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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Over 10,000 Acres of Lake Superior Habitat Internationally Recognized

The Kakagon and Bad River Sloughs was recently recognized as a Wetland of International Importance, or a Ramsar site! Often called the Everglades of the North, the Sloughs mark the first Ramsar site to be owned by a tribe.



Wild rice growing in the Sloughs. Photo courtesy of the Bad River Natural Resources Department.

The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance is a treaty initiated in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971 that provides for international cooperation among 160 countries for the conservation and wise use of wetlands. The Kakagon and Bad River Sloughs complex was one of the exceptional wetlands recently designated as a Ramsar site, bringing the total to 2,000 Ramsar sites worldwide! To learn more about Ramsar sites, visit: www.ramsar.org.

When asked about the importance of the Sloughs and reaching this milestone, Tribal Chairman, Mike Wiggins, Jr., commented:

“The Kakagon and Bad River Sloughs wetland complex represent everything our Tribal People hold dear and sacred on many different levels. Spiritually, the ‘place’ and everything it has, the clean water, the winged, the seasons, the rice and fish, connects us with our ancestors and the Creator. The Sloughs sustain the physical well-being of our community with foods such as wild rice, fish, cranberries, waterfowl, venison, and medicines. From an Anishinabe (Chippewa) world-view perspective, the wetlands ecosystem is a tangible representation of our values of caring for the environment. The international Ramsar recognition is an honor for the Bad River Band and maybe even more importantly, the recognition sends a message about the importance and critical need for biologically productive and water rich areas such as the Kakagon and Bad River Sloughs wetland complex. There is water purification, ecological harmony, and

people who are interwoven into this ‘place’ where the Bad River Reservation dovetails with Lake Superior.”

The Kakagon and Bad River Sloughs easily fulfilled criteria established to identify Ramsar sites. The diversity of wetland types in the Sloughs complex lends to its unique and rare features, such as vast beds of wild rice (Manomin), spawning habitat for lake sturgeon (Name), and stopover habitat for numerous migratory birds. Comprising a significant portion of the remaining Lake Superior coastal wetlands, the Kakagon and Bad River Sloughs is critical to supporting the biodiversity of Lake Superior fisheries.



Bird's eye view of the Sloughs. Photo courtesy of Jim Meeker.

The Bad River Tribe worked closely with partners, such as the Wisconsin Wetlands Association (www.wisconsinwetlands.org), to assist in designating the Sloughs as a Ramsar site. Almost 3 years after the process was initiated, the Ramsar designation was approved on World Wetlands Day, February 2, 2012.

Located in the downstream portion of the Bad River Watershed, the Kakagon and Bad River Sloughs face a multitude of health and environmental challenges, such as mining and a changing climate. The Ramsar designation and federally-approved water quality standards are two important milestones in the protection and enhancement of the Kakagon and Bad River Sloughs.



Immature bald eagle perched in the Kakagon Sloughs. Photo courtesy of the Bad River Natural Resources Department.