

# Who Will Clean Up The Rouge River?

It's easy to say the pollution is bad and to demand that our streams be cleaned up. It's quite another thing, however, to determine precisely how the streams got dirty in the first place. Even experts disagree among themselves on what to do about it.

And once it has been determined what to do, there may still be a problem in deciding which agency, in our fragmented system of government, should carry out the job.

These themes run through a recent report by the Wayne County Department of Public Works on deterioration of water quality in the Middle Rouge River.

The county report was written in response to a 1967 report by the State Water

Resources Commission which measured actual pollution in the Middle Rouge and some of the actual and potential sources of pollution. The WRC asked Wayne County to come up with a report and recommendations for correction. A major portion of that report is reprinted below.

THE MIDDLE ROUGE starts in Oakland County, flows through Novi and Northville. At the latter point, it becomes the nucleus of the Huron Parkway system through Northville Township, Plymouth, southern Livonia, Westland and Dearborn Heights.

Dams form several impoundments - Waterford Pond, Phoenix Lake, Wilcox Pond and Newburgh Lake. The water is so murky that few boaters use any of the ponds.

Politically, the key point for Observerland residents is the recommendation that either an existing governmental agency be designated to run a coordinated anti-pollution program, or that a special "Middle River Rouge Watershed Council" be organized to do the job.

Many ideas in the report came from a meeting last Nov. 4 of officials from the Wayne County Road Commission, Department of Public Works and Health Department; the cities of Dearborn Heights, Livonia, Garden City and Westland; private engineering consultants; and the state WRC.

A KEY POINT the county stresses is the need to separate sanitary and storm sewage

water. Overflow from these so-called "combined" systems was seen as an important, though not the sole, cause of pollution.

State and federal grants may be needed to rebuild such systems, the DPW report suggests.

Another interesting point is that sanitary sewage and industrial wastes aren't the only causes of pollution. Such "good" things in our society as fertilizers, insecticides and salt from the roads also degrade the stream.

The county report reprinted here isn't the most exciting reading in the world, but it will illustrate the complexity of the pollution problem and serve as an antidote to public indignation.

## What Wayne County Engineer Recommends

By DUANE EGELAND  
Chief Engineer  
Wayne County DPW

In a publication entitled "Water Quality Evaluation of the Middle River Rouge Basin," dated October, 1967, the Michigan Water Resources Commission reported that water samples taken at various points in the Middle River Rouge indicated that the quality of the river's water is seriously degraded. The report also identified combined sewer discharges as one of the causes of the degradation.

On July 19, 1968, the Water Resources Commission requested the Wayne County Department of Public Works to initiate a study to determine the amount of wastewater actually entering the Middle River Rouge. Interceptor System from each of the areas served; to coordinate its studies with those of the areas served; and to submit a report on proposed corrective action (concerning combined overflows) to the WRC by Jan. 1, 1970.

Each community discharges sewage to the Rouge Valley Interceptor System has an allocated capacity in the system. Some time ago it became apparent that certain communities were fast approaching their allocation and consequently the DPW had been studying methods of measuring sewage from the local systems even before the Water Resources Commission requested it to do so.

THE STAFF of the DPW has conducted several meetings with representatives of communities located within the Middle River Rouge Watershed. The representatives of the communities first reviewed the Water Resources Commission report and accepted its findings with two exceptions, which were:

1. The report lists the causes of water quality degradation in the river as combined sewer diversions, trash accumulations, industrial

waste discharge and soil erosion. It was noted that storm sewer diversions which carry air pollutants, fertilizers, insecticides, salt and the accumulated filth of the urbanized system of the river must certainly be added to the list. This is an important point because it indicates that a study of combined overflows should be made in conjunction with storm water diversions.

B. The conclusions of the WRC report are based on two samples taken only eight hours apart at 18 points in the river. The samples were taken during a time when the storm water runoff was at a peak and during a period of very low natural flow in the river. The samples would, therefore, represent a condition of maximum pollution, but a condition which would be of short duration and infrequent occurrence.

While most of the samples do indicate a serious pollution condition, it is evidenced by high coliform counts and low dissolved oxygen levels, these samples do not necessarily indicate that combined overflows are the only or the most serious cause of the pollution.

Some samples obtained north of Phoenix Lake, upstream from all known combined overflows, also indicated high coliform count following rainfall. There is no question but that the Middle River Rouge is seriously degraded, but considerably more information is needed to positively identify the causes of the pollution.

It is clear that no one is more concerned about the pollution of the Middle River Rouge than the residents of the Middle Rouge Watershed and the representatives of these residents are determined not only to comply with orders of the Water Resources Commission but to restore the river to the best condition attainable.

THERE ARE, of course, several obstacles which must be overcome before this desire

can be converted to meaningful actions.

The sewerage systems and other facilities contributing to the pollution are under the jurisdiction of many local units of government, various agencies of three different counties and numerous private organizations.

It is imperative that an existing authority be designated, or a new authority created, for the specific purposes of (1) establishing river quality goals; (2) implementing basin wide studies, programs, and projects to systematically achieve these goals; and (3) coordinating the anti-pollution efforts of the many public agencies, private organizations and individuals so as to efficiently organize these efforts, thereby eliminating wasteful duplication.

Early in 1970, the DPW will arrange a meeting of officials of governmental units in the Middle River Rouge Watershed. The officials will be requested to consider designating an existing agency to administer a coordinated watershed pollution control program, or to petition the Water Resources Commission for the formation of a "Middle River Rouge Watershed Council," under the provisions of Act 253 of the Public Acts of 1964, to perform the same function.

It will be recommended that the first order of business for the designated agency or council should be to establish a water quality monitoring program to determine, among other things, the normal condition of the river and the effect of rainfall on the condition, to accurately identify the sources of pollution and to evaluate the relative effect of each source on the overall pollution.

FOUR METHODS have been considered to reduce combined sewer overflows to the Middle River Rouge. They will be discussed here in terms of actions actually taken or proposed.

I. Separation of Combined Sewerage System

The ultimate solution to eliminating combined overflow is, of course, for all new work to be constructed as separate systems and all existing combined systems be separated.

In 1966 the Board of Supervisors of Wayne County adopted a policy of limiting new construction to separate systems, except where such separation could be proven to be unfeasible.

In 1966 the DPW carried that policy one step further by requiring all new extensions to systems under its jurisdiction to be constructed as separate systems, even though these systems might temporarily outlet into a combined system. The latter action was prompted by a realization that the major cost of separation was reconnecting existing house leads.

It is established therefore, that the DPW is strong proponent of separated sewerage systems and has taken positive action to support that position.

If these combined systems are no longer acceptable, the community is not solely at fault, and if the community is required to separate its system in order to protect the public health, it would appear that the cost of such separation should be partially supported by public funds through state and federal grants.

Five communities in the Middle Rouge Interceptor District currently operate sewerage systems which overflow to the river during heavy rainfall. Each of these communities has under consideration programs whereby all or parts of their combined systems will be separated. It should be noted however, that the compelling reason for separation is flooded basements and not a concern with overflows.

The DPW recommends that the first step of any separation program should be the construction of separate outfalls for existing separated sanitary and storm sewers which outlet into a combined sewer.

II. Storage and Treatment of Combined Sewerage Overflows

Before a program of separating combined sewers is adopted, an evaluation of the relative benefits of the separation program, as compared to a system of storing and treating the combined overflows, should be made. If storm water will eventually require treatment, it may be more economical and efficient to treat the combined overflows along with the storm water, than to separate the combined systems.

This is one of the reasons a comprehensive monitoring program is important. It would



THE ROUGE RIVER, though polluted in spots and full of trash, is still popular with ducks. (Observer photo)

provide the information necessary to make such decisions.

III. Storage of Combined Sewage in Local Systems

This method of reducing combined sewerage overflows is not particularly adopted in the Middle River Rouge Systems because they are basically gravity systems, whereas systems experimenting with this method are generally pumped systems.

The successful operation of this scheme depends on sophisticated controls and highly trained personnel. Any error or malfunction could cause extensive property damage and serious health hazards.

In view of other methods available, the DPW does not feel this method should be considered in the Middle Rouge District.

IV. Discharging additional combined Sewage to the Sanitary Interceptor

As stated previously, it appears that no more capacity is available in the interceptor for combined sewage. However, the metering and sewerage inventory programs now in progress will provide information on which to base revisions of the settings of regulators so as to optimize utilization of the interceptor for combined sewage.

The DPW is also investigating the feasibility of installing a system which would remotely monitor levels in the interceptor.

## GOP Turns Left In Congress—ACA

Michigan congressmen are swinging to the political left as they vote for Kennedy-Johnson programs being continued by the Nixon Administration.

So says Americans for Constitutional Action (ACA), a conservative non-partisan political action group which rates lawmakers on their voting records.

The higher a congressman's score, the more conservative he is by ACA standards.

IN 1969 REP. Marvin Esch (R-Ann Arbor) earned only a 23 from ACA, placing him fairly close to many of the Democrats elected in the 1950s and early '60s. Each represents the 2nd District, including Plymouth and Northville.

Rep. Jack McDonald (R-Farmington) earned a 56 for the year, a little more conservative than the 53 earned by House Minority Leader Gerald R. Ford. McDonald's 18th District includes Livonia, Redford and the City of Northville in Wayne County and most of western Oakland County.

Rep. William D. Ford (D-Taylor) continued to have one of the more liberal Michigan voting records in sight. He has a lifetime voting record of four, the most liberal of any Michigan congressman.

These included vice presidential nominee Edmund Muskie of Maine and Eugene McCarthy of Minnesota.

ACA's index was based on 17 House votes and 16 Senate roll calls. In general, ACA opposes foreign aid and new domestic spending programs along with any bill that seems to mean

more government regulation of private industry.

Its ratings are almost exactly the reverse of the liberal Americans for Democratic Action and the AFL-CIO's Political Action Committee, which rate a conservative voter, a high ACA rating is good; to a liberal, a low rating is preferred.

## Easter Seal Drive Seeks Volunteers

The Easter Seal Society for Crippled Children and Adults of Western Wayne County is seeking volunteers for all the varied clerical tasks necessary to the annual appeal for funds to support its local service program.

These volunteers will join hundreds of others who are helping to bring a variety of services to their handicapped neighbors in this area. Over 200 individuals were directly involved in personal service at the Easter Seal Center near Middle Belt and Michigan in Inkster over the Christmas holidays while several hundreds more worked on service projects behind the scenes.

The annual Easter Seal campaign runs from Feb. 23 to March 29. The Easter Seal Society itself does not duplicate what is available from other agencies supported by Torch Drive funds or from taxes.

DURING THE PAST YEAR, 659 individuals received 1,192 services from the local society.

which is an affiliate of the Michigan and National Easter Seal Societies.

These services included year-round clubs for teenagers and adults, occupational therapy groups, assistance with equipment such as wheelchairs or walkers, either loaned or by purchase as prescribed by a physician, and help with part of the costs for special treatment such as speech therapy and a general concern for all those with handicaps who are striving to find their places in their communities.

General chairman for western Wayne County is Charles A. Smith of Northville.

Joe Spagnola, who retains his Livonia home and his business interests in spite of the change in his baseball setting, is honorary chairman.

Those interested in serving crippled children and adults during the campaign or through the year are urged to call the society at FA 2-3055 or to write to P.O. Box 101, Inkster 48141.

AREA CHAIRMEN include: Garden City - Glenn Heavens, 3000 Marquette, Garden City Rotary; Livonia - Bill Lube, Livonia National Bank, Livonia Rotary; Plymouth - Carl Langston, 355 W. Ann Arbor Trail, Plymouth Rotary; Redford Township - J.L. Fleisher, 24567 Northwestern, Birmingham, Redford Rotary; Lola Valley - Jack Armbruster, 18665 Salem, Lola Valley Kiwanis; Westland - David Smith, Tire Department of J.L. Hudson's Westland Center, Westland Rotary.

### THE HARRIS BROADCASTER

**SPECIAL LENTEN SERVICE**

Wednesday, February 18, 7:30 p.m.  
St. Michael Lutheran Church  
3003 Hannan Road (at Glenwood)

**TOASTMASTERS MEET**

(Motor City Speakeasy)  
2nd and 4th Mondays, 7 p.m.  
Hillside Inn, Plymouth  
For Information  
Call Neil Smith, President - 464-2367

**ARTS and CRAFT EXHIBIT**

February 19 through 28  
Livonia Mall  
Seven Mile Road at Middlebelt  
Cost: Free

**"GENTLE EXERCISE"**

Tuesday, February 24, 7 p.m.  
YMCA  
827 South Wayne Road

To publish the notice of your organization activity, contact, in person, Thomas F. Rost, Mgr., Garden City Chapel, or David R. Whitney, Mgr., Livonia Chapel.

R.G.&G.R. SINCE 1910

**Harris FUNERAL HOMES**

GARDEN CITY CHAPEL (Formerly LANE) Phone: 425-9200 31551 Ford Road, near Meridian

LIVONIA CHAPEL Phone: 422-6720 15455 Farmington Road, near Five Mile

observer newspapers, INC.

### CIRCULATION DATA

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NEWSPAPER	Current Paid Sub.	CAC Audit Paid Sub. 1969
LIVONIA OBSERVER	29,500	28,220
REDFORD OBSERVER	20,700	19,956
WESTLAND OBSERVER	18,000	17,376
SOUTHFIELD OBSERVER	17,000	116,000
FARMINGTON ENTERPRISE & OBSERVER	15,400	14,501
GARDEN CITY OBSERVER	11,400	10,924
PLYMOUTH MAIL & OBSERVER	9,700	9,800

WEEKLY EDITIONS, WEDNESDAY EDITION, February 1970. Not included in March 1970. CAC Audit

Total Weekly	122,200	116,577
Weekend	93,800	88,277

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