higher taxes or fees a year to clean up the Rouge River? | Up to \$25 48% | Up to \$50 15% | Up to \$100 5% | More than \$100 1% | Nothing 31% |
| 7. What is the highest level of education you have completed? | Some high school 6% | High school graduate 26% | Some college 28% | College graduate 25% | Advanced classes 16% |

Rouge rescue

Survey shows support for river cleanup

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But only 27 percent indicated they would be willing to volunteer their time to help clean up the river.

However, that number still represents a substantial pool of possible helpers. "Having organized a number of volunteer fund-raising campaigns, 27 percent would be encouraging," Jakeway said.

Last year, more than 2,000 people turned out at 22 sites to clean up the river and its banks. Nineteen cars, two motorcycles and 75 grocery carts were among the items hauled out of the Rouge.

AN OVERWHELMING majority of those surveyed — almost 91 percent — strongly agreed or agreed somewhat with the statement, "The Rouge River is an important natural resource that must be cleaned up."

"We've attempted to create publicity and this indicates we're getting through to people," Jakeway said.

And most people surveyed believe the Rouge can be cleaned up. Sixty-

More than 90 percent of people surveyed in the Observer & Eccentric circulation area agree that the Rouge River must be cleaned up.

four percent said it will be very likely or somewhat likely cleanup efforts on the Rouge will be successful. But even if those efforts are a success, a majority of people would not make the river a prime recreation destination.

THE SURVEY showed that 61 percent would be somewhat or very unlikely to use the river for recreational purposes.

Only 30 percent said it they would be very likely or somewhat likely to use the river if cleanup efforts are successful. Nine percent did not know.

"There's a lot of people who could care less about the outdoors," Jakeway said. "People have different priorities."

"People would take a shot at it once or twice a year if the condition of the water would be improved."

WHILE MANY would not recreate near the Rouge, most would be willing to pay something to have the river cleaned.

Almost 69 percent said they would be willing to pay at least \$25 a year in higher taxes and fees to clean up the Rouge.

That breaks down to 48 percent who would pay up to \$25 a year, 15 percent up to \$50, 5 percent up to \$100, and 1 percent more than \$100.

But 31 percent said they would pay nothing to rescue the Rouge.

"IT CERTAINLY is going to be a costly plan but everyone involved sincerely believes we are going to turn this thing around," Jakeway said. "The alternative is not doing it,

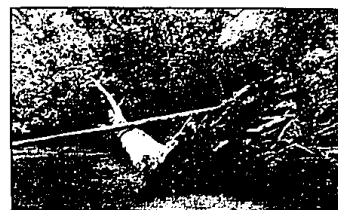
and down the road the cost will be even greater and it may be too late."

A recent report estimated it will take more than \$900 million to clean the Rouge and turn it into a recreational area with boating, fishing and even swimming by the year 2005.

So with that many people willing to spend at least \$25 a year, Jakeway is encouraged that enough money will be found to do the job.

But Jakeway said it's going to take more than that to clean up the river.

"We've got to get the corporate sponsors involved. Once we start the campaign to recruit corporate sponsors, we're going to be successful."



The photo

Debris in the Rouge is a major problem, whether it is manmade or natural such as this fallen tree in the Southfield portion of the river. Volunteers on June 4 help to at least temporarily ease the river's flow.

River workers needed June 4

Workers from throughout the Observer area are sought for Rouge Rescue '88, the third annual volunteer cleanup of the Rouge River. The event is sponsored by Friends of the Rouge, a volunteer agency dedicated to restoring the Rouge for boaters and bathers.

The cleanup will be held Saturday, June 4. Volunteers are asked to register at 8:30 a.m. the day of the event at listed sites, though they can also volunteer in advance.

Area sites include:
• Beverly Hills — Detroit Country Day School, 13 Mile, west of Lahser. Call Michael Bouchard, 645-

5664 to volunteer.

• Birmingham — City metered parking lot, east of North Woodward, south of Oak. Call Robert J. Fox, 645-0731 to volunteer.

• Southfield — Beech Woods park, southeast of the Beech/9 Mile intersection. Call Steve Marshall, 354-9540 to volunteer.

• Farmington Hills — Boys Republic, 28500 W. Nine Mile, west of Inkster Road. Call Dale Countegun, 473-9520 to volunteer.

Other Oakland County sites include Walled Lake, 624-4845, and Novi, 347-0454.

363 people answered random phone survey

This telephone survey was conducted May 2-10. A total of 363 people completed the survey, resulting in a response rate of 52 percent.

Phone numbers used in this survey were selected at random based on the populations of the cities and townships in the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers circulation area.

The confidence level on the survey is 95 percent within a range of plus or minus 5.2 percent.

For example, when we say 72 percent of the people responding to the survey have heard about cleanup efforts on the Rouge River, we are 95 percent confident the actual figure for this population would fall between 77.2 percent and 66.8 percent.

'It does look terrible'

By Neal Haldane
staff writer

People responding to the survey had a wide variety of views regarding the Rouge River, ranging from disgust over its current condition to being unaware of where the waterway is located.

Here's a sampling of some people's views on the Rouge.

"It's going to take time if people are aware of the problem and stop dumping in it," Rochester's Bob

Mandeville said about cleanup efforts. "Everyone seems to be more involved in the environment."

But Mandeville said you won't find him using the Rouge even if it is cleaned up.

"I don't even use Lake St. Clair and that's pretty good," he said. "It's cleaner than it was 15 years ago but it's got a long way to go," said Tom Walrod of Westland. "I live right on it almost and I've noticed a lot more wildlife back there."

"It does look terrible," said Helen Hunter of Birmingham. "At certain times of the year it looks muddy, it smells and there are debris."

Vikki Forster, also of Birmingham, was unsure if cleanup efforts will succeed.

"IT DEPENDS," she said. "In some areas it will be very likely to come clean. But in some areas the river has been hurt too much."

Jerry Poelask of Canton Township said he would not pay anything to clean up the river.

"Ford Motor Co. should pay with all the profits they made," he said. "They were major contributors to the pollution."

The Rouge could turn out to be a recreation site in the eyes of Linda Peckham of Farmington.

"We live above a little arm of it," she said. "We have canoed on it before. I think there's some possibilities for it. It runs through some nice areas."

Nancy Merlo of Southfield also thinks using the Rouge for recreation would make sense.

"IT WOULD be convenient if I lived here in 2005," Merlo said. "It would be nice and close."

But Merlo is skeptical of cleanup efforts being successful.

"I think it will never happen," she said.

Carol Barnum of Troy said a cleanup "would be a real benefit environmentally."

And using an unpolluted Rouge is a possibility, she said.

"We're boaters, wherever there's good water we usually try and go," she said.

Charles Roach of Redford Township said the river's problems are too big to be handled by volunteers.

"As an individual, I can go down there and pull a tire or some junk out of the river. But it's not just the filth. That's not even water down there."

"The cleanup is something the federal government and state of Michigan will have to take care of. I don't know if I'll see it in my lifetime."

"I learned to swim in the Rouge River," said John Rudinski of Birmingham. "My first time in the river was when the bigger guys threw me in."

"The river was clean before and it could be again."



NANCY DORST/the photo

At Rouge Rescue '87 last June, workers cleared the riverway through Farmington's Shilohsaw Park. In the river is DPW worker Matt Koon. On the bank are Tim Burton (left) and Rita Spence from the Michigan Bell Telephone Pioneers, a volunteer group.

MEMORIAL DAY

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