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## **Archaeologists to Collect Meadowcroft Rockshelter Sediment Samples for DNA Testing**

***-James M. Adovasio, Ph.D., Meadowcroft's newly appointed Director of Archaeology, will work with archaeologist Devlin Gandy to collect samples this week-***

PITTSBURGH, Aug. 26, 2019 – Cutting-edge archaeological research continues at the Meadowcroft Rockshelter in Avella, Pa., recognized as the oldest site of human habitation in North America.

A National Historic Landmark, the Rockshelter first underwent archaeological excavations in the 1970s that provided evidence of human habitation at the site as early as 19,000 years ago. Since then, excavations and studies have continued at the site to learn more about the peopling of North America.

This week, archaeologist Devlin Gandy, a Ph.D. student at St. John's College, University of Cambridge, will visit the site to collect sediment samples that will be tested for DNA.

The samples will be taken from an isolated area within the Rockshelter known as the "deep hole," the deepest and therefore the oldest part of the site, which has been excavated to the bedrock layer.

Once retrieved, the sediment samples will be tested for traces of ancient human DNA in the coming weeks.

If discovered, human DNA from the Rockshelter would enable researchers to look for genetic similarities with DNA samples found during other comparable archaeological excavations; help identify the origin of the humans who used the site thousands of years ago to better understand how North America was populated; and identify any similarities between the DNA and that of modern-day American Indians.

This marks the first time DNA testing will be done with sediment samples from the Meadowcroft Rockshelter.

Gandy will work closely with James M. Adovasio, Ph.D., who achieved international acclaim with his archeological excavation of the Rockshelter in 1973, to obtain the sediment samples.

Dr. Adovasio recently joined the staff of Meadowcroft Rockshelter and Historic Village as Director of Archaeology. In his role, he will promote archaeological investigation, research, and publication which furthers our understanding of the peopling of North America.

**\*\*MEDIA NOTE:** *Members of the media are welcome to observe the collection process and interview Adovasio and Gandy on Wednesday, Aug. 28 and Thursday, Aug. 29. Please contact Brady Smith to arrange a visit.*

**Meadowcroft Rockshelter and Historic Village** operates in association with the Senator John Heinz History Center, an affiliate of the Smithsonian and Pennsylvania's largest history museum. Meadowcroft, a National Historic Landmark, is the oldest site of human habitation in North America and features a massive rock overhang used by the region's earliest inhabitants for shelter more than 19,000 years ago. The 16th century Monongahela Indian Village includes wigwams, recreated prehistoric artifacts, and hands-on activities related to agriculture. Two 18th century structures help to spotlight the similarities and differences between the everyday lives of European settlers and American Indians in the Upper Ohio Valley. Meadowcroft's 19th century village features a covered bridge, one-room schoolhouse, blacksmith shop, and church that create a charming country village setting. Meadowcroft Rockshelter and Historic Village is located in Avella, Pa., Washington County, within an hour's drive of Pittsburgh. For more, visit **[www.heinzhistorycenter.org/meadowcroft](http://www.heinzhistorycenter.org/meadowcroft)**.

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