



About 1,100 tires removed from Cedar since '11

CRWD-led effort with volunteers, Conservation Corps has cleaned river in MN

AUSTIN, Minn. – Thursday, Aug. 14, 2014 – About 1,100 tires now have been removed from the Cedar River in Mower County since 2011 under the cleanup initiative started and led by the Cedar River Watershed District.

This week, work by a crew with the Conservation Corps of Minnesota & Iowa helped the CRWD-led initiative surpass the 1,000-tire mark while working on a stretch of the Cedar River south of Austin. The crew's work further downstream then added about another 100 tires taken out of the river.

"The fact that most of these tires are old is a good sign that all of these efforts likely won't be replaced by polluters throwing tires back in the river," said Justin Hanson, the CRWD resource specialist who has coordinated the tire-cleanup partnership with the Conservation Corps.

According to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, large numbers of tires being found in the state's waterways stem from a tire disposal problem in the state during the 1970s and 1980s.

Low water levels this summer created an opportune time for the CRWD to enlist the help of the Conservation Corps to do what they did last fall south of Austin – hunt for tires illegally dumped into the Cedar River and remove them from the waterway. CRWD has funded the proper disposal of the tires.

Conservation Corps members the past two weeks have removed about 400 tires overall from the Cedar River, covering stretches of the river north and south of Austin as well as within the city. Last fall, Conservation Corps removed about 220 tires from a stretch of the Cedar River south of Austin.

Under the CRWD's coordination this summer, Conservation Corps members are expected to spend more than six weeks overall working on watershed cleanup projects in Mower County.

Conservation Corps of Minnesota & Iowa provides meaningful work for young people in managing natural resources, responding to disasters, conserving energy and leading volunteers. The program provides training in numerous areas to its participants.

Volunteers also have played a major role in removing several hundred tires from the river through the CRWD's "Adopt-A-River" initiative launched in 2011 to remove litter and flooding debris from the Cedar River and other local waterways. Thousands of pounds of trash have been removed by dozens of volunteers in that period.

Hanson said he is proud of the extensive efforts that have been put into cleaning up the Cedar River in recent years. He credited the success to the hard-working, dedicated volunteers and Conservation Corps members.

"I really think we're making great headway and taking substantial steps to improve the river – the most-vital natural resource we have in Mower County," Hanson said.

Tim Ruzek, CRWD's public-outreach coordinator and co-chair of the Austin Vision 2020 Waterways Committee, said the cleanup efforts have made the Cedar River the cleanest that it has been in likely many decades.

"All of us Vision 2020 Waterways volunteers greatly appreciate these cleanup efforts as they further improve our local, scenic waterway and help our work to enhance and promote the recreational opportunities on the Cedar River State Water Trail," Ruzek said.

Within Mower County, the Cedar River is designated as a State Water Trail under a Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' program. In 2011, the CRWD successfully proposed and secured the legislative approval needed for designating the Cedar River as an official State Water Trail.

Earlier this summer, Conservation Corps members, working with CRWD, cleared several log jams on the Cedar River along a stretch in the Wildwood Park area in Austin that is prone to jams. That stretch from Ramsey Dam to the Downtown Mill Pond now should be portage-free for canoeists and kayakers thanks to the crew's work.

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. CRWD's top priorities focus on flood reduction and improving water quality within the Cedar River Watershed.

Cedar River Watershed District, 1408 21st Ave. N.W., Austin, MN, 55912, (507) 434-2603

www.cedarriverwd.org

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