

# Our Actions Affect the Rouge River

A guide to improving water quality in Redford



## Why be concerned?

Government, industry and individuals need to work together during the Rouge River restoration process. Some possible benefits to a restored Rouge River are:

- Canoeing and fishing along the river
- Increased wildlife to the area
- Improved aesthetics
- Potential rise in property values
- A safe place for your children and grandchildren to discover and explore!

Did you know that more than one-third of the pollution in the Rouge River and its tributaries comes from storm water runoff? As rain water flows over land it picks up a variety of pollutants, including eroded soil, trash, fertilizers and pesticides. Automobile fluids, including motor oil, antifreeze, gasoline, and brake fluid, contain trace metals and poisons that often leak from vehicles onto streets and parking lots. These pollutants may make their way into storm sewers and ultimately into nearby streams and rivers.

The Rouge River is one of the most degraded river systems in the country; but today, significant efforts are underway throughout the watershed to improve the river's water quality. A watershed is the area of land that is drained by a river system or

## Rouge River Watershed



## Sources and Funding

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by a network of river systems. The Rouge River Watershed includes all land area and waterways that drain into the Rouge River. The map below shows all communities within the Rouge River Watershed.

The Rouge River Watershed, located in southeast Michigan, runs through the most densely populated and urbanized area in the state. The watershed is approximately 466 square miles in size and includes all or part of 48 municipalities in three counties with a population of over 1.5 million.

Passing through the City of River Rouge, the Rouge River empties into the Detroit River. The Detroit River is the connecting channel between Lake St. Clair and Lake Erie.

Redford Township is entirely located within the Rouge River Watershed, and all creeks and streams within the community flow into the Rouge River. Redford is committed to protecting water quality and is working with other communities in the watershed to develop proactive methods of controlling water pollution.

Despite advances in technology, environmental clean-up costs continue to increase every year. Preventing pollution is much easier and less costly to implement than trying to correct environmental damage after it has occurred.

## Isn't industry the big polluter to the Rouge?

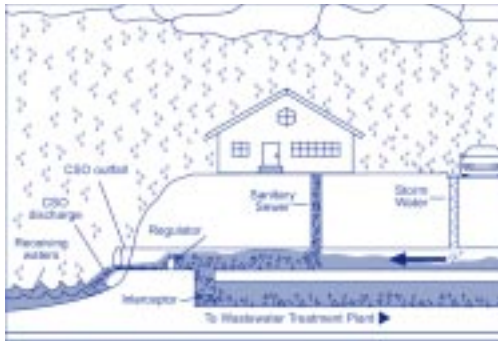
No. That is a misconception that many people have. It's true that industry used to be a large polluter, but today, industry causes only about 2% of pollution to the river.

## How do individuals pollute the river?

Individuals contribute to pollution in our area lakes and streams by creating polluted storm water runoff. This is the water that runs over the ground during a rainstorm or snowmelt and picks up pollutants found in fertilizers, pesticides, oil and grease from cars and bacteria from pet wastes. This polluted storm water enters the river directly or through storm drains that lead directly to the river.

## Do you know where your water goes?

Before getting into what actions you can take to restore the river, it is important to understand where the water goes when it leaves your house and property.



### Septic system with no storm drains

Some households collect wastewater and it enters into the septic tank where it eventually enters the drainfield and allows the soil to treat the wastewater. Water running off pavement and lawns outside enters ditches which flow into tributaries of the Rouge River.

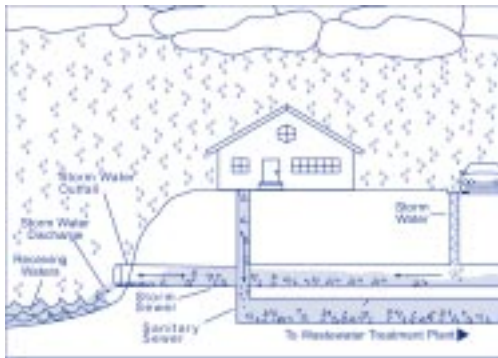
Therefore, any pollutant that is improperly disposed of your septic system or outside could contaminate both the soil and the river.

### Riparian owners

Property adjacent to the Rouge River or its tributaries is in need of special attention. Not only can storm water enter the river from the above mentioned sewer systems, but it can also enter the river directly as overland flow. Therefore, any chemicals, fertilizers, etc., that are put on your lawn or garden have the potential to runoff directly into the river.

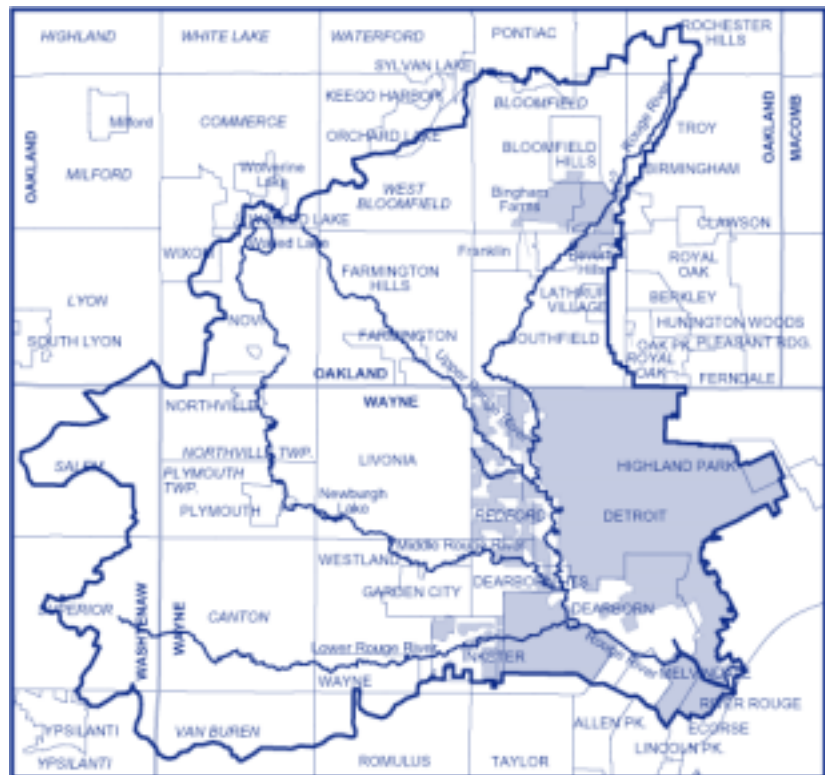
### Combined sewer system

Combined sewers collect both storm water and sanitary wastewater. Sometimes, when it rains, combined sewers do not have enough capacity to carry all the storm water and wastewater to the treatment plant. In these situations, the combined wastewater overflows untreated into a body of water. This situation is called a combined sewer overflow (CSO). In some cases, water is treated to kill the bacteria found in the sewage, but the other materials (fertilizers, pesticides, motor oil, etc.) enter the river untreated.



### Which system do you have?

If you are not sure if you live in a combined system or a separated system, look at the map below. The combined sewer system areas are shaded.



### Separated sewer system

Some communities collect storm water and sanitary wastewater in different sewers. These are called “separated sewers”. In this case, any polluted water entering your storm drain will reach the river without any treatment.

### Getting Help

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality

800.622.9278

Charter Township of Redford Dept. of Public Works

313.387.2690