



'Adopt-a-River' effort for Cedar River growing

CRWD lines up Austin Ikes, others with routes; Rotaract completes another cleanup

AUSTIN, Minn. – Thursday, June 7 – While continuing to grow, the local “Adopt-A-River” effort organized by the Cedar River Watershed District already is underway with a new season of removing garbage and debris.

After a successful first year in 2011 – and with three additional cleanup routes adopted this year – the CRWD is continuing its efforts to line up volunteer groups with “adopted” cleanup routes created by the CRWD along the Cedar River. The local effort uses the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources’ “Adopt-A-River” program as a resource.

On Saturday, June 2, the Austin Rotaract service organization helped start the season of river cleanups by cleaning its adopted route. Rotaract’s route on the Cedar River runs from the Ramsey Dam near the Old Mill Restaurant on Austin’s north edge to Mill Pond downtown. About 10 volunteers used seven canoes that they twice filled and emptied during the cleanup.

James Surdy, who helped lead Rotaract’s cleanup, said the group saw and picked up significantly less garbage than its first cleanup last year. It shows their efforts are paying off, he said, but much garbage remains.

“We pulled everything out from parts of old boat docks, all kinds of old tires, a very large and heavy pool filtration system, huge chunks of metal wire as well as the usual bottles, glasses, garbage bags and other debris,” Surdy said.

Many items were too big to remove, Surdy said, but Rotaract plans to do another cleanup this summer with jon boats to handle those items, such as a cattle watering tank, couch, boat docks and a boat trailer.

Rotaract was one of nine groups in 2011 that adopted cleanup routes created by the CRWD staff. Eight of those groups conducted at least one cleanup during the year, involving about 50 volunteers and removing thousands of pounds of garbage and debris overall from the Cedar River, including one crew – the Mullenbach group – removing about 120 tires from the river south of Austin.

“We are very encouraged by the strong interest shown by volunteer groups to adopt cleanup routes as well as by the significant amount of garbage they are removing from the Cedar River,” said Justin Hanson, the CRWD’s resource specialist. “Their work is making a big difference.”

This year, three groups and families have adopted additional routes, leaving just two “Adopt-a-River” sections on the Cedar River remaining in Mower County: one going a few miles upstream from the County Road 2 bridge near Lansing and the other a short stretch from the County Road 6 bridge to the Minnesota/Iowa border. Aside from those two sections, more than 25 miles of the Cedar River now has been “adopted” since 2011 for “Adopt-a-River” cleanup efforts from Mower County’s north border down to near the Iowa border.

The Austin Chapter 10 of the Izaak Walton League, a national conservation organization, has adopted a cleanup route from the Riverbend Campground along Minnesota Highway 105 (southern area of Mower County) to the County Road 6 bridge.

“Adopt-a-River’ fits perfectly into our overall strategy to ‘clean up’ the Cedar River in Mower County,” said Dave Cole, secretary and media outreach coordinator for the Austin Ikes.

The Austin Ikes have been part of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency’s stream monitoring program in the past to check the turbidity and temperature of waterways, Cole said. In 2007, the Austin Ikes started a campaign to reduce the level of e-coli bacteria coming into the Cedar River from septic systems or straight pipes, leading to significant progress being made for water quality, he added.

More ‘Adopt-a-River’ routes available

Who: Cedar River Watershed District.

What: Seeking more volunteers for its “Adopt-A-River” initiative to take on available stretches of the Cedar River or Turtle, Dobbins and Wolf creeks.

Where: For the Cedar River: from the County Road 2 bridge near Lansing going upstream a few miles; and a short route from the County Road 6 bridge to the Iowa border.

When: Commit to two years of doing at least one cleanup per year.

Why: Removing litter and flood debris from the Cedar River and other waterways helps wildlife, recreation and water quality.

Contact: Tim Ruzek, CRWD Public Outreach, (cell) 507-993-2518

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For the group's citizen activism with clean water, the National Izaak Walton League of America honored Austin Chapter 10 with its 2008 Save-Our-Streams Award, Cole said.

Recently retired CRWD board member Harlen Peck and his family also have adopted a stretch of the Cedar River from the County Road 4 bridge to where Orchard Creek enters the Cedar River.

Current CRWD board member Mike Jones and his family have adopted a stretch of the Cedar River as well from the County Road 1 bridge in northern Mower County to where the river splits into two smaller streams for awhile.

CRWD officials still are seeking volunteers to adopt the two remaining stretches of the Cedar River as well as anyone interested in adopting sections of Dobbins and Turtle creeks. Wolf Creek, which runs through Austin's Todd Park before entering the Cedar, is another cleanup option.

Anyone interested in the CRWD's "Adopt-A-River" effort can contact Tim Ruzek, the CRWD's Public Outreach Coordinator, at 507-993-2518 or tim.ruzek@cedarriverwd.org.

You also can view photos from some of last year's cleanup work on the CRWD's new Facebook page: www.facebook.com/CedarRiverWD. The CRWD Facebook page provides a variety of information, facts, pictures (old and new) and news related to the Cedar River and its tributaries.

In April 2007, state and local officials formed the CRWD in response to the Cedar River Watershed's top, worst-known floods occurring in 2000 and 2004. The CRWD's top priorities are aimed at reducing flooding and improving water quality within the Cedar River Watershed.

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