



# State water trail activities begin for Cedar River

## *DNR launches website, starts removing waterway navigation hazards*

**AUSTIN, Minn. – Wednesday, June 20** – After months of work, the Cedar River officially has been launched as Minnesota’s 33<sup>rd</sup> state water trail, bringing numerous forms of waterway recreation information to the public and starting work on clearing navigation hazards on the river.

On Wednesday evening, officials from the Cedar River Watershed District and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources joined Sen. Dan Sparks and Rep. Jeanne Poppe, both of Austin, for an event signifying the official launch of the Cedar River as a state water trail. The CRWD requested the water trail designation –supported by the DNR – and Sen. Sparks and Rep. Poppe introduced legislation that was passed by the state Legislature in 2011.

Austin native Polly Jelinek also spoke about the significance of the water trail designation to her and about her family’s long-time home along the Cedar River near Austin’s Roosevelt Bridge from the late 1800s to 1981, when it was acquired through the City of Austin’s flood-mitigation program. Her family operated a boat rental business at that location from the late 1800s to early 1900s.

The Cedar River’s state water trail route was designated for about 25 miles from the village of Lansing (north of Austin at County Road 2) to the Minnesota-Iowa border. Under the Minnesota DNR’s state water trail program, more than 4,400 miles of mapped routes throughout the state are available for canoeists and kayakers.

CRWD staff initiated the idea for the state designation due to the Cedar River’s rich history, beautiful corridor and recreational opportunities, including fishing, canoeing and kayaking, said Justin Hanson, resource specialist with the CRWD.

“We are really excited to see the DNR launch the new Cedar River website and begin clearing pathways through blockages on the river for canoeists and kayakers,” said Justin Hanson, resource specialist with the CRWD. “Many positives and future opportunities stem from this water trail designation and it helps greatly with the CRWD’s ‘Reviving Our River’ initiatives.”

This past winter and spring, DNR staff in St. Paul spent considerable time putting information together for the Cedar River Water Trail map and State Water Trail website, said Joel Wagar, a DNR Parks and Trails area supervisor. DNR staff is working on changes and additions to these features, he said, as substantial information needs to be added to make them more accurate but the website is online now and printed copies of the Cedar River water trail map will be available soon.

DNR crew members have been floating the Cedar River for parts of three days in May and June to address any navigation hazards – such as fallen trees and beaver dams – they encounter between Lansing and the Iowa border, Wagar said. The DNR plans to continue these trips once or twice a month to address navigation hazards, he said, but also get a better understanding of river levels and the ability to canoe the waterway at various stages.

“We provide this information to boaters **and anglers using** our website to give them a better idea of what to expect when they head out to recreate on the Cedar,” Wagar said.

During these river trips, DNR staff also will locate potential water access sites, particularly between Austin and the Iowa border, as well as near Lansing, Wagar added and

**Who:** Cedar River Watershed District; the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources; Sen. Dan Sparks; and Rep. Jeanne Poppe.

**What:** Hosted a media event signifying the official launch of the Cedar River as a state water trail under a Minnesota DNR program.

**When:** Wednesday, June 20.

**Where:** Austin.

**Why:** The CRWD initiated the idea due to the Cedar River’s rich history, beautiful corridor and recreational opportunities, such as fishing, canoeing and kayaking.

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“We may also be looking for potential primitive canoe camping and canoe rest area opportunities,” he said, adding that any new sites would be on existing public land or acquired from willing sellers along the Cedar River.

DNR officials, he said, have continued working to accomplish their access maintenance tasks at the two sites they currently maintain – Riverwood Landing south of Austin (near Solafide Observatory) and Ramsey Mill Pond Access at the Ramsey Mill Pond Dam. These sites have been maintained by the DNR since Mower County turned the flood-mitigated sites over to the agency several years ago.

DNR officials also intend to work with the City of Austin to better mark and provide safe portage around the Austin Mill Dam (4<sup>th</sup> Ave NE near Riverside Arena) for those who want to paddle that portion of the Cedar River and have safe passage around the dam, Wagar said.

With the Cedar River water trail website, information is provided about the river’s water characteristics, landscape, fish and wildlife, and cultural information. The map highlights points of interest – including water-access sites and bridges – as well as mile markers between Lansing and the Iowa border.

Established in 2007, the CRWD is a local government unit based in Austin that was formed by state and local officials in response to the Cedar River Watershed’s worst-known floods occurring in 2000 and 2004. The CRWD’s top priorities are reducing flooding and improving water quality within the Cedar River Watershed along with striving to improve recreational opportunities along the river.

### **Cedar River Watershed District**

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