



Volunteers drag logs, branches and other debris from a clogged section of the Evans Branch of the Rouge River in Southfield. This 1972 cleanup

effort was one of more than a dozen Southfield officials and volunteers have initiated to clean the waterway of natural and manmade obstacles.

Cleaning up

Volunteers have helped clear away clogs, clutter

An enormous amount of volunteer effort and a bit of paid effort accounts for most of what has been done so far to clean up the Rouge River.

Much of this effort has involved trash removal and clearing log jams, both important in keeping the river corridor open and flowing, said James Murray, chairman of Michigan's Water Resources Committee.

While most of the efforts are modest, there are lots of them, said Bruce Monson, director for both the Rouge River Watershed Council and Friends of the Rouge.

For 15 years Steve Marshall, a field supervisor with the Southfield Planning Department, has been organizing annual cleanups by volunteers on the first weekend in June. Marshall has shared these experiences at workshops with officials from neighboring communities.

On June 7, a massive volunteer effort involving 10 communities, private businesses and governmental resources will combine efforts in the "Rouge Rescue '86 Cleanup." WJBK-TV is coordinating the event that is being partially underwritten by the Ford Motor Co.

Every summer Jim Bally of Redford Township organizes volunteers for cleanup throughout the summer. Volunteers use donated township equipment.

ONE SUCH volunteer, Franklin Wert,

participated in these cleanups, and at the organizational meeting of the Friends of the Rouge River on Feb. 27 he showed slides of huge piles of trash he had helped to remove. The following week Franklin died. He was 83 years old.

Members of the Riverside Park Civic Association of Detroit regularly clean trash from the river bank in the park. Volunteer members of the Brightmoor Concerned Citizens do the same in Eliza Howell Park.

In 1983 nearly 2,000 volunteers from Wayne, Livonia and other communities helped county employees clear trash along Edward Hines Drive.

That same year, 242 Michigan Youth Corps members cleared 17 tons of debris from the river, including a broken down shanty or outhouse, three Volkswagens and 50 railroad ties.

Since January of this year, crews with the Detroit Water and Sewage Department have been removing log jams and abandoned automobiles. Other cities, Marshall said, have also paid for cleanup, but usually on an as-needed basis.

The Wayne County Sheriff's Department launched a jail work program Feb. 24 and district court prisoners from five communities are working five days a week on river cleanup. Additional district courts are expected to participate in the program. Sheriff spokesman Dale Jurcisin said.

Janice Brunson



George Veach, shown here in a photo taken in September 1972, adds the rejected remainder of a bicycle to a pile of junk hauled out of the river during a "Rescue the Rouge" project. Veach, a Westland Jaycee, joined more than 3,000 volunteers to help clean sections of the Rouge in Wayne County.