

Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians: Tribe's new wastewater treatment system progressing

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LAC DU FLAMBEAU—July 31, 2020—The Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians Tribal Council today announced construction on its new wastewater treatment system is underway and it will exceed new, stricter regulatory requirements.

“The end result will be a robust, state-of-the-art wastewater treatment system that will exceed regulatory requirements and provide sufficient capacity for the future,” LDF Tribal President Joseph Wildcat Sr. says. “One of our core values is protecting the environment and this investment is consistent with protecting what we value most for future generations to enjoy what we enjoy today.”

According to the Indian Health Service, a federal government agency, the existing lagoon wastewater treatment system has met existing environmental protection standards. However, the standards are becoming more stringent and upgrades are necessary to keep the system in compliance. The new wastewater treatment system goes beyond what's required by the new regulations.

IHS Engineer Matt Zoch says, “The improved wastewater treatment system will eliminate the need for any surface discharge, which will keep the facility in compliance with new regulatory requirements regarding phosphorous. All of the treated wastewater will be disposed of through subsurface discharge. This results in phosphorous being bound to the soil at the discharge location and keeps it out of surface waters.”

Even though not required by federal environmental regulations, the Tribe decided to invest in an additional treatment system known as a Moving Bed Biofilm Reactor (MBBR) to reduce nitrogen from wastewater. As a further means of protecting water

resources, an ultraviolet disinfection system is also being incorporated to deactivate potential pathogens within treated waste water. The project also calls for relining the existing secondary lagoon cell. This cell will remain in place as part of the upgraded system and will be retrofit with an HDPE membrane liner system to replace the current clay liner.

“The Tribe is committed to ensuring that the waters of the Lac du Flambeau Reservation remain clean and usable for everyone who enjoys our homeland well into the future,” LDF Tribal President Wildcat says. “This is why the Tribe along with Tribal Programs and federal agencies are continuing to work on upgrading this system.”

Howard Bros. of Woodruff, Wis., is general contractor for construction of the new wastewater treatment system with joint funding from several organizations. Funding for the project comes from the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, Indian Health Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development program.

Work completed to date includes:

- Clearing and grubbing the site for the new treatment and disposal system
- Construction of settling basin and seepage cells
- Construction of concrete basin and installation of wastewater treatment system equipment
- Construction of building to house wastewater treatment system, control system and associated components
- Electrical power service
- Installation of lift station structures
- Sewage force main between the new lift station and treatment system

Tentative Timeline: If construction goes to plan, start date for the new treatment and disposal system is Dec. 31, 2020. Re-lining of lagoon cell 2 completion is estimated to be Sept. 1, 2021.

“Every community must consider many, many variables to reach the most efficient, effective wastewater treatment solution,” Tribal Natural Resources Director Larry Wawronowicz says. “We’ve created a plan to continue to protect our natural resources. This is core to the cultural values of the Tribe.”

“We know people are interested in what’s been accomplished related to the lagoon,” Wawronowicz says. “For those wanting to be part of the process, we welcome their input in working with us to keep our waters healthy. There are many ways to get involved.”

About the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa:

The Tribe is an Indian tribal government that was federally recognized by treaty

with the United States in 1854. The Tribe has more than 4,000 members, with more than 2,000 members residing on the Tribe's 86,000-acre reservation, located in Lac du Flambeau, Wis.

Our Mission: To provide leadership for the betterment of tribal membership and descendants in the areas of health, education, welfare, economic/job development and the protection of natural resources.