

Group aims to clean up polluted runoff

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Rivers are eroding back yards. River water is discolored.

Where is the vegetation along the river? What's that smell?

These were among the water quality concerns brought by the residents and civic leaders of many southern Oakland County communities to West Bloomfield's Family Aquatic Center on Thursday.

Finding ways to halt Rouge River pollution was the goal of the local Rouge River Watershed advisory group, comprised of representatives from 18 county communities including West Bloomfield, Southfield, Birmingham, Troy and Rochester Hills, where water runoff spills into the river.

They said fertilizers, oils, eroded soil, septic leakage and pollutants rinsed off pavements flow into the river and other bodies of water, creating environmental and public health problems.

"We're trying to clean up the

watershed through public education and awareness," said Philip Sanzica, an engineer with the Oakland County Drain Commissioner's Office. "We want the river to be fishable and we want to increase recreation opportunities around the river and other local bodies of water."

Through research and public inquiries, the advisory group is nearly done with a strategy to clean up the Rouge River watershed within the county. In the meantime, individual communities are finding success with programs that may be part of the entire watershed clean-up strategy.

■ In Birmingham, officials obtained grant money for landscaping and bioengineering (specific natural plantings that reduce erosion) to stop the Rouge River from swallowing land which dirtied the water that flows through the city-operated Springfield Golf Course.

"With the improvements made, the loading of sedimentation from the stream-bank erosion will be reduced and provide

an improved aquatic life habitat," said Jennifer Lawson, Birmingham's watershed consultant.

■ In Southfield, officials developed a septic inspection program where Oakland County Health Division staff visit homes using septic systems in the hope of preventing septic from leaking into the river. During visits, staff members also take time to explain to homeowners how to prevent harmful runoff into the river.

Most of Southfield's residents still using septic are in the southwest part of the city, where the river flows," said Mark Hansell of the county's health division. "So this program is having quite an impact on the river."

■ In Bloomfield Township, officials are creating a public forum involving all residential associations along the township's lakes, all of which have private access.

The forums are designed to educate residents about the smart use of fertilizers, salts and

septic systems. They are creating uniform methods to monitor their declining water quality, so they can find ways and local government policies to improve it.

"Ultimately, this group effort will lead into an expansive network of all township homeowners who treasure our lakes as a valuable asset within our community," said Wayne Domine of the Bloomfield Township Water Department.

These efforts pleased Bill Scott of Farmington Hills, who said he's concerned about the quality of river water running along his back yard.

"They always seem to focus their clean-up efforts down river," said Scott, who assisted Rouge River clean-up efforts in the past. "We don't hear too much about what they're doing until now."

Thursday marked the third of four public participation meetings slated during the local Rouge River advisory group's planning process. The next one is scheduled for May at a site to be named later.

POLICE CALLS

The following reports were filed during the past week with the Farmington and Farmington Hills Police Departments:

In the Hills:

ROAD RAGE

A 29-year-old Farmington Hills woman told police a man forced her to stop her vehicle on Eldred Road, hit the hood of her vehicle, screamed and smashed a head pipe.

She was followed by another truck that tried to force her off the road near Grand River and M-5, but she lost the tail near M-5 and Halsted.

The man who stopped the woman, a resident of Eldred Street, said he intended to caution her against speeding on the street, which is often used as a cut-through between Middlebelt and Eight Mile Road. She was driving 80 mph, he said.

The man said the woman struck him in trying to get around him. He told police his 19-year-old son followed her.

GROUP HOME RAPE

The manager of a group home told police Tuesday that a resident reported that he was raped by another resident Feb. 17 in one of the bedrooms.

Police interviewed the victim and suspect, both of whom have Down's syndrome. The victim said he told the suspect to stop to no avail. The suspect told essentially the same story, as did a witness.

The victim's brother and guardian told police he would remove the victim from the home.

STOLEN CAR

A 48-year-old Farmington man told police his daughter's 1992 Ford Escort was stolen by her boyfriend. The daughter went to visit the boyfriend at the Motel 6 on Grand River at 10:30 a.m. Feb. 22. The boyfriend took \$18 and her car keys from her purse and left while she was in the bathroom, the man told police.

CRACK FOUND

Police arrested a 39-year-old

woman about 2:50 a.m. Thursday for possession of three rocks of crack cocaine. The woman was a passenger in a 1986 Ford Bronco that was pulled over on Grand River near Purdue for weaving. The police officer, smelling alcohol on the woman's breath and noticing a drink on the floor of the car, searched her purse and found the cocaine. She was subsequently lodged in the Farmington Hills lockup.

In Farmington:

LARCENY

The owner of Dependable Hardchome, 32728 Eight Mile Road, reported that two sweep gauges valued at approximately \$2,800 were taken from the shop about noon Wednesday.

MALICIOUS MISCHIEF

A 72-year-old woman, a resident in the 33000 block of Oakland, heard several objects hit her house about 11 p.m. Monday. The next day, she reported that to police. According to reports, several homes on the

street were struck with blue paint balls.

SKATEBOARDERS WARNED

Three youngsters, between ages 12-14, were warned about riding skateboards or scooters in downtown Farmington. They were riding about 10:50 a.m. Tuesday on the sidewalks near Village Mall, which is located at Grand River and Farmington Road.

The city of Farmington prohibits the riding of skateboards or scooters in the downtown business district. The youngsters were told they would be ticketed, and their equipment confiscated, if they continued.

BREAK-IN

The lock of a storage area at public storage, 34030 Nine Mile, was broken sometime between Feb. 8 and Monday, with several items stolen. The items, valued at an undisclosed total amount, included two television sets, a VCR and baker's rack.

The area was ransacked and a shelving unit stolen.

How to protect the Rouge River Watershed

Branches and tributaries of the Rouge River reach 18 southern Oakland County communities, including Birmingham, Bloomfield, Bloomfield Hills, Farmington, Farmington Hills, Lathrup Village, Oak Park, Orchard Lake, Southfield and West Bloomfield.

Here are ways to reduce the volume of pollutants draining into rivers and lakes.

Homeowners: Use slow-release formula fertilizers, limit the use of ice-melting salts, clean chemical spills and leaks without rinsing them into street drains, properly maintain septic systems.

Local leaders: Create laws requiring environmental-friendly fertilizers and push for more porous parking lots so water seeps immediately into the ground instead of collecting pollutants on concrete and draining into sewers.

Developers: Minimize the amount of impervious surfaces in developments and preserve as much green space as possible.

Source: Main 1-2 Rouge River Subwatershed Advisory Group

Training burn



Combustible: Members of the Farmington Hills Fire Department participated in training burns recently. Pictured, firefighters studied the effects of flammable materials burning on a garage floor.

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