

**Elsen, Nikki**

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**From:** Gretchen NatureSchool <homegrownnatureschool@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 4, 2020 5:32 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Cc:** Kabat, Tim; Richmond, Andrea; Kahlow, Chris; Padesky, Gary; Olson, Jessica; Weaver, Justice; Gaul, Martin; Neumeister, Scott  
**Subject:** Request for Ethical Process in development of bluff

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Good afternoon,

My name is Gretchen Paquette and for the last four years I owned and operated HomeGrown Nature School- La Crosse's only nature based preschool and childcare. I am also an avid outdoors woman and advocate.

My life's work has been connecting people to nature in many forms- wilderness therapy, trail planning and construction, adventure guide, etc, and of course Nature School.

At many of the previous parks and zoning meetings, I keep hearing ORA bring up the benefits of getting people in nature. Its one of their main arguments in favor of grandma's gateway project.

Its TRUE- exposure to nature immensely benefits humans. But ORA is missing half the story.

The concept is called EcoPsychology- which I also have my degree in. I've studied this concept in depth and put it into practice both personally and professionally.

EcoPsychology is the RECIPROCAL relationship between humans and nature, and how this relationship (or lack there of) can have an effect on both the human psyche AND The ENVIRONMENT.

In short, what they keep missing, is the part about it benefiting the environment. In theory, people who enjoy the environment will (should) adequately care for and preserve the environment.

In this case, that means obtaining and taking into account environmental impact studies.

These should've been done in the beginning- Not as an after thought because of questions.

In a public response to Environmental concerns, ORA wrote this- "environmental concerns, which you've probably seen, but for reference: the area has had significant environmental impact over the last 150 years. With few areas that have not been impacted, studies would LIKELY not result in much information. The Environmental Leadership Forum was involved in the process, **Nobody had any objections to what was being planned, thus there was NO FLAG OR NEED FOR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STUDIES.**"

This is concerning for multiple reasons. First ELF heard about the project but there was NEVER an approval process.

Second, even if there was no vocal objection, ELF should not and does not serve as a substitute for an environmental impact study. It is a group of passionate individuals, but not experts by any means.

As most of you know, the Driftless region is a unique and delicate landscape. No two bluffs are the same.

I am simply asking that before this project goes any further, you take the USDA study into serious account, and obtain any further information to make this the best possible outcome for the ENTIRE community of La Crosse for generations to come.

Thank you for taking this seriously. I hope I can count on you to fully think through this decision.

Gretchen Paquette  
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