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No Blue River

Chicago: On Thursday, November 3 Friends of the Chicago River, the only organization solely dedicated to improving and protecting the Chicago River, released a statement suggesting that there were many ways to celebrate the Cubs’ victory but they would not like to see dyeing the river among them.

“We are thrilled for the Cubs and for all the people who live here and share in the joy of this wonderful winning team,” said Margaret Frisbie, executive director of Friends of the Chicago River. “However, we hope this is a rumor of idle fun and speculation rather than an actual plan. The Chicago River downtown and elsewhere is alive with fish and other life including beavers, muskrats, and birds, like the state endangered black crowned night heron I saw on the riverbank at LaSalle Street less than two weeks ago,” Frisbie continued. “I know that the mayor is a real river champion and I am sure he will do what is right for the river.”

According to Friends as of Thursday, no one had confirmed that anyone is dyeing the river blue and that anyone who wished to would need a permit from Illinois EPA which is required under the federal Clean Water Act and that no permit has been applied for.

Frisbie said water quality is improving and in 2015 the Illinois Pollution Control Board approved new water quality standards for the Chicago River systems to protect aquatic life including lowering the temperature of allowable discharges, decreasing chloride (road salt), and increasing dissolved oxygen which fish need to breathe. In October 2016 the City opened the third phase of the downtown Chicago Riverwalk which includes fish habitat at The Jetty which will help increase both the biodiversity and numbers of fish. “There are many wonderful ways to celebrate a victory,” continued Frisbie. “But we do not want to set a precedent that every time we celebrate in Chicago, the river changes color.”

Founded in 1979, Friends of the Chicago River is an award winning nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve and protect the Chicago River for people, plants, and animals. With over 6,000 members, volunteers, and online advocates, Friends works to make the river greener and more accessible, while building awareness of the benefits that a clean, healthy river can bring to communities across the
watershed. For more information on Friends of the Chicago River, please visit our website: www.chicagoriver.org.

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