



Adopt-A-River bigger than ever for Cedar

CRWD still seeking volunteers for designated stretches of local waterways in 2016

AUSTIN, Minn. – Wednesday, May 25, 2016 – Usually two to four times a month during the season, Mindy Neilon and her friends enjoy paddling the Cedar River in the Austin area.

“We’ve definitely seen improvement on the river,” Neilon said, referring to the work of volunteers through the local Adopt-A-River initiative started and led by the Cedar River Watershed District since 2011.

Neilon’s group now is taking its passion for the state water trail to a new level this year by adopting a nearly five-mile stretch of the Cedar River as part of the CRWD’s Adopt-A-River initiative. The Moe-Unverzagt Memorial cleanup group – including Neilon with Megan Moe, Andrea Moe, Sarah Unverzagt and Natasha Hillemeier – will clean the Cedar River from its confluence with Dobbins Creek in Austin’s Driesner Park to the state’s Riverwood Landing access near Solafide Observatory.

“We wanted to do the cleanup because the river is a part of our community that’s underutilized and it often catches a bad rap,” Neilon said. “We want to change that. We want people to enjoy it as much as we do; take their kids out for a different experience; turn them on to nature in a world full of technology.”

Her group is one of several new volunteers to CRWD’s Adopt-A-River effort.

Since 2011, CRWD’s Adopt-A-River initiative – inspired by the state’s cleanup program – has involved dozens of volunteers removing several tons of garbage and flood debris, including more than 1,100 tires, from the Cedar River in Mower County. CRWD has created cleanup routes; lined up volunteers; assisted with cleanup logistics; and paid for the proper disposal of the removed items.

“Our volunteers are the reason why ‘Adopt-A-River’ has been a great success in reviving the Cedar River,” CRWD outreach coordinator Tim Ruzek said. “It’s not easy work but they have helped significantly to improve the river for everyone’s enjoyment whether you be on the water or on the shoreline.”

CRWD’s 2016 Adopt-A-River lineup (listed north to south) includes:

- **Brookside Campground** (new) – Mower County 1 going north one mile.
- **Mike Jones** – Mower County 1 going south one mile.
- **Cedar River Watershed District and Vision 2020 Waterways** – Ramsey Mill Pond to the Ramsey Dam.
- **Rotaract service club** – Ramsey Dam to Austin Mill Pond downtown.
- **Southern Minnesota Bicycling Club** and the **Austin Trail Group** (new) – wooded areas west of Todd Park along the Cedar River and Wolf Creek.
- **Austin VFW Club** (new) – Austin Mill Pond to the Fourth Avenue Northeast bridge.
- **Mower County Corrections’ Sentenced-to-Serve** (new) – Fourth Avenue Northeast to Driesner Park’s “point.”
- **Moe-Unverzagt Memorial cleanup group** (new) – “The Point” to state’s Riverwood Landing access site.
- **Mike Hull group** – Riverwood Landing to Mower County 4 bridge.
- **Cody Fox group** (new) – Mower County 4 to Mower County 5 bridge.
- **Larry Callahan group** – Mower County 5 to Mower County 6 bridge.
- **OTHER: Spruce Up Austin** (new) – East Side Lake (Dobbins Creek) in Austin.

This year, a few Adopt-a-River sections remain available on the Cedar River in Mower County, including the Mower County 25 bridge north of Lansing to the north edge of Ramsey Mill Pond; and the Mower County 6 bridge to Stateline Road on the Iowa border. The area creeks also are available for cleanup, such as Dobbins and Turtle creeks.

The Austin-based Cedar River Canoe & Kayak Rental Service, which Brian and Dorothy Pirmantgen started last summer, is offering any available canoes at no cost for Adopt-A-River volunteers to use for cleanup work.

People also can help the effort by picking up litter in their neighborhoods to prevent those items from being washed into the waterways via stormwater systems and by reporting an illegal dumping activities, such as with tires.

Anyone interested in CRWD’s Adopt-A-River effort can contact Tim Ruzek at 507-434-2603 or by email at tim.ruzek@mowerswcd.org. Photos from previous cleanups are online at: www.facebook.com/CedarRiverWD.

Cedar River Watershed District

In April 2007, state and local officials formed 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.

Adopt-a-River routes available

Who: Cedar River Watershed District.

What: Seeking volunteers for its Adopt-A-River cleanup initiative to adopt stretches of the Cedar River or any local creek.

Where: On the Cedar River: area of Mower County 25 bridge north of Lansing to the north edge of Ramsey Mill Pond. Also, Mower County 6 to the Iowa border.

When: Commit to river cleanup per year.

Why: Removing litter and flood debris helps wildlife, recreation and water quality.

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