



Major flood project proposed by CRWD

State funds could help reduce flooding at Dobbins Creek-Cedar River juncture by 8%

AUSTIN, Minn. – Thursday, Oct. 24, 2013 – Flooding in the Austin area could get a significant reduction under a project being proposed for major state funding by the Cedar River Watershed District.

Cedar River Watershed District recently submitted several grant applications for state Clean Water Legacy funding for proposed 2014 projects. By far the biggest request – totaling about \$475,000 overall – is the CRWD’s “Dobbins Creek Targeted Sediment Reduction” project. If approved for state funds, the project would include \$118,750 in CRWD tax levy funds.

With the project, CRWD could reduce flooding or “peak flows” in Dobbins Creek during rain events by 8 percent at its confluence with the Cedar River in Austin’s Driesner Park, district officials say. The work also would keep about 120 tons of soil per year from being eroded into Dobbins Creek, East Side Lake (a stretch of Dobbins) and the Cedar River.

CRWD would build three detention areas in close proximity during fall 2014 in the headwaters area of Dobbins Creek’s north branch, with cooperation from multiple landowners. CRWD would own and maintain the detention structures, which would retain stormwater and slowly release it over an approximately 24-hour period.

“Our studies have shown that Dobbins Creek’s flash-flooding nature contributes greatly to Austin’s flood issues,” CRWD Administrator Bev Nordby said. “This proposed project would help us take a big step toward the CRWD’s goal for a 20 percent reduction in overall flooding within the Cedar River Watershed.”

Dobbins Creek, a subwatershed of the Cedar River Watershed, is the steepest of the Cedar River’s tributaries in Minnesota. It consists of two streams that converge at Austin’s Jay C. Hormel Nature Center. A dam on Dobbins forms East Side Lake, just upstream from where it joins the Cedar River in Driesner Park.

Restoration of Dobbins Creek, likely one of the most-analyzed watersheds in the state, is the CRWD’s top priority due to its high sedimentation and high stream flows during rain events, Nordby said. Flash-flow conditions during rain events have challenged the creek’s stream banks and water quality while also significantly affecting the Cedar River’s water quality, she said.

“This project’s purpose is to make incremental progress toward the long-term goal of removing the Cedar River and its tributaries, including Dobbins Creek, from the state’s impaired waters list,” Nordby said. “We are starting our efforts by focusing on areas where our modeling has revealed the greatest immediate effect possible.”

CRWD’s proposed project would result in less turbidity, improved habitat and improved recreational use of Dobbins Creek and the Cedar River. Both are listed as “impaired” for turbidity – the clarity of the water – by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

Competition for Clean Water Legacy funds, however, is “incredible” this year, Nordby said, as 244 applications have been submitted for \$51 million while just \$14 million is available for grants. CRWD staff, though, believe strongly in the project’s significance and potential effect on improving the Austin area’s waterways.

About the Cedar River Watershed District

In April 2007, state and local officials formed the 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.

Who: Cedar River Watershed District.
What: Seeking state Clean Water Legacy funds for a series of projects in the Dobbins Creek subwatershed within the Cedar River Watershed.
Where: Headwaters of the Dobbins Creek Watershed.
When: Application made this fall; state Clean Water grant announcements made in December.
Why: Project shows potential for reducing peak stormwater flows by 8 percent at the confluence of Dobbins Creek and the Cedar River in Austin. Soil erosion along Dobbins also would be helped greatly.
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