

**Rock Solid**

Howard Knorr, Citizen, and Tracy Slintak, City of Farmington Hills

Too often, the result of our changing landscape is the creation of one solid surface after another. Whether it is a road, parking lot, driveway, house, or other building, they all make up impervious surfaces which prevents water from soaking into the ground. Instead, the rainfall runs off into our storm drains as stormwater. Imagine the result of all that stormwater - overflowing streams of fast-moving water, eroding banks, flooding properties, and wildlife literally washed away.



Pavers are attractive and let the rain soak through

As if that isn't enough, consider the pollutants that stormwater picks up on its journey to our rivers and lakes. Oil drips from cars on the road, coolant leaks from radiators in a parking lot, fertilizer ends up on a driveway instead of the lawn.

So what can we do? Soften the landscape wherever possible. Consider using pervious pavement instead of asphalt or concrete for your driveway. Direct the rainwater from your roof to a rain garden. Encourage developments in your community to soften their landscapes by talking to your local officials. Innovations in porous asphalt, green roofs, and stormwater systems that infiltrate water into the ground make it easier for developers to use these river-friendly methods.

Reducing impervious surfaces, along with practicing other river-friendly techniques, makes our waterways cleaner, safer, and goes a long way toward making the Rouge an asset to enjoy!

This newsletter is sponsored by the Rouge River National Wet Weather Demonstration Project, the Main 1-2 Subwatershed Communities and the Oakland County Drain Commissioner's Office. Please call the Environmental Unit at (248) 858-0958 with questions or inquiries.

Waterside Living

Rouge River Watershed

One Public Works Dr., Waterford, MI 48328

**Disappearing Act**

Tracy Slintak, City of Farmington Hills

Is your riparian property disappearing right before your eyes? If you have a problem with erosion, it's time to assess how you are managing your shoreline.

Your first reaction to erosion may be to install concrete or another hard surface along the streambanks to counteract the problem. While this solution may be tempting, it probably won't be a pretty one, and you may be sending the problem downstream to the area just beyond where the concrete stops.

A buffer of native plants, usually 25 feet wide along the banks of the river, can offer an easy alternative. The deep roots of these plants act as natural erosion control, and they look more attractive than concrete.

If you have a serious erosion problem, you may need to install an erosion control mat, geoweb, or other product that will work with your plantings to produce a more resilient surface. A search in the local phone book or online under "erosion control" will help you find the professional advice you need for these specialized products.

To learn about where to find the native plants you need, or how to better manage your riparian property, check with your local government office, visit the Friends of the Rouge website ([www.therouge.org](http://www.therouge.org)), or watch your local paper for news on the latest workshops and informational meetings.

**Rouge Creature Feature: Blandings Turtle**

Michele Arquette-Palermo, Cranbrook Institute of Science

Have you seen one of these lately? The Blandings Turtle, *Emydoidea blandingii*, is a resident of most areas south of the Mackinac Bridge, including the Rouge watershed. This turtle is named for William Blanding, the early Philadelphia naturalist who first described it. With their



very long, bright yellow neck, charming "smile," and high-domed shell, you can easily identify them in ponds, marshes, wet prairies and bogs. They prefer to live in clean water with lots of vegetation. According to the Michigan Natural Features Inventory, the Blandings Turtle is a species of special concern, which means you will have a harder time finding them in the wild. Although the

condition of our lakes and streams is improving, poor water quality and the loss of prime habitat are still affecting their numbers. Like many species in the Rouge River Watershed, it is sensitive to pesticides, herbicides, and changes in its environment. So remember, your actions impact the home of the Blandings Turtle and many other creatures. Let's work together to keep the "smile" on this guy's face!

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Rouge Main 1-2 Subwatershed Partners: Auburn Hills, Beverly Hills, Bingham Farms, Birmingham Hills, Bloomfield Hills, Bloomfield Twp., Farmington, Commerce Twp., Franklin, Lathrup Village, Lyon Twp., Novi, Oak Park, Farmington Hills, Farmington Hills, Orchard Lake, Pontiac, Rochester Hills, Southfield, Troy, Walled Lake, West Bloomfield Twp., Wixom and Oakland County Drain Commissioner's Office

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### Golf Courses as River Stewards

Skip Roche, Glen Oaks Golf Course - Oakland County Parks

Park and recreation managers and golf course administrators have recognized that today's golf courses have to deal with a broad range of complex environmental issues. Courses today are maintained to work in conjunction with surrounding wetlands and wildlife areas. Managers must ensure that the present health of today's land and water will exist for the future generations to come.

Water resources and the related wildlife are dependent on the sound ecological practices turf managers now utilize. There are a number of resources available to assist golf courses in maintaining water and wetlands quality. One of the best and most comprehensive is the Environmental Stewardship Program administered by Michigan State University and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. Many of Southeast Michigan's golf courses have met the educational and inspection requirements to achieve this certification.



Currently, golf courses maintain buffer zones with naturalized

vegetation areas to reduce the risk of contaminating wetlands with surface runoff. Wellheads (the source of water for drinking water wells) are protected with a no maintenance area to guard against any leaching of pollutants into the water table. A constant battle is waged against invasive species that are persistently attacking Michigan's waters and wetlands. These practices allow us to maintain water quality and promote wildlife diversity.

The stewardship of not only the maintained golf area but also the waters and wetlands that tie into the Rouge system is one of our most critical challenges. We recognize that environmental sensitivity not only provides quality aesthetics but also makes us good neighbors to those downstream. Golfers and environmentalists alike acknowledge and appreciate the value in these highly successful efforts.

#### DID YOU KNOW??

Lawns only need approximately 1 to 1.5 inches of water per week.

### Greening the Lawn ... the Rouge-Friendly Way

Lillian Dean, SOCWA

Residential lawns account for about 50% of the pollutants in storm water runoff reaching the Rouge River. It is critical that riparian landowners learn good land stewardship practices.

If you have decided to maintain a green lawn, be sure that you have at least a 25-foot buffer zone between the river (or lake) and the lawn. The fish and small insects that make up nature's food chain will thank you!



The SOCWA Healthy Lawn Program, developed in consultation with Michigan State University and other turfgrass specialists, offers the following tips for lawn care:

- Cut grass high. Leave 2½ or 3 inches on the grass blade AFTER cutting.
- Use a slow-release, low-phosphorus fertilizer. Call SOCWA for the "do-it-yourself" healthy lawn care information package.
- If you contract for fertilizer and weed control services, consider the "healthy lawn program for watershed protection", sponsored by the Michigan Green Industry Association. Avoid "automatic" insecticide and herbicide applications and ask for options. Spot treat weeds. This method may cost more than "automatic blanket" applications – but it is much better for the health of your family and the environment.
- If you have compacted soil, use a service for core aeration in the spring or fall. Raking compost into the lawn also gives the turf a boost.

To learn more, please telephone SOCWA at 248-288-5150 weekdays or e-mail [LFDean@aol.com](mailto:LFDean@aol.com).

### Rouge Rescue: A Water Week Event

Brandy Bakita, City of Southfield

From its humble beginnings 35 years ago, Rouge Rescue has evolved to become part of Water Week, a collection of approximately 100 events happening throughout southeast Michigan. This week is devoted to clean-up events, nature hikes, canoe trips, and other water related activities. An annual event is a great opportunity for volunteers from local businesses, homeowners associations, school groups, service organizations, churches, and other concerned citizens to work together and make a difference in their community. This year's event was a great success, but it's never too early to start planning for next year, and the river needs your help! Please contact Friends of the Rouge at (313) 792-9900 or visit their website [www.therouge.org](http://www.therouge.org) for more information on how you can participate or even sponsor an event in your community. You *can* make a difference!