



CRWD approves rules to protect Cedar River

Effective Dec. 1, new policies focus on flood reduction, improved water quality

AUSTIN, Minn. – Thursday, July 21, 2011 – Rules targeted at reducing future flooding and improving water quality in the Cedar River watershed have been approved following nearly two years of work.

On Wednesday night, the Cedar River Watershed District's Board of Managers unanimously approved a final set of rules that include a permitting program.

"What a milestone in our short life," CRWD board chairman Mike Jones said after the vote about the watershed district, which was formed in 2007 in response to the area's frequent major floods.

CRWD officials opted to make the rules – which cover areas related to stormwater, flood plains, water body alterations, erosion control and enforcement – effective Dec. 1, 2011, because it would be too difficult to implement them in the middle of this year's construction season. All watershed districts are required by state law to implement rules to accomplish their purpose.

As one of the objectives in the CRWD's watershed management plan, the rules are focused on flood control and rate control that prevent the district's current flood conditions from worsening. The district's rules are intended to fill gaps in existing federal, state and local regulations – not duplicate existing regulations.

With its newly approved rules, the CRWD now has to follow certain steps under state statute, including notifying all public transportation authorities and filing the rules at the county recorder's office in each of the four counties in the Cedar River Watershed District (Dodge, Freeborn, Mower and Steele counties).

CRWD staff also will start another educational campaign on the approved rules after conducting a similar effort for the draft rules. This will involve a variety of efforts to educate local government units and the general public on the rules.

Board members approved the rules Wednesday after first amending language related to off-site snow storage near waterways. Board members, who heard concerns on snow-storage restrictions from the City of Austin, decided snow storage from any off-site location must be at least 100 feet away from a waterway and best-management practices must be in place to protect water quality if the site is within the shoreland and floodplain areas. An approved annual runoff control plan is needed for snow storage in the shoreland and floodplain area. A focal point had been the city's large snow pile near the Cedar River next to the Marcusen Park baseball stadium.

Prior to the meeting, the CRWD board had an hour-long hearing for final public feedback on the rules.

CRWD board members also approved a memorandum of understanding with the City of Austin in relation to the new rules and the city's multi-phase, ongoing North Main flood project. The Austin City Council is expected to approve the agreement at its next meeting.

Copies of the final rules will be available by the end of this week at the Mower County Soil & Water Conservation District office in Austin and online at the CRWD's website – www.cedarriverwd.org.

Who: Cedar River Watershed District's Board of Managers.

What/When: Approved on Wednesday a final set of rules – effective Dec. 1, 2011 – for the watershed district, including a permitting program.

Where: Ruby Rupner Auditorium, Jay C. Hormel Nature Center in Austin.

Why: Formed in 2007 due to frequent major flooding, the CRWD is required by state law to implement rules to accomplish its goals: reduce flooding and improve water quality.

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