

June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022



Dear Mayor Ward,

I am writing to you on behalf of The Ridges Sanctuary to express our support for Sturgeon Bay to be the location of a National Estuarine Research Reserve Facility.

The Ridges Sanctuary stewards over 1,600 acres of land in Baileys Harbor and Jacksonport and through our mission we *protect the Sanctuary and inspire stewardship of natural areas through programs of education, outreach, and research*. The Ridges Sanctuary was established to protect the sensitive and biodiverse ridges and swales found along the Lake Michigan shoreline in Baileys Harbor. Through continued acquisition and preservation, The Ridges protects significant wetland ecosystems and over 2,500 feet of Lake Michigan shoreline on Baileys Harbor and Moonlight Bay, all of which is recognized under the RAMSAR designation of wetlands of international importance.

Research is fundamental to the work that we do at The Ridges Sanctuary. We have made great advances in our internationally recognized Orchid Restoration Project; a project designed to restore populations of the threatened Ram's Head Lady Slipper orchid and more. We have also participated in many watershed-based research projects. We have collaborated with UW-Green Bay researchers to map The Ridges watershed – the drainage area that channels surface water into the swales and Pickerel Pond before entering into Lake Michigan, as well as conducted ongoing Stream Monitoring through citizen science, monitored culverts for watershed health, monitored suckers in collaboration with the Shedd Aquarium, and participated in the identification of best management practices to protect the Hine's Emerald Dragonfly. Through this work, it has been made abundantly clear how vital our freshwater resources continue to be to the health and protection of our Door Peninsula ecosystems.

We are excited about the prospect of a NERR facility in Door County. Not only will this facility be a fantastic resource and educational experience for our shared visitors and community but also a resource for organizations like ours. We look forward to engaging with the network of researchers that the facility will attract as well as continuing to grow our understanding of the critical ecosystems that are protected here on the Door Peninsula.

The Ridges Sanctuary is thrilled to express its support for the establishment of a NERR facility in Sturgeon Bay and looks forward to interacting more intimately with this project in the future. If there is anything more we can do to help support this initiative, please do not hesitate to ask.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Andy R. Gill'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Andy Gill

Executive Director