

CRWD seeks citizen advisors to protect, improve Cedar *Newly revamped CAC group to continue work of Vision 2020 Waterways*

AUSTIN, Minn. – Thursday, Dec. 21, 2017 – Citizens, including representatives of local groups, are being sought for service on a revamped advisory committee for the Cedar River Watershed District that will continue the efforts of Vision 2020 Waterways.

CRWD is accepting applications through Jan. 10 for its Citizens Advisory Committee, which the state requires for each watershed district. The CAC will provide input on CRWD projects as well as assist the district with its work in the watershed.

“Serving on this group will be a great way for individuals and specific groups to help our staff protect and improve the Cedar River State Water Trail and its tributaries,” said Tim Ruzek, CRWD’s outreach coordinator who will work with the committee. “We hope this new arrangement will strengthen partnerships and create new ones that support our local natural resources.”

CRWD expects at least six CAC meetings per year, with a chair and recorder chosen by CAC members at their first meeting.

About 20 committee members – including five from the general public – will be appointed to one-year terms by CRWD’s Board of Managers likely at its Jan. 17 meeting. Once formed, the committee will set its meeting schedule.

In relation to the Austin Vision 2020 initiative, part of the CRWD advisory committee’s main responsibilities will include oversight and continuing the goals and projects of Vision 2020 Waterways group started in 2012. Those include the Waterways committee’s four priority areas: water quality; water recreation; waterways enhancements; and water education.

Ruzek, also co-chair of Vision 2020 Waterways, said the Vision 2020 group reached a point where it made sense to transition it into a permanent home.

Vision 2020 and CRWD have done a lot of work together in recent years, said Greg Siems, director of Vision 2020. CRWD’s Capital Improvement Project – a nearly \$8.4 million initiative for water quality and flood reduction – has a \$3.2 million grant from The Hormel Foundation thanks to Vision 2020 Waterways. CRWD also has helped further Vision 2020 projects, such as enhancing plans at Austin’s three dams and adding canoe-kayak access along the Cedar River.

“This made a lot of sense to officially join forces now with CRWD,” Siems said. “Vision 2020 volunteers already have built a strong relationship with CRWD, and we want this work of protecting our waterways and enhancing our natural assets to be sustainable well into the future.”

CRWD’s Citizens Advisory Committee has been an 8-person group of county staff, elected county commissioners and Soil & Water Conservation District board supervisors from the district’s counties: Mower, Dodge, Freeborn and Steele.

These positions now are represented on three new committees created for the Cedar River One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P) process that began in 2016. Those committees – Policy; Advisory; and Planning Work Group – will keep meeting after finalizing a 1W1P planning document. A revamped Citizens Advisory Committee will avoid duplicating input by 1W1P committees, Ruzek said.

Groups initially invited to select a representative to serve on the CRWD advisory committee include Mower County farm groups; Riverland Community College’s agricultural center; Friends of the Jay C. Hormel Nature Center; Izaak Walton League; Mower County Pheasants Forever; youth representative; Hormel Foods Corp.; Austin Rotaract; Austin Parks & Recreation; City of Austin’s Public Works; Vision 2020 steering committee; and county staff or 4-H staff from Mower, Freeborn, Steele and Dodge counties.

CAC members will have numerous responsibilities, including to:

- Support of CRWD’s mission statement and goals, including advising and assisting CRWD with decisions.
- Consider issues pertinent to CRWD’s functions and purposes.
- Network and collaborate on projects related to conservation and natural resources within the CRWD.
- Raise issues of concern from the public.
- Oversight and continuation of Vision 2020 Waterways’ goals and projects.
- Provide recommendations to the CRWD Board of Managers on distribution of non-tax levy funds.
- Receive information and education on CRWD’s programs and projects.
- Participate in developing and reviewing CRWD’s annual work program and budget.
- Complete tasks assigned by the CRWD Board of Managers.
- Review CRWD plans, studies and projects as well as providing comments.
- Assist CRWD staff in public education, outreach and information activities and events.

Interested candidates should apply by Jan. 10. Applications are online at www.cedarriverwd.org and the CRWD office, 1408 21st Ave. N.W. in Austin. Applications and questions should be directed to Tim Ruzek at tim.ruzek@mowerswcd.org or 507-434-2603.

Formed in 2007, CRWD was created by local and state officials in response to the Cedar River Watershed’s worst-known flooding in 2000 and 2004. CRWD’s priorities are reducing flooding and improving water quality. In December 2017, CRWD was named Watershed District of the Year by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources at the Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts (MAWD) annual convention.

CRWD Citizens Advisory Committee

Who: Cedar River Watershed District.

What: Accepting applications from the public for seats on its revamped Citizens Advisory Committee.

Where: Areas within the CRWD, including parts of four counties – Mower, Dodge, Freeborn and Steele.

When: Applications are due by Jan. 10, 2018.

Why: CRWD is required to have a Citizens Advisory Committee and wants to give its current group more purpose, including by transition the Vision 2020 Waterways group’s goals and projects into this committee.

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