UNIVERSITY WISCONSIN
FOX VALLEY
A Campus of the University of Wisconsin Colleges

Department of Biological Sciences
28 April, 2006

Donna VanBuecken, Executive Director
Wild Ones Natural Landscapes Ltd
P.O. Box 1274
Appleton, WI 54912-1274

Dear Donna,

I am writing this letter on behalf of the five teaching staff members of the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of Wisconsin – Fox Valley. We are unanimous in our strong support of the Wild Ones plan to develop the West Shore Preserve Environmental Center, and wish to encourage efforts that would accomplish the plan. The West Shore property would be located within a ten-minute drive of our campus, and holds much potential as a field study site for students in several of our biology courses.

Each year on our campus approximately 325 students enroll in biology and environmental science laboratory courses that include field activities revolving around water quality monitoring, wetland habitat analysis, and/or studies of ecological succession and restoration. All of these activities, and more, could be carried out at the West Shore Preserve site.

In addition, for the last three years, students in Animal Biology have undertaken service learning projects with stream monitoring as a primary research activity. This past fall, all 50 students were involved in monitoring streams in the lower Fox River watershed. The students presented their research to classmates and other faculty who were invited to the class research "symposium". Individual students have elected to continue this research in independent study projects; some plan to present their results at a "Posters in the Rotunda" event at the State Capitol building. The West Shore Preserve holds promise as a convenient and accessible site for such student service and research.

We would support this project even if the West Shores Preserve weren't located so close to our campus. However, we are truly excited by the potential learning opportunities afforded to our students at this site. Many field study sites require significant travel time that limits their utility during a typical three-hour laboratory session. Not so with the West Shore Preserve. Few sites could offer the comparable indoor lab space that would allow students to utilize sensitive electronic equipment during inclement weather. Few field study sites offer comparable accessible and intact wetland habitat. And no other field study sites are located within sight of the world's largest cleanup of contaminated sediments.

The Preserve would also enhance possibilities for synergies within the Fox River Valley. Three of us are collaborating with Lawrence University faculty to submit a grant application to the National Science Foundation for funding of laboratory and field water quality monitoring equipment. This grant would facilitate formation of a collaborative program linking students and faculty at our two institutions to work in partnership with several existing river-related projects to establish a water quality monitoring program for the Fox River. At least one monitoring location would be on Little Lake Butte des Morts, and the West Shore Preserve would be an ideal location. Additionally, education majors taking environmental science courses at UWFox have been linked in teaching/learning projects with School of the Lake middle school students in the past. We could envision expanding this program to take advantage of the mutually convenient West Shores Preserve location.

We have no doubt that our students and staff would utilize the West Shores Preserve in a variety of ways to enhance their understanding of basic biological and environmental science processes and concepts. We would look forward to working with Wild Ones at the Preserve.

Sincerely,

Joy B. Perry
Lecturer, Department of Biological Sciences

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