



## DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

*“Preserving Ho-Chunk Traditions through land and natural resource management.”*

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### 2021-2022 ANNUAL REPORT

#### **Overview**

The Department of Natural Resources is responsible for managing, exercising stewardship, and applying sound conservation practices over all of the Nation’s lands and its natural resources.

The Agricultural Division is responsible for management and oversight of all agricultural lands, leases, food sovereignty and gardening initiatives, grant writing, and development of a department of agriculture for the Ho-Chunk Nation. Currently, there are not any Agriculture Division staff. However, the Land Management Division Manager and other DNR supportive staff have provided efforts to keep the basic functions for the division operating during this time. Future development within the division will require additional funding resources that may come through grants and or Ho-Chunk Nation dollars.

The Forestry Division is responsible for managing all forest resources on Nation lands. The Division is responsible for planning and implementing science based forest management techniques that benefit all forest resources such as forest products, soil health and forest wildlife habitat. The Community Forestry section works on managing the Nation’s forest resources in urban areas. The Forestry Division consists of a Forestry Manager and Forestry Technician.

The Land Management Division is responsible for land management and conservation practices of Ho-Chunk Nation rural lands. In collaboration with the many land management projects, the division works closely with various agencies including, but not limited to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Farm Service Agency (FSA) grants, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS), Nature Conservancy, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). The Land Management Division consists of a Division Manager and five (5) Lands Specialists.

The Wildlife Division is responsible for monitoring and enhancing habitat for native wildlife species on the Nation’s lands. The Division conducts wildlife surveys, aids in environmental assessments by providing endangered resource reviews, works closely with state and federal wildlife agencies and officials to better manage wildlife resources, and provides outreach and educational programs for tribal members.

# Organizational Chart 2021-2022 FY



# Division of Agriculture

## Overview

The Division of Agriculture received some Aid to Tribal Government funds from the Federal government to provide for one position, Agriculture Researcher and Education Manager, which started in November 2021. This also included some money for some equipment like a small tractor, a no till drill and two row corn planter.

At the time of this report, all agricultural expenses are dependent upon funding and staff partnerships from DNR or other Departments within the Ho-Chunk Nation. There are numerous partners, tribes and agencies that have helped or assisted over the course of this year. They are deeply appreciated.

## Staffing

- Agriculture Researcher and Education Manager (November 2021 - present)

## Agricultural Leases (Tasked to Lands Supervisor)

- Management of 12 agricultural leases throughout Sauk, Vernon, La Crosse, Monroe, Wood, Juneau, Richland, and Jackson County.
- Seven (7) of the twelve agricultural leases remained active 2021 growing season.

## Organic Industrial Hemp Research Plot

- MOU with University of Wisconsin to partner on an Organic Industrial Hemp Research project at Whirling Thunder
- Field Day with UW Ext. planting industrial hemp varieties of fiber and grain seed

## Indian corn (Wicąwąš kirikiriš)

- Planting Bronze Beauty and Rainbow Flint, seed to the Hand planted and hand pollination plot at Whirling Thunder & UW Ext.
- Organic Cover Crop with Indian Corn Research Project (UW Madison)
- Daikon Radish cover crop to improve soil quality and structure

## Sumer Tribal Youth Grant (WI DNR)

- Proposed approved by Legislature for Wittenberg, Green Bay and Madison

## Notable Accomplishments from July 2021 – June 2022

- 6 strategic planning sessions
- 3 Action plan sessions
- Increased partnerships with climate fast forward group in Madison
- Research and networking with NRCS on buffalo, grazing, high houses

## Problems/Potential Corrective Actions

- Audit information from 2019 does not lead well for grants
- Need to deal with Limited Sovereign immunity for grants
- Need a Development Corporation for each community

## Goals and Strategies for 2022 – 2023 Fiscal Year

- Turn Agricultural Division into a department
- Seek grant funding for staffing, researching, and development of business plans for agribusinesses
- Continue agricultural research of industrial hemp for potential economic diversification
- Develop business plans for 4 communities
- Add Food Security and Food Sovereignty to mission statement
- Add Agriculture to HCN Strategic plans
- Instill Total Quality Management system and ISO 9000 standards
- Reassign agricultural equipment inventory back to Agriculture Division
- Set accounts in Treasury

## Grant funding sources and partnerships for 2021-2022

- Natural Resource Conservation Service Grants
- UW Extension grant funded Hemp Research project
- State DNR Summer Tribal Youth Employment
- Meat processing BIA Grant
- Native American Agriculture Fund 2023

## AGRICULTURAL FIELD PROJECTS



Indian Corn/Cover Crop Research Project (minimize soil destruction and improve quality)



DNR and UW-Madison collection of soil bore sampling & harvest data collection of industrial hemp cultivars

## Division of Forestry

### Staffing

- Forestry Manager
- Forestry Technician

### Activities

- Manage of the Nation's rural forest lands
- Completion of 3 Natural Resource Management Plans
- Tree risk assessment and mitigation on Nation land
- Management of EQIP funds for contractor to draft Forest Management Plan for the Leasum Ward property

- Earth Day Event
- Master Naturalist Instructor Training
- Management of 3 BIA Forestry grants and 2 EQIP funded projects
- Collected stand exam data on KVR Trust property
- Completed inventory of black ash trees on Nation lands
- Assisted 21 Nation members with locating black ash trees to harvest
- Collected stand exam data on Winneshiek Trust property
- Collected Stand Exam data on Joe Wolf Trust property
- Minor Forest Product Harvest Permits for 16 Nation members
- Acquired funding from BIA to fund the Rural Lands Forester position for 1 year
- Acquired funding from BIA to treat invasive buckthorn plants in the Wittenberg area
- Assisted Lands Division staff with Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) project at Wazee subdivision. Firebreak is being prepped to be planted in grasses and clovers that provide elk forage.



### Grant funding sources and partnerships for 2022-2023

- Forestry Management Plan (Emerald Ash Bore)
- Elk Restoration Project
- Natural Resource Conservation Service Grants -
- BIA Fire Resource Grant
- UW Extension grant funded Hemp Research project
- BIA Circle of Flight Grant (Wolf)
- BIA 638 grant (Rural Lands Forester)
- BIA 638 grant (Buckthorn treatment Wittenberg)

### Goals and Strategies for 2022 – 2023 Fiscal Year

#### Forestry Division

1. Write 5 Natural Resource Management Plans for HCN properties.
2. Continue to improve the overall health of the forested properties. This includes establishing forest wildlife habitat and invasive species control.
3. Development of Master Naturalist Program

### Problems/Potential Corrective Actions

#### Forestry Division

1. Developing a new data storage and collection system so that forestry data is easily accessible and can be shared amongst other departments. This is being corrected through the integration of the Survey 123 program into daily work activities.
2. Keeping up with the constant threat that invasive species pose to the Ho-Chunk Nation's forested lands. Grant funding is being utilized to treat invasive species.

## Division of Wildlife

The Wildlife Division cooperates with state and federal agencies in wildlife management projects within Ho-Chunk Nation (HCN) ancestral homelands.

### Staffing

- Forestry Division Manager job description changed to include management of the Wildlife Division

### Elk (Hųųwų) (Grant)

- Assisted with trapping and relocation of 31 elk
- Voting member of the Elk Advisory Committee
- Submitted grant proposal to fund elk habitat improvement project on Nation lands
- Attended 2022 Eastern Elk Management Workshop
- Assisted with elk calf collaring efforts



### Snapshot Wisconsin

- Partnership with WIDNR to monitor two wildlife cameras in eastern Jackson County for several months, with the purpose of monitoring habitat use by animals.

### Deer (Caa) Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)

- The division had five kiosks for CWD sample collection, one for each Whitetail Crossing Convenience Store. Hunters submitted whole deer head samples, which are tested for CWD by WI DNR. There were 32 samples collected from all 5 kiosks. Kiosks were installed and regularly maintained by HCN DNR staff.
- Revised and printed Hunting Packet for Nation lands.



### Wolf (Šųųkų) (Grant):

- Winter tracking surveys on Nation lands
- Served as committee member to assist with writing of 10 year WI DNR Wolf Management Plan

## Goals and Strategies for 2022 – 2023 Fiscal Year

### Wildlife Division

1. Establish quality elk habitat on Nation lands within the range of the Central Elk Herd.
2. Continue to strengthen partnership with WI DNR in regards to restoration efforts for elk in Wisconsin.
3. Increase CWD testing efforts in Monroe County due to recent positive tests.

## Problems/Potential Corrective Actions

### Wildlife Division

1. It can be difficult to manage wildlife species on small/fragmented parcels of land, because wildlife don't know property boundaries. Establish and maintain relationships with other organizations and partners to manage wildlife on a landscape level.
2. Increasing threats from wildlife related diseases and viruses such as Chronic Wasting Disease and Avian Influenza.

## Division of Land Management

### Staffing

Lands Division Manager  
Lands Specialist (5)

### Property Management

- Recreational trail system maintenance
- Oversight of ATV ordinance
- Property Checks
- Earth Day Event
- Invasive species management
- Wildlife habitat management
- Wildland Urban Interface work in Jackson County
- Mowing and brush work
- Access road maintenance
- Response to trespass complaints
- Firebreak mowing/maintenance



Lands Specialist Isaiah Funmaker

### Prescribed Fire and Wildfire Assistance

- Prioritize burn units and create seasonal burn plans.
- Management and certification of staff to conduct prescribed burns to promote native grasses for our prairies.
- Conducted prescribed burning of native prairies.
- Certified staff with annual federal fire fighter qualifications.



## Notable Accomplishments from July 2021 – June 2022

- Prepped and completed prescribed burning as a land management tool for the purpose of fuel reduction and prairie restoration projects on Kickapoo Valley Reserve, Sacred Earth, and Kingsley Bend.
- Lands maintenance of HCN properties Statewide
- Earth Day Event
- Completion of 3 Natural Resource Management Plans



**Earth Day in Kickapoo Valley Reserve April 2022**