

River

From Page 1

during the school festival and wonder what's going on," he said during Monday's planning meeting. "They wonder why the public can't take part in it."

Organizers want to keep the school festival focused on students for safety and logistical reasons. They believe the festival has likely reached its limit at about 500 students.

However, the planning committee enthusiastically embraced Kuhl's idea for a Saturday afternoon festival.

Organizers hope the events will feed on each other, with students from Friday's festival returning with their families and friends on Saturday. And organizers are hoping the public will partic-

ipate in both the Saturday clean-up and river festival.

Kuhl sees tremendous possibilities for reaching a wider audience throughout the weekend. The Scout expo alone usually draws 200 participants, he said.

"You could incorporate the Saturday festival with the clean-up day. And with the Saturday festival, you wouldn't need the 16 booths like you do for the school festival," he said. "A lot of the festival activities would blend in well with the Scouts' outdoor expo that has things like archery, sailing and kayaking."

The presentations could be adjusted for a wider age range, Kuhl said. In addition, the format could be more flexible, allowing visitors to wander around the park as they take in the presentations.

The Scouts would also find a larger audience for

their expo, Kuhl said. "The Scouts love to show off their skills, and some are doing it for community service," he said.

Kuhl pointed to a number of other promotional opportunities.

"This is the inaugural year for the water trail designation, so we can definitely make greater awareness of it," he said. "Food vendors can use the day as a fundraiser. And people can enjoy the park and river while they camp for the weekend."

In turn, the clean-boat event will use the Saturday events as a jumping-off point for reaching the public. The effort contacts boaters about the need to keep their crafts free of invasive species such as the Asian carp and zebra mussel.

"We talk about ways to keep these critters away," said Paul Lepisto with the

Izaak Walton League of America (IWLAA).

The clean-boat event will change to an intense one-week effort rather than the past three or four weekends, he said.

"When we had bad weather last year (on the weekends), I went out during the week. I was shocked (by) how many people were out on the water during the middle of the week," he said. "I reached as many people on a Tuesday night as I usually did on a Friday night. One time, I made 83 contacts in about 90 minutes."

The five-year event has definitely built awareness of invasive species, Lepisto said. "But you're never done getting the message out," he said.

While the Yankton river clean-up won't change, the local effort has spread up and down the Missouri River, said Ranger Dugan Smith

with the National Park Service.

"We are talking about having clean-up events at Yankton and Ponca State Park on the first two weekends in May," he said. "Then we would have Clay County State Park near Vermillion and Niobrara State Park near Verdel (Neb.) during the first two weekends in September."

The Yankton and Ponca clean-up are established events. The Clay County event recently started, while the initial Niobrara State Park clean-up was canceled because of inclement weather and the federal government shutdown.

"At Clay County, we collected 4,000 pounds (of debris) with the help of more than 80 volunteers," Smith said. "It was a nice day, and the (Vermillion) community and University of South Dakota were really support-

ive. We plan to build on those relationships."

Smith holds a goal of engaging people up and down the river.

"We want to make it more holistic," he said. "People know, if they can't make the clean-up in Yankton, there will be another one at another time, 30 or 40 miles up or down the river."

In the end, the Missouri River events play a tremendous role in building awareness, Kuhl said.

"We have problems with people understanding things like the wild and scenic designation," he said. "With these events, we can team up and educate people about the river."

You can follow Randy Dockendorf on Twitter at twitter.com/RDockendorf. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net/.



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