

Rouge Rescue

Volunteers free up river's flow

By Joanne Mallazowski
staff writer

Every foot up the steep embankment marked a victory for the 200-odd Rouge Rescue '89 volunteers in Farmington Hills Saturday.

"This is like Hamburger Hill all over again," a volunteer shouted as a

5-6-foot log reached the crest of the embankment, thanks to modded and strained volunteers.

But through the mud and the strained muscles, volunteers — many Farmington Hills employees — talked of the progress made in just a couple hours.

"When I first came here, the wa-

ter wasn't moving. Now it's moving," said planning commissioner Mary Avery, participating in the annual cleanup for the first time.

Taking a breather when he reached the top of the embankment, city manager William Costick pointed to the flowing river. "This was a big jam. It was a dam down there."

Exhausting, yes. Dirty, yes. Hot, yes. But the volunteers made a good time of the annual cleanup along the river by the Farmington Nursing Home, on the southwest corner of Folsom and Tuck.

"This is a first for me. Oh, I love to get dirty," said Gerry Crossmyer, grandknight at the Knights of Columbus, St. Francis Council, on Middlebelt, south of Nine Mile. "This is great. This is what it's all about."

THIS IS the first year the Knights of Columbus added the Rouge Rescue to its list of community projects. "They've taken six loads out of here already," Crossmyer said, pointing to big yellow Department of Public Works trucks carrying away debris retrieved from the river by volunteers.

"You have to do it every year," said Farmington Hills resident and Friends of the Rouge member Fred Harrison. "This is helping. It'll scour itself. It's self-cleaning."

Though the Rouge has raw sewage and toxic pollutant problems, the annual cleanup day is specifically designed to remove the debris, log jams and other objects that pile up in the river and either block it or aid in changing its course.

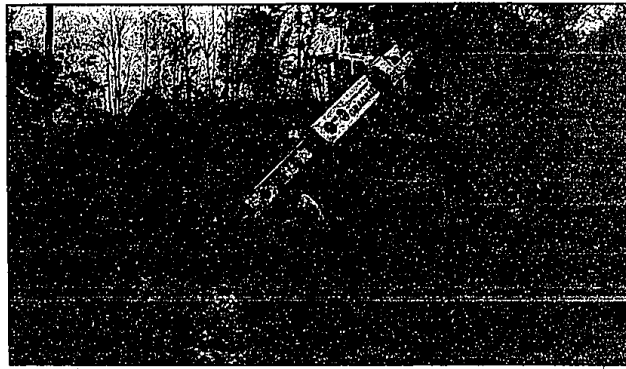
When the river changes its course because of blockage, it erodes the river banks and prevents the river's natural abilities to cleanse itself of fecal contaminants.

"One little twig will start a build-up. It's a constant," said Harrison, who believes the Rouge River has a healthy future.

Unlike past years, when tires, steds and office chairs accompanied the debris hauled out of the river, this year was primarily log jams.

"The major jams we've got out to get, we have gotten out already," said local Rouge coordinator Jean Barrett, assistant to the Farmington Hills public services director.

"A lot of this is nature-made. But if you take care of it when it happens — pull out stuff when you see it — we can keep the water flowing," Barrett said.



Bob Hall (left) of the Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Department helps Bob Malloy by Dave Edwards, who is also a DPS employee. of the Department of Public Services load logs

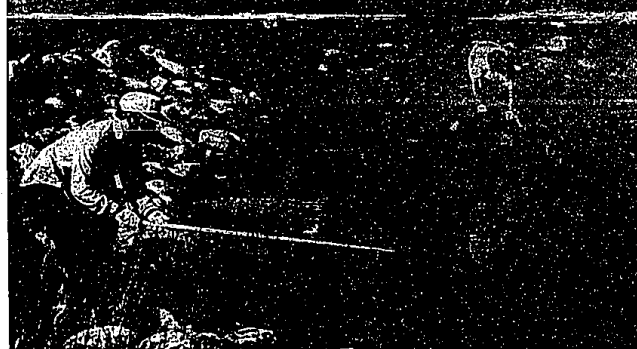


Kelli Harvey of Rochester pulls debris from a detention pond on OCC's Orchard Ridge Campus during Rouge Rescue '89 Saturday. The pond is fed by the river.



AT LEFT: Doug Walter (foreground) of Farmington wades through the Rouge to pick up logs at the Farmington Hills clean-up site near the Farmington Nursing Home on Folsom Saturday morning. In the background is Bill Lockman, 14, of Farmington Hills. The city of Farmington Hills treated the volunteer workers to lunch after the morning river rescue.

Staff photos
by
Randy Borst



Mike Rosen (foreground) of Southfield and Sue Beattie of West Bloomfield help clean a detention pond on the OCC Orchard Ridge Campus Saturday. Rosen is an OCC student. Beattie works there.

OCC's clean-up effort makes up for lost time

By Susan Buck
staff writer

Poor publicity was another reason for low turnout, he said.

Even so, five 30-yard dumpsters, supplied by Waste Management of Michigan, were filled last year, six were expected to be filled this year.

This year's promotional effort was buoyed by student government support.

Steve Thurlow, a biology instructor, offered extra credit to his students who contributed several hours of work.

Cathy Mote of Walled Lake, a student in Thurlow's "Man and the Environment" class, took him up on the offer. "He told us that we could get 30 points or what is equivalent to a day's lab," she said.

Debris filters down, north of campus to an area that is somewhat scenic.

"We've already got four signs, garbage can lids, kid's toys and a seven-foot-long chunk of telephone pole," said Kadrofske, a coordinator who is superintending of OCC's buildings and grounds.

"Last year, we didn't coincide with the same day," Kadrofske said.

Keith Turner, a student coordinator from West Bloomfield, served as a liaison between faculty and Friends of the Rouge.

"People used to fish on the river during the 1930s and 1940s," said Turner, a robotics student, as he raked mud from the pond. "There's a blue heron that comes here every morning around eight or nine o'clock and will sit here until people come along."

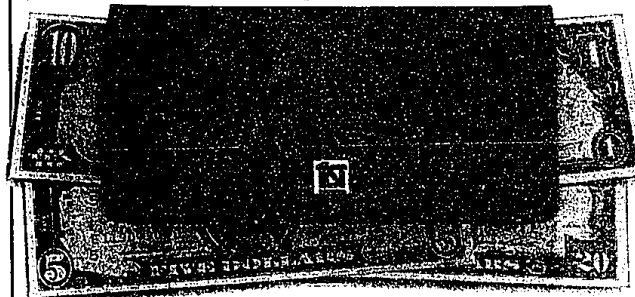
GEORGE COMDEN, campus business manager, also pitched in. "We really had the pits here, last year," he said. "What's hurting us today is the high water from the recent rain."

Chain saws whined as volunteers purged the tank-filled water.

Community activism runs in the family, said Yael Goldbaum, an OCC student active in campus student government. Her mother, Vicki, who sits on the Southfield City Council, has been active in Southfield's Rouge cleanup at Beech Woods Park, she said.

"She's always been active politically. We have Rouge T-shirts all over the house," she said.

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