



Cedar River becomes newest state water trail

Legislation initiated by CRWD passes; DNR to give river more services

AUSTIN, Minn. – Friday, June 17, 2011 – Mower County is the home to the newest Minnesota state water trail, with legislation passing in the recent session to give the Cedar River that designation.

Minnesota currently has 32 state water trails, with 4,400 miles of mapped routes throughout the state for canoeists and kayakers. Work now is starting for adding the Cedar River officially to that list later this year, with its route running from the village of Lansing (north of Austin) to the Minnesota-Iowa border.

“This is a big positive for the Cedar River and a very fitting designation,” said Justin Hanson, resource specialist with the CRWD. “The Cedar River offers a beautiful, wooded corridor for canoeists and kayakers, and this will provide, among other things, significant help in raising awareness about it.”

An effort initiated by the Cedar River Watershed District staff, the Cedar River’s designation as a state water trail happened through legislation introduced by Sen. Dan Sparks and Rep. Jeanne Poppe, both of Austin. CRWD staff testified before House and Senate committees on the legislation with Sparks and Poppe; Rep. Rich Murray, of Albert Lea, also supported the legislation, which was part of one of the few environment bills passed this session.

“Securing state water trail designation will help efforts to protect the river and make it more accessible for the public to enjoy,” Sparks said. “I was happy to work with the CRWD to accomplish this goal. We owe a lot of thanks to the organizations and individuals in our community who have been dedicated to improvements we see along the Cedar.”

Poppe called the Cedar River’s state water trail designation a “great idea” brought forward by the CRWD and advocated by staff and volunteers.

“This is a very positive outcome for our region and should help highlight the natural resources we share along the Cedar River,” Poppe said. “I was happy to be included in this success story.”

As a result of the Cedar River’s state water trail designation, the DNR will be more involved with the river in several ways, said Joel Wagar, an area supervisor for the Minnesota DNR office in Rochester.

Staff from the DNR will provide the public with information about the new opportunity, Wagar said, including mapping the Cedar River; creating text for the map and webpage; developing the webpage; printing maps; interpreting the existing river gauges to provide river level reports; and working with local government units with facilities on the river to provide more information at these sites.

Other area waterways – the Root, Straight, Cannon and Zumbro rivers – are state water trails. The DNR gives details online about each river’s water characteristics, landscape, fish and wildlife, and cultural information.

DNR field staff also will float the Cedar River several times a year to check for navigation hazards; mark or remove navigation hazards (dams, rapids, etc.); manage the public water access sites (mowing, parking lots, signage); and work with local government units or volunteers on site-maintenance agreements.

If there is a need or demand, the DNR also could lead acquisition and development of new facilities along the river, such as access sites or canoe-in campsites, Wagar said. The DNR has several access sites along the Cedar River, including on land acquired through flood mitigation efforts since the area’s worst-known flood in 2004.

The CRWD is a local government unit created in 2007 to reduce flooding and improve water quality within the Cedar River Watershed. It also strives to improve recreational opportunities along the river.

Cedar River Watershed District, 1408 21st Ave. N.W., Austin, MN, 55912, 507.434.2603

Who: Cedar River Watershed District and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.
What: Legislation passed designating the Cedar River as a DNR state water trail.
When: At end of recent legislative session.
Where: State water trail route will run from the village of Lansing (north of Austin) to the MN-IA border.
Why: The CRWD initiated the idea due to the Cedar River’s rich history, beautiful corridor and recreational opportunities, such as fishing, canoeing and kayaking.
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