

LIFE IS BUT A STREAM

River man rows with the flow

Ron Fadoir is an environmental planner with the Oakland County Water Resources Commission. He knows Southeast Michigan's three major rivers – the Clinton, the Rouge and the Huron – better than anyone. He is a tireless protector of our most important natural resource: water. Ron also helped start several kid's water festivals, including the Rouge River Water Festival, at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, and the Detroit River Water Festival, on Belle Isle. He has a Bachelor of Science degree in microbiology from Eastern Michigan University.

How did you start exploring rivers? “It was the mid-1980s, and I got a job with the Wayne County Health Department, which was studying the Rouge River. They got some federal money to try to see if they could restore that watershed's fish and wildlife.”

What was the Rouge like then? “It was bad. A lot of communities had combined systems, which meant both storm water and sanitary sewage flowed through the same pipe. When it rained those pipes



Photos Courtesy of Ron Fadoir

River walker Ron Fadoir helped start the Rouge Water Festival for kids at the University of Michigan-Dearborn Environmental Interpretive Center. Ron explains that rivers include all the water that flows down your street after it rains!

would overflow into the river. So I spent five summers just walking creeks and streams through Hines Park, identifying pipes and outlets into the river and taking water samples.”

How did you come to love nature? “I was in Boy Scouts. And my dad was an avid fisherman, and he'd take us fishing in the Detroit River and into Lake Erie. But my uncle lived in Gaylord, so we fished a lot of creeks and streams of the Au Sable and the Sturgeon rivers, too.”

How many miles of the Clinton, Rouge and Huron river systems have you walked or waded? “You could probably say thousands of miles of rivers and streams and inlets.”

Tell us a little about each of the systems. “The Rouge has four major branches: a main branch, and upper, middle,

and lower branches. But then each main branch has multiple creeks and streams. There are probably about 45 branches that come into the Rouge.”

How about the Clinton? “The Clinton has three major branches: Red Run, the main branch, and a North Branch, and Paint Creek, which is lower Michigan's only cold water trout stream. And there are hundreds of tributaries.”

And the Huron? “The Huron's main stem has three geographically distinct sections: the upper, middle and lower Huron. Twenty-four major tributaries flow into them.”

What exactly is a watershed? “A watershed is all the land that drains into a common body of water. For example, a lot of land in Oakland, Washtenaw and Wayne counties drains into the Rouge and is all part of its watershed.”

Where can you find a river or creek? “There are places in every community that are right out your back door that are just beautiful. But nobody ever sees them because they never go and look for them. The river is right by your house.”



Ron Fadoir also helped organize the Detroit River Water Festival on Belle Isle. These kids are learning how to paddle a canoe.

Continued on Page 7.