



# Crossroads at Big Creek

LEARNING CENTER NATURE PRESERVE

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Mayor David Ward  
City of Sturgeon Bay  
421 Michigan  
Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin 54325

Dear Mayor Ward,

Crossroads at Big Creek already has submitted a letter of support for locating a National Estuarine Research Reserve facility in Sturgeon Bay. I suggest an additional reason that Sturgeon Bay could serve as a “living classroom” with outreach opportunities to advance estuarine literacy.

First Nation People have lived beside and have depended on resources from the waters of Green Bay since the retreat of the Ice Age glaciers which created the estuary. Excavation at the Cardy site (47DR-79) on the West Side of Sturgeon Bay revealed that Early Paleoindians lived here more than 12,000 years ago.

Excavation along the west side of Clay Banks Road completed in 2011 by Midwest Archaeological Consultants revealed a Late Paleo Indian occupation (47DR-482) dating back 10,000 years. It is highly likely that site 47DR-482 was associated with dugout canoe construction based upon the stone tool assemblage and proximity to the ancient shoreline.

Excavation at the Crossroads’ Big Creek Estuary and Ida Bay Preserve are underway under the direction of Midwest Archaeological Consultants. We know that Late Woodland period First Nation groups have utilized the estuary, at least seasonally, for 1,000 – 3,000 years, and we suspect and hope to discover, far longer.

Archaeology, with contributions by local students and interested citizens, goes far beyond digging up stone tools. Evidence recovered at Crossroads is undergoing analysis to reveal the plants and animals which once were found in the estuary and along its shoreline. This is done using pollen, organic materials such as seeds, shells, teeth and bones, protein residue on projectile points and electron microscope examination of the wear patterns on stone tools. An archaeological-geomorphologist has been enlisted to assist in environmental

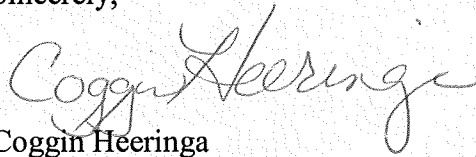


reconstruction and interpret the long-term changes in lake levels during thousands of years of climate fluctuations.

The educational outreach of NERR should honor and pay tribute to our prehistoric residents. But also, and probably more importantly, recognize that a knowledge of land history will inform both short- and long-term research and restoration efforts.

The archaeology programs at Crossroads would greatly enhance the educational outreach and research opportunities for a NERR facility and we would gladly help with this effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Coggin Heeringa". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Coggin Heeringa  
Program Director/Naturalist  
Crossroads at Big Creek