

## Police recover stolen kayak; man's trek to resume

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### Document Text

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A kayak stolen from a California man who was passing through St. Cloud on the Mississippi River was discovered by an Elk River woman Sunday morning.

The kayak recovery means the man can resume his 10-week journey down the Mississippi.

After spending the night Friday in St. Cloud, Jeffrey Pearson returned Saturday to the spot where he had locked up his kayak and other belongings only to find them gone. Pearson was two weeks into an almost 10-week kayaking trip. And without his equipment, he had to stay in St. Cloud until he could catch a flight back to California.

"My plan was to leave at noon (Saturday) to drive to Minneapolis to fly home," Pearson said.

Pearson had planned to have friends drive him to the airport.

His plan changed Saturday evening when Ivan Bartha, coordinator for experiential programs at St. Cloud State University's Outdoor Endeavors, heard of Pearson's predicament and offered to lend him supplies and a boat to finish his trip.

Bartha tracked down Pearson's number through a blog he'd been keeping and asked if he could help.

"I just gave him a call and told him we can fix it. It was unfortunate what happened with his boat and pretty sad," Bartha said. "It's a hell of a way to welcome someone to the community."

Bartha and his staff rounded up supplies for the trip and after finding pretty much everything Pearson was going to need, they were ready to send him on his way once again Sunday morning.

"I looked at that (stuff) and said, yeah, I can do this trip," Pearson said. "I just didn't know this morning that I'd be doing it in my boat."

That's because it wasn't until around 10 a.m. Sunday that Pearson's already unpredictable trip took one more unexpected turn. His stolen boat reappeared, though not exactly where he left it.

According to a police report, a woman who lives near the Elk River called St. Cloud police Sunday morning after discovering what she believed to be the stolen kayak she'd read about in Saturday's newspaper. She found the kayak washed up against some brush along the river.

"We're sitting there (this morning) with all this (equipment) laid out in front of us and the police called," Pearson said. "Ivan went out with me ... and there was my boat."

Police are unsure how the kayak ended up along the Elk River. The two rivers don't connect until further south of where the kayak was found.

Though the equipment he left with the boat is gone, the boat and its paddles were there and still functional. The boat and paddles have an estimated value of \$2,000, Pearson said.

Bartha was happy to see the kayak and its owner reunited. He also said that all the hard work area residents put forth for a complete stranger was inspiring.

"I think one thing that's important to understand is that the paddling community is a pretty tight-knit community ... it's kind of one of those things, when you're out on the river you look out for one another," Bartha said.

Person said he was very grateful that people he'd just met and people he'd never met came together to help him.

"The help I've received was from people who I didn't know two weeks ago," Pearson said. "It's all the good people that define (this trip) for me."

With fresh supplies and his boat back, Pearson plans to launch today at 10 a.m. and make his way to St. Louis where he will meet up with his 10-year-old son. They will then kayak to New Orleans.

St. Cloud police are still investigating the theft. Anyone with information can call the St. Cloud Police Department at 251-1200.

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**Abstract** (Document Summary)

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