



New access open on Cedar River State Water Trail

CRWD, partners gather at new launch for canoes, kayaks in Austin

AUSTIN, Minn. – Thursday, Aug. 10, 2017 – Austin’s most-popular spot to launch a canoe or kayak now has a dedicated access with a rock surface to enable individuals and groups to get paddling more easily and cleanly.

On Thursday, Cedar River Watershed District gathered together its project partners at the new access along the Cedar River State Water Trail located behind the historic Marcusen Park baseball stadium in Austin’s Lafayette Park.

Representatives from Austin Area Foundation; City of Austin; Minnesota Department of Natural Resources; Vision 2020; and Cedar River Canoe & Kayak Rental Service viewed the new access they worked together on with CRWD over the past year.

CRWD was awarded a \$2,000 grant in late 2016 from the Austin Area Foundation to cover the cost of materials for constructing the new walk-in access under an agreement that the City of Austin’s public works department would design the access and deliver materials for a DNR crew to build the launch.

In late July, a DNR crew brought in machinery to build the access over a few days on the north side of the Cedar River, creating a slope with a rock surface and rip-rap rock used on each side to protect it from washing out.

“This is exciting to have the access completed and already in great use,” said Tim Ruzek, CRWD’s outreach coordinator and Vision 2020 Waterways co-chair. “Our strong, collaborative effort on the project has helped enhance the Cedar River State Water Trail for local residents and an increasing number of visitors.”

CRWD requested the AAF grant to cover the cost of materials for the launch, which now provides an access size that better accommodates groups of paddlers seeking to start paddling at the same time. Its slope with a rocky surface also will allow for safer and less-muddy launches onto the river.

The CRWD-led project originated with the Vision 2020 Waterways Committee that began five years into exploring ways to enhance the Cedar River and other local waterways. Adding access sites was one of the committee’s goals.

Under the project, the City of Austin’s engineering department designed the access and provided those designs to the DNR to construct in late July.

DNR’s support of the access project is connected directly to CRWD’s efforts in 2011 with State Sen. Dan Sparks and State Rep. Jeanne Poppe, both of Austin, to gain legislative approval for designating 25 river miles of the Cedar River as Minnesota’s 33rd State Water Trail. With that designation, DNR provides for the Cedar River free fold-out maps; a webpage with details and real-time river level data; river access maintenance and improvements; and removal of navigational hazards, such as fallen trees requiring paddlers to portage.

Started in summer 2015, Cedar River Canoe & Rental Service of Austin – owned by Brian and Dorothy Pirmantgen – saw a major increase in canoe and kayak rents in 2016, including out-of-towners. They frequently have used the Lafayette Park/Marcusen Park area for launching paddlers but experienced problems without a dedicated access.

DNR, CRWD and the City of Austin also will work on adding signage at various spots in the community to promote the locations of water-access sites.

Cedar River Watershed District

In 2007, state and local officials formed CRWD in response to the Cedar River Watershed’s 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.

New canoe-kayak access on Cedar River

Who: Austin Area Foundation; Cedar River Watershed District; City of Austin, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources; Austin Vision 2020; and Cedar River Canoe & Kayak Rental Service.

What: Minnesota DNR finished constructing a new canoe-kayak access with a rock surface designed by the City of Austin. Project paid for with a \$2,000 grant Austin Area Foundation awarded CRWD.

Where: Cedar River State Water Trail near Austin’s Marcusen Park baseball stadium in Lafayette Park.

When: Completed in late July.

Why: Easier, cleaner entry for river paddling trips, which are becoming increasingly popular on the Cedar River.

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A group of paddlers get ready to launch in early August at the new walk-in access site on the Cedar River State Water Trail in Austin. Photo provided by Cedar River Canoe & Kayak Rental Service.



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