



2017 fishing opener to highlight Mississippi, community

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Ben Rodgers, brodgers@stcloudtimes.com 6:08 a.m. CDT May 16, 2016



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(Photo: Jason Wachter, jwachter@stcloudtimes.com)

Aaron Kreller, owner of Stop Light Bait Shop in St. Cloud, said the weather for this year's fishing opener made it slower compared some years.

Next year, however, Kreller knows to expect a boom in customers as the Minnesota Governor's Fishing Opener will be hosted in the St. Cloud area.

"It's going to be a different animal," Kreller said about the weekend that is already busy enough.

On Saturday the St. Cloud area was picked to host the 70th Minnesota Governor's Fishing Opener. The Governor's Fishing Opener has been going on since 1948. According to its website, it was designed to improve Minnesota's economy through the development and promotion of the state's fishing opportunities.

"We're excited to be able to host the governor's 70th fishing opener," Mayor Dave Kleis said. "It's great to be able to showcase St. Cloud and Central Minnesota hospitality."

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Kevin Luhmann, Monticello, comes into the boat landing with three walleyes after spending the morning fishing on the Mississippi River Sunday, May 15, near the boat access at Mississippi River County Park. (Photo: Jason Wachter, jwachter@stcloudtimes.com)

Sartell and Sauk Rapids will also be involved in hosting events throughout the weekend.

Both Kleis and the Julie Lunning, executive director of the St. Cloud Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, said the biggest highlight of having the governor's is the chance to highlight the area's "most important resource": the Mississippi.

Lunning said the opener plans to offer fishing on three different sections of the Mississippi. The first section being the above the Sartell Dam, which she said is the most similar to lake fishing.

Between the Sartell Dam and St. Cloud State Dam is what Julie said will be considered an urban fishing experience. Lunning said the urban fishing experience is not something that is typically offered for a fishing opener, as most people think about going further north to fish.

"That small stretch of river is so completely different and diverse we can expose people to different things," she said.



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Lastly, below the St. Cloud State dam, Lunning said anglers will have the opportunity to experience shallow water fishing. She also said this will be an opportunity to demonstrate kayak fishing, which she said is a rising trend in fishing.

Kreller said one thing he also hopes to see promoted at the 2017 opener is shore fishing, something he said is popular in the St. Cloud area.



Jason Power, Albany, casts as he fishes along the bank of the Mississippi River Sunday, May 15, near the boat access at Mississippi River County Park. (Photo: Jason Wachter, jwachter@stcloudtimes.com)

"That's what St. Cloud is about," Kreller said. "The community around here fishes the piers. Sauk Rapids just put in a new fishing pier and St. Cloud is doing a walkway down by the civic center."

Officials are also pleased about the economic benefits the opener will bring into the area as well. Kleis cited restaurant, hotel and entertainment and sight seeing options in the city offer anglers multiple options during their stay.

"Main purpose is for the fishing opener, but it's a time to celebrate community," Kleis said. "We have a lot of things we have to showcase."

As a bait shop owner, Kreller said he is looking forward to the extra business that can be expected with the opener.

"I think having an extra 100 people in the area, that's where you're guaranteed to have

more traffic," Kreller said.

Kreller said one unique thing about his shop is that he carries locally made lures from places Leena Lures in St. Joseph and Jimmy D's River Bugs from Sartell. Kreller said he could see the opener as an opportunity to lend some exposure to those local craftsmen.



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Aaron Kreller, owner of Stop Light Bait Shop, talks Sunday, May 15, about the impact of having the Minnesota Governor's Fishing Opener next year on the Mississippi River in the St. Cloud area. (Photo: Jason Wachter, jwachter@stcloudtimes.com)

Now that the bid has been announced, the next step is planning. Kreller said he had been involved during the application process in speaking with fishing pros and sportsman clubs about helping with boats and serving as possible guides. Kreller said because the opener is on the river instead of a lake, it's important to have guides who know the river.

Kleis said the city and St. Cloud Area Convention & Visitors Bureau will also soon be ramping up efforts to find volunteers. He also said they plan to reach out to area businesses for possible partnerships.

Overall, Lunning said she hopes the opener will put St. Cloud on the map for anglers across the state.

"People don't think of St. Cloud necessarily as a big fishing destination or outdoor destination when those of us who live here do know of those opportunities," she said.

Follow Ben Rodgers on Twitter at [@benrodgers1](https://twitter.com/benrodgers1) and on Facebook at Ben Rodgers — St. Cloud Times.

Kate Kompas contributed to this report.



Kevin Luhmann, Monticello, trailers his boat after spending the morning fishing on the Mississippi River Sunday, May 15, near the boat access at Mississippi River County Park. (Photo: Jason Wachter, jwachter@stcloudtimes.com)

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