

Dreams and 'the confluence'

By Erica Pennington epennington@beloitdailynews.com | Posted: Monday, June 16, 2014 4:00 pm

Trees, plants, rocks and shells received a second glance from area youth and their parents at the confluence landing on Saturday.

Located at 300 Dickop St., South Beloit, the area where the Rock River and Turtle Creek meet is quite the hidden gem.

"Where else can you be in the wilderness around here? It's really beautiful," said Mike Duffy, South Beloit Mayor.

Duffy, South Beloit City Councilor Alice Schoonover and others were on hand to discuss a proposal to build an urban ecology center on the site.

The idea for turning the confluence site into an urban ecology center came from looking at a similar site in Milwaukee.

"There is so much that kids and adults could learn out here," Duffy said.

And not only is there natural beauty at the site, but also a lot of history.

"The higher ground around the confluence, especially on the south side of Turtle Creek, could have served as habitation sites for native people going as far back as the ice age," said Bill Green, director of the Logan Museum at Beloit College.

The City of South Beloit is working with Beloit 2020 to plan the development at the confluence site.

Beloit 2020 has committed to raising a leverage fund to help get the project started.

A brainstorming session with stakeholders took place on Friday, and by Saturday a \$1,000 donation was made.



Muddy fun

Isaac Blue has a blast getting his hands muddy during Nature at the Confluence in South Beloit on Saturday. The event was held at the confluence landing, 300 Dickop St., as a way for the public to learn about the area and a proposal to transform the area into an outdoor learning center.

“We have about 69 acres of land in total, and we really want to keep it a rustic area,” Duffy said. “We want to label some of the trees and plants...there are a lot of ideas being shared.”

Duffy says he hopes to see a special organization formed to help facilitate the transformation with help from area municipalities and organizations.

Schoonover agreed, saying she hopes area citizens really take interest in turning the confluence into a destination.

“When people invest their money into a project they want to make sure it is done wisely,” she said. “I think that will be the case here.”

While visitors scoured over maps and took walks, more than a handful came to Saturday’s gathering via Turtle Creek.

Therese Oldenburg organized an 8-mile kayak and canoe trip to give locals a different perspective on the area.

“The community paddle is all about getting people out in the water and to look at the beauty of Turtle Creek through the city. You would be surprised. You could be in the middle of the city and not know you were there,” she told the Beloit Daily News.