

The Rouge: A Water Un-Wonderland

There's a dark side to the assets of the Water Wonderland.

You see it about this time of year, especially in the Rouge River branches of suburbia. The streams are low. They're clogged with debris and silt. The waters, bright and sparkling in June, have turned green with slime. A sophisticated population, with much leisure time on its hands, has dumped the empty containers of its leisure time entertainment into the water.

Parks, as a rule, are considered more desirable if they can be on a body of water.

At this time of year, however, much of that water has become virtually unusable. Because it is low and warm, the water lacks oxygen that can support any great amount of fish. Because it is stagnant, the water is a breeding ground for mosquitoes. Because it stinks, people don't want to go near it, and kids don't go there to throw stones, chase frogs or wade.

IT'S MORE THAN a problem of pollution. Gradually, suburbia is building sewers, and so its wastes getting into the water table can't be blamed for the entire problem.

Rather, the problem seems to a great degree to be one of the flow of water. Irony as it seems, it's something of a twin to the problem of flood control.

Look at it this way:

The river in many places twists and turns. In early spring, rain and melted snow rush over the frozen ground into the stream. The stream's ability to handle the water depends on the size of its channel and the speed of the flow. If the speed is hampered by twists and junk and logfills, it can handle less water. So it floods.

And vice-versa. In mid-summer, those little oxbows in the channel become tiny ponds. They are stagnant. They present all the problems and undesirable characteristics of stagnant water anywhere. Rocks, hunks of cement, old furniture, mattresses, a million cans — all of these dumped into the water cause more tiny obstructions and render the stream unsafe and unsightly.

The pictures on this page were shot on a single day in three different segments of the Rouge River — the Upper Rouge in Farming-

ton; the Middle Rouge in Northville, Plymouth and southern Livonia; and Bell Creek, in middle Livonia.

THE U.S. ARMY CORPS of Engineers is taking an interest.

In 1963 it issued an information report on the flood plain in the City of Farmington. It currently is asking for easements for a channel clearing and straightening project for three-quarters of a mile in Secs. 35 and 36 of Farmington Township, south of I-696 and in the vicinity of Tuck Road. And it is planning to issue a report on the river in Livonia and northwest Detroit in June of 1968.

The report on the City of Farmington section states: "There have been no federal flood control or allied purpose projects constructed in the River Rouge basin. In Farmington, some minor straightening of the Upper River Rouge was done by a local developer when the Twin Valley Subdivision was constructed. . . . This minor improvement would have little effect on flood stages in the area."

The Army Engineers report notes with approval that the City of Farmington has an ordinance prohibiting the filling of the flood plain without approval of the City Council. Also, one subdivision has regulations on lots bordering the river which prohibit filling or encroachment of the river.

But the point here is that there seems to be some relationship between flood conditions in spring and stagnant conditions in late summer.

These will ultimately require cooperative solutions between municipal units, counties, the state Water Resources Commission and the Army Engineers.

Not to mention some prodding from the public.

Story: **TIM RICHARD**
Pictures: **JAMES HUBBARD**



NORTH END OF PHOENIX LAKE, PLYMOUTH



BELL CREEK FROM MERRIMAN RD., LIVONIA



A GREEN SLIME AWAITS HINES PARK SIGHT-SEERS



UPPER ROUGE RIVER — A VIEW FROM TUCK ROAD, FARMINGTON TOWNSHIP



ARMY ENGINEERS' PROJECT IS AIMED AT CLEARING THIS ROUGE SECTION



BELL CREEK: GOOD SPOT FOR MUD PIES AND MOSQUITOES



MIDDLE ROUGE TURTLES GET GIFT FOR ELEGANT PICNICING