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Houston kids get the ride of their life on Spring Creek's rapids

By: Tiffany Williams, Courier staff

SOUTH COUNTY - Years of work preserving some of Montgomery County's most pristine spaces will culminate in one wild ride on the rapids of Spring Creek for 30 Houston adolescents today.

Naturalists with Legacy Land Trust and the Houston Canoe Club invited 30 students from Houston Independent School District's Cullen Middle School to be the first to launch canoes and kayaks on the creek from a new launch site at the Old Riley Fuzzel Road bridge.

The trip down the creek begins at 10 a.m. and will take about 45 minutes, said Jennifer Lorenz, executive director of Legacy Land Trust. Anyone who is interested is invited to join along in the inaugural event.

"This is the first official opening of the first canoers and kayakers going in at Riley Fuzzel," Lorenz said.

The ride, which takes about 45 minutes, will end at Pundt Park, located on the Harris County side of Spring Creek. Lorenz said although Pundt Park is not officially open to the public, participants will be able to use it on Saturday. Those who want a longer ride can take their canoes and kayaks out of the water at the Jones Nature Center or the site where the Texas 59 bridge crosses Spring Creek.

"Riley Fuzzel is the most west spot people can launch from and the only public location owned by a county entity in Montgomery County," Lorenz said.

Robert Collins, project coordinator for Spring Creek Greenway and special counsel to Precinct 3 Commissioner Ed Chance, said the canoe and kayak launch site is the first to be opened and promoted by Montgomery County Precinct 3 on Spring Creek Greenway.

The project is a combined effort between Montgomery County Precinct 3 Commissioner Ed Chance and Harris County Precinct 4 Commissioner Jerry Eversole to create a 33-mile education and nature corridor consisting of about 12,000 acres of wetlands. The project preserves the existing wetlands by connecting trails through communities in Humble, Spring and The Woodlands.

Legacy Land Trust's role is to ensure the greenway will never undergo development.

"We're very excited," Collins said. "People have been using this location for years, but we've made some improvements."

Collins said there are even more improvements to come to the Riley Fuzzel entrance to the greenway, including added parking.

"Paddle trails are a very important component of Spring Creek Greenway," he said. "It is a totally different feeling being on the water and seeing the creek from that perspective."

It will be the first occasion for some of today's visitors.

"These are students who have never had the opportunity to use a canoe," Lorenz said. "We're going to give them a taste of the creek."

Of course, Lorenz only meant that figuratively and said the trip for the inexperienced students might be postponed if the rain has elevated the creek to dangerous levels.

Other nature enthusiasts are invited to enjoy the creek today, and those who don't want to get into the water can enjoy the natural beauty of the preserve on dry land. Lorenz said nature specialists will be stationed at various locations to give visitors an inside look at the creek's charms.

Participants can also rent canoes and kayaks by calling Willowbrook Mall's REI, which sell recreational outdoor equipment, at (832) 237-8833 or Southwest Paddle Sports in The Woodlands at (281) 292-5600.

Tiffany Williams can be reached at twilliams@hcnonline.com

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