



CRWD to organize, promote Cedar River cleanup program *Need is strong for removing garbage from Mower County's top water resource*

AUSTIN, Minn. – Monday, Nov. 15 – Four major floods in the past decade definitely have left significant amounts of debris in and along the Cedar River but littering, in general, also has played a role.

With water quality as one of its priorities, the Cedar River Watershed District is starting an effort to create a cleanup program for the Cedar River in Mower County likely by using the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' "Adopt-A-River" program.

According to the DNR, Mower County does not have anyone participating in its Adopt-A-River program.

"As Mower County's most significant natural water resource and with all of its rich history, the Cedar River deserves an organized, cleanup program to assist with water quality and enhance its beauty," said Tim Ruzek, the CRWD's public-outreach coordinator.

CRWD staff is looking for service clubs, businesses, families and other groups or individuals to "adopt" a section of the Cedar River from the CRWD's list of proposed cleanup routes to clean at least once a year. Feedback from the public also is strongly encouraged for this.

The following are cleanup routes proposed by the CRWD:

- Mower County Road 2 bridge (Lansing) to Ramsey Dam public-access site. (Long route)
- Ramsey Dam to Wildwood Park/Interstate 90 in Austin. (Long route)
- Wildwood Park/Interstate 90 to Mill Pond. (Short route)
- Riverside Arena to Marcusen Park (Short route)
- Marcusen Park to 23rd Ave. S.W. public-access site (Short route)
- 23rd Ave. access site to Solafide Observatory public-access site (Short route)
- Solafide access site to Orchard Creek (Long route)
- Orchard Creek to State Line Road. (Long route)

CRWD officials also plan to work on other ways to help with cleaning litter out of the Cedar River, such as working with Austin's annual Community Pride Day in the spring that already does shoreline garbage pickup in park areas.

On Oct. 9, three CRWD staff members and one of their sons did a small river cleanup, putting in on the south side of Austin's Marcusen Park baseball stadium and gathering litter along both sides of the Cedar River down to its confluence with Turtle Creek. Two people went in each canoe and trailed another canoe behind but much of the cleanup effort involved walking the shoreline in waders and picking up items on the bank or in the water.

Who: Cedar River Watershed District.

What: Seeking service clubs and other groups to help clean garbage and litter from the Cedar River.

Where: Eight cleanup stretches are proposed to run from the Mower County Road 2 bridge in Lansing to the Iowa border.

When: Starting spring 2011, with groups expected to clean up their designated stretch at least once a year.

Why: Littering and repetitive flooding have created a strong need to clean up garbage along the river.

Photo/video options: Interview CRWD staff at a bend of the Cedar River near Austin's Skinners Hill. Debris can be seen along the river.

Contact: **Justin Hanson**, CRWD resource specialist, (507) 434-2603; **Tim Ruzek**, CRWD public-outreach coordinator, (507) 993-2518

In just two hours along that short stretch, the group filled four canoes with trash.

Plastic bag debris and aluminum cans were among the most-common items picked up during the Oct. 9 effort. Other litter included plastic bottles, clothing items, construction debris and sheet metal. Other bigger items, including large barrels and pieces of furniture, had to be left for later removal.

In following the DNR's "Adopt-A-River" program, those who volunteer for a section of the river need to do an annual cleanup for at least two years in a row. DNR has a two-year commitment to allow enough time for the volunteers to see a change due to their efforts.

DNR assistance through the "Adopt-A-River" program includes a free cleanup/organizing kit, bags, gloves and other logistical support. CRWD staff can help organize a pickup effort, offer suggestions, and assist with trash pickup and disposal, among other things.

Cleanup results then should be reported online to the DNR. The CRWD also would like those results, which would be reported to the public.

Ideally, volunteers already will have canoes or access to them but, if not, the CRWD will try to assist groups in getting canoes for their cleanup.

Anyone interested in the cleanup program should call either the CRWD's public-outreach coordinator Tim Ruzek at (507) 993-2518 or resource specialist Justin Hanson at (507) 434-2603.

Further information is available online at www.cedarriverwd.org and www.dnr.state.mn.us/adoptriver.

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