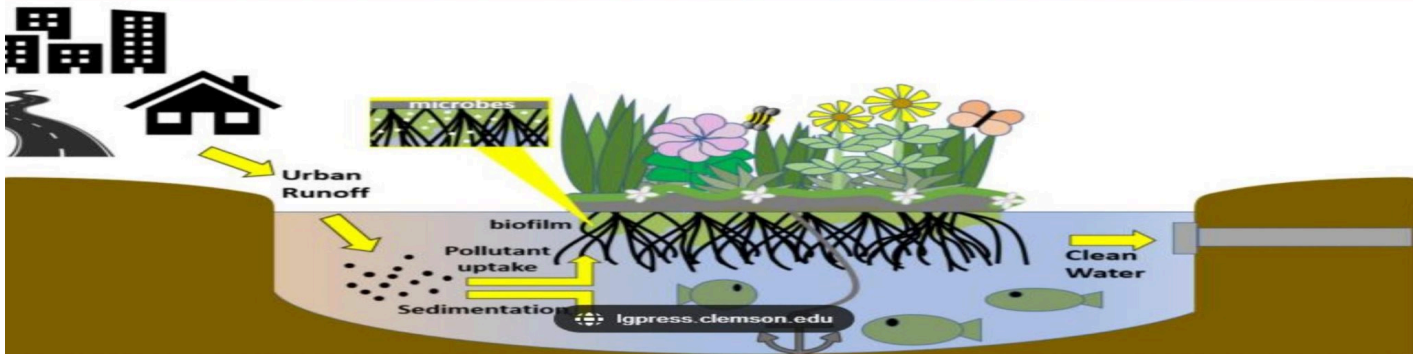


# Foundation floats proposal for 'ecopark' atop Fox River



The River Corridor Foundation of St. Charles is proposing a floating 'ecopark' on the Fox River. (Courtesy of River Corridor Foundation of St. Charles)



The River Corridor Foundation of St. Charles is proposing a floating garden, called an ecopark, on the Fox River. It would be similar to The Wild Mile park, pictured here, in Chicago. (Courtesy of River Corridor Foundation of St. Charles)

Imagine walking on the Fox River in St. Charles. Not along. On.

It could happen in a floating “ecopark” proposed by the River Corridor Foundation of St. Charles.

John Rabchuk, president of the foundation, explained the idea to the St. Charles City Council’s Government Services Committee Monday night.

Members of the committee gave an informal thumbs-up to the idea, directing the city administrator to develop a letter of support the foundation can present to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the Army Corps of Engineers and donors.

The park would be similar to The Wild Mile on the Chicago River in Chicago, where schoolchildren take field trips and activities such as jazz concerts and s’mores grilling take place.

“These things become a real destination,” Rabchuk said.

Wooden dock-like structures would extend out on to the river, with spaces between them for plants. People would be able to walk on the plants, Rabchuk said.

The plants would receive their nutrients from the river, not soil, he said, and their plants roots would help filter the water.

Rabchuk said the foundation hopes to build a park that is about 500 to 600 feet long. Possible locations include a site just south of a railroad trestle, near the Frank Gorham Canoe Launch; on the west side of the river south of the Main Street Bridge; or on the east side of the river near the Illinois Street bridge.

The estimated cost is about \$500,000, and the foundation already received a “six-figure” donation that will be used to pay for engineering, he added.

Some aldermen asked what would happen to the park if the state removes the dam north of Main Street. Rabchuk said the garden’s panels could be moved to another site.

Rabchuk said the foundation intends to have the park maintained by volunteers. But the state Department of Natural Resources wants a government body to own it.