

Gidayaangwaami'idimin **Ezhi-inawendiyang**

Natural Resources Division

Semi-Annual Presentation

*January 2026 - June 2026 Activities
Presented August 2026*



NRD - Ezhi-inawendiyang

General Overview

- **Vision**
 - Protect, enhance, and support resilient ecological communities and our members' intergenerational rights, relationships, and responsibilities.
- **Mission**
 - Serve as leaders in collaborative stewardship within the Great Lakes region, honoring those who came before us and providing for those yet to come.
- **Established December 2023**
 - Four programs, one Division: shared planning, grant management, and one point of contact for treaty rights, stewardship, and consultation work.





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Treaty Rights

- **1836 Treaty of Washington**
 - About 14 million acres ceded; the right to hunt, fish, and gather reserved forever.
 - Reserved rights, not privileges granted by the state or federal government.
- **How those rights are implemented today**
 - 2023 Great Lakes Consent Decree
 - 2007 Inland Consent Decree
 - 2006 MOU with the U.S. Forest Service
 - Federal trust responsibility and government-to-government consultation.
- **Why it matters for NRD**
 - Most NRD position exists to meet the Tribe's commitments under these agreements.
 - Our science is how we protect the rights our ancestors reserved.



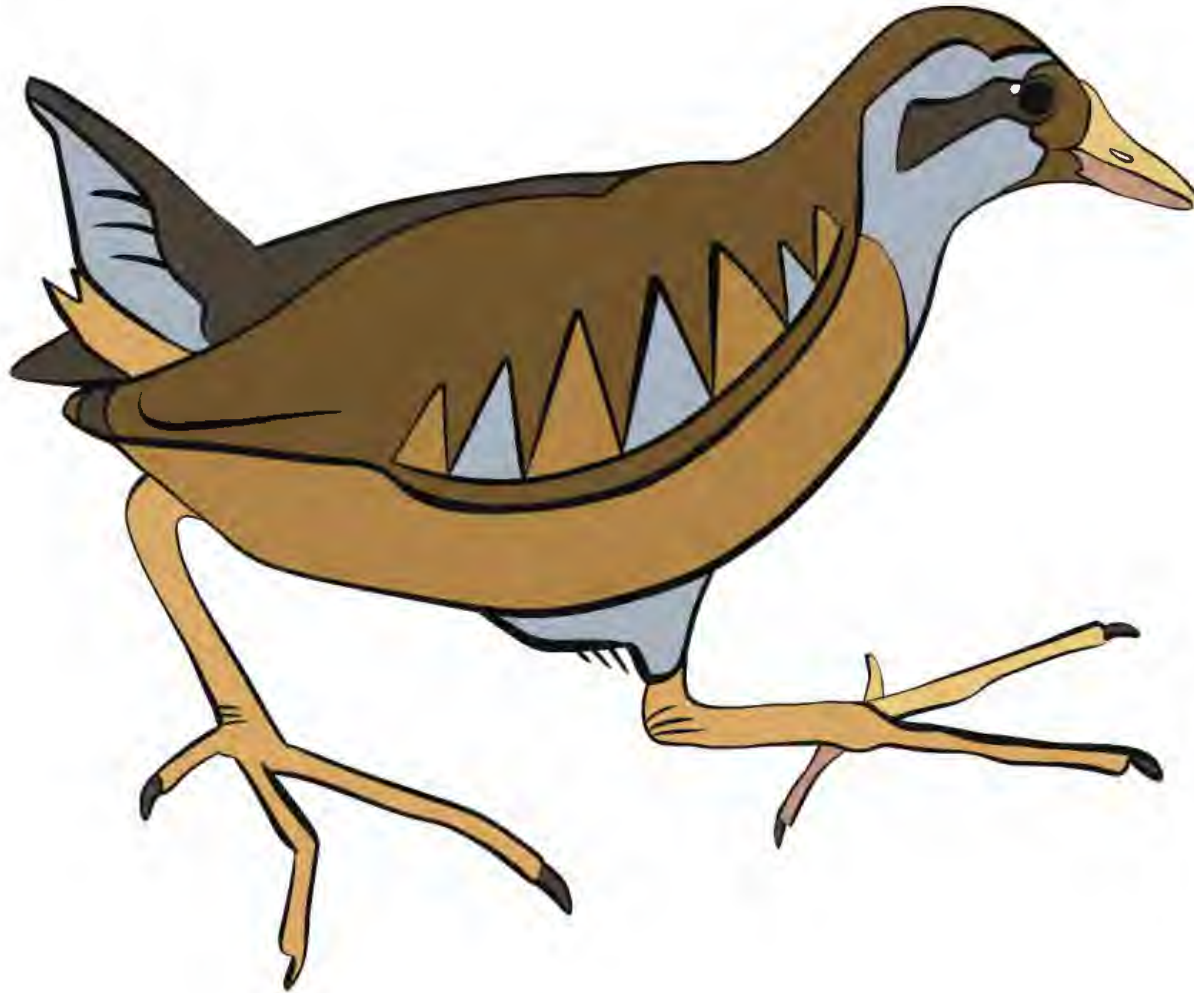
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Organizational Structure

4 Programs, approximately 30 staff

- Division Administration: Director, Grant Manager, Administrative Assistant
- Environmental Program: air, water, drinking water, brownfields, regulatory matters
- Fisheries Program: assessment, decree reporting, hatcheries, whitefish and walleye
- Wildlife Program: harvest, forests and ishkode, coastal wetlands, stewardship and restoration
- CCER: research partnerships, decision support, data, conservation finance





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Tribal Members Served

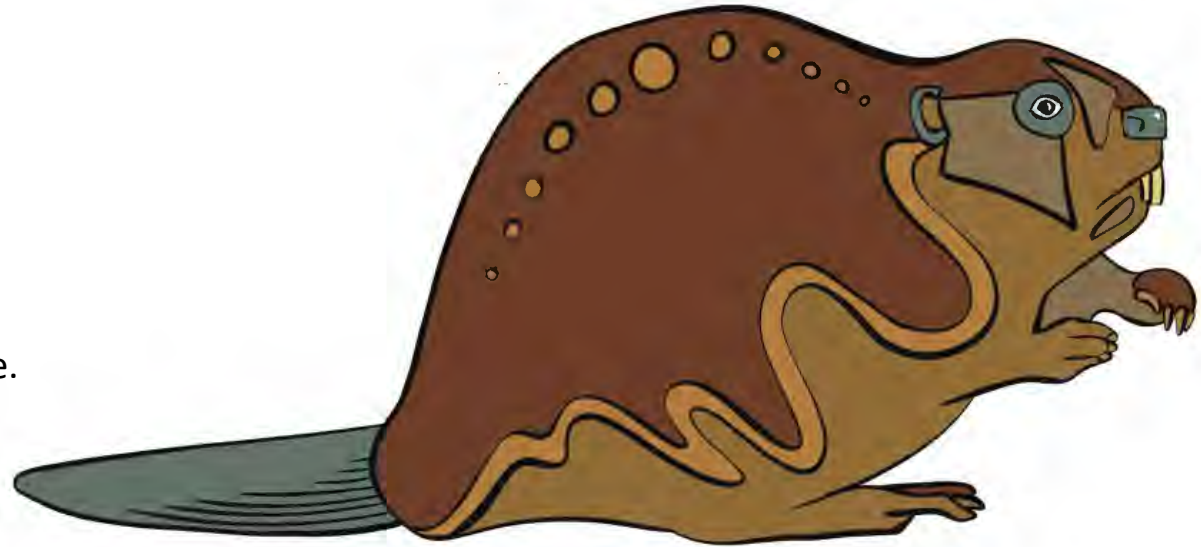
Division staff, projects, and programs serve:

- Members exercising treaty rights across the 1836 Ceded Territory
- More than 4,000 hunters, fishers, trappers, and gatherers
- Members who rely on clean water, air, and healthy ecosystems for ceremony
- Families who eat Great Lakes fish and regional wildlife
- Tribal youth, through school and hatchery programs
- Other Tribal entities needing environmental review, land management, and water support
- The broader community across the Service Area and Ceded Territory

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Co-stewardship and process

- **Within the Tribe**
 - Conservation Committee advises the Board on policy; Board approves resolutions, NRD grant applications, and agreements.
- **Among the 1836 Treaty tribes**
 - Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority (CORA)
- **With the State and the United States**
 - Technical Fisheries Committee sets Great Lakes harvest limits.
 - Wildlife Technical Committee handles inland regulations, deer and elk cycles, wolves, disease.
 - Annual Executive Council escalates unresolved issues.
- **With federal land managers**
 - Consultation (e.g., Line 5) and co-stewardship agreements (Hiawatha, Seney, TNC).





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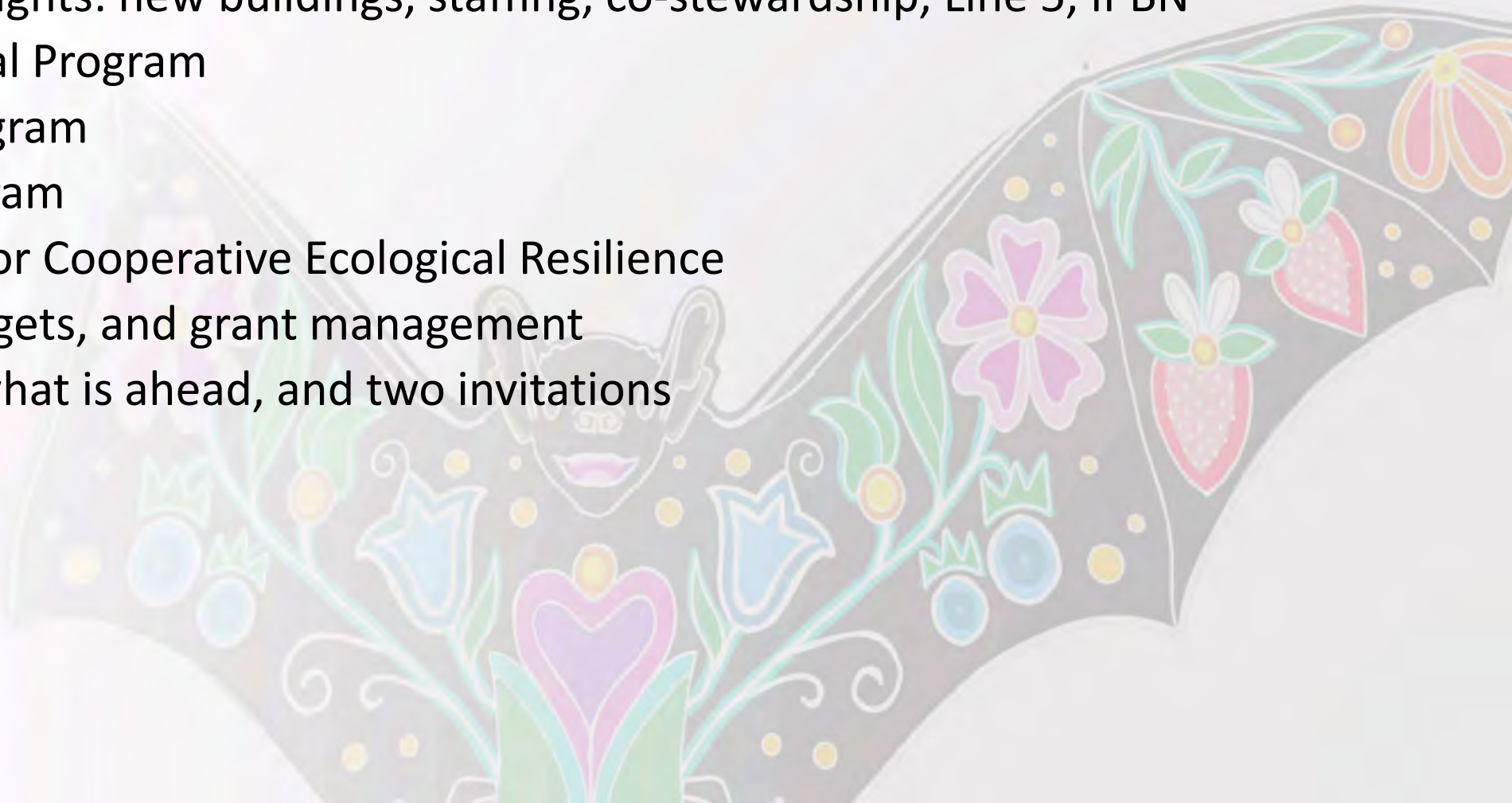
NRD Priorities

- **Three Division-level priorities**
 - Protecting rights, relationships, and responsibilities
 - Supporting strategic land acquisition
 - Advancing meaningful co-stewardship across the 1836 Ceded Territory
- **January 2026 - June 2026**
 - Rights: formal comments on multiple federal and state rules; monthly Line 5 consultation
 - Land: MOU with the Global Land Restoration Fund; land management framework drafted
 - Co-stewardship: Seney NWR and TNC agreements in draft; Hemiboreal Decision Support Project launched

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Planned Overview

- Division highlights: new buildings, staffing, co-stewardship, Line 5, IPBN
- Environmental Program
- Fisheries Program
- Wildlife Program
- Consortium for Cooperative Ecological Resilience
- Funding, budgets, and grant management
- Challenges, what is ahead, and two invitations
- Questions





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New NRD Buildings

- **The move**

- Two buildings: offices and a renovated motor pool
- Move began in May; completed in June
- All programs together for the first time in Division history

- **What it makes possible**

- A working laboratory with a chemical hygiene plan and hazardous waste registration
- Room for boats, gear, and field equipment
- Space to host the community

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Division Highlights: Co-stewardship and Land

Co-stewardship agreements in progress

- Seney National Wildlife Refuge (USFWS): draft agreement; Board workshop to follow
- The Nature Conservancy: parallel agreement in discussion

Land

- MOU executed with the Global Land Restoration Fund (March)
- Tribal land management and decision-making framework drafted
- Land coordination with BIA for Sault Tribe Construction and Transportation projects





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Division Highlights: Enbridge Line 5 Consultation

- **What it is**
 - Proposed tunnel under the Straits of Mackinac; requires an Army Corps permit
 - The Straits are among the most important treaty fishing waters
- **NRD's role**
 - Consultation and application review meetings every month
 - Technical review coordinated across Fisheries, Wildlife, and Environmental
 - Bi-weekly treaty communication meetings with Bellwether PR
- **Next**
 - Continue review and input; keep Legal, the Treaty Team, and the Board informed

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Division Highlights: Indigenous Peoples Burning Network

- **Sault Tribe hosts the IPBN national meeting**
 - Kewadin Casino, Sault Ste. Marie, November 2 - 6, 2026
 - Site visits to NRD fire planning and prescribed burn locations
- **Why it matters**
 - National network of Indigenous nations revitalizing cultural fire
 - Showcases our ishkode work and the Hiawatha partnership
 - A chance for members and leadership to learn from other nations
- **Building our own capacity**
 - Wildlife staff progressing through BIA Red Card certification
 - Wildfire smoke readiness template for Tribal facilities



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Division Highlights:

People, Safety, and Policy

- **New positions filled**
 - Wildlife Program Manager; Forest Ecologist II; Permitting and Reporting Specialist
 - Two CCER Research Ecologists; NRD Administrative Assistant; seasonal technicians
 - Recruiting: Environmental Scientists for air, water, and brownfields
- **Safety and wellbeing**
 - Division-wide safety meetings and equipment inventories
 - Mental Health First Aid, CPR, boat safety, snowmobile training
- **Management**
 - Division-wide performance expectations emphasizing safety and accountability



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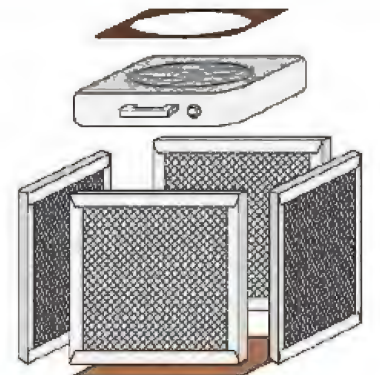
Environmental Program - Air Quality

- **Monitoring**
 - Weekly atmospheric deposition sampling all six months; PFAS added
 - Additional Purple Air sensors purchased; emissions inventory nearly complete
- **Indoor air and smoke**
 - Indoor air assessments in members' homes
 - Wildfire smoke readiness guidance and template for Tribal facilities
- **Funding and leadership**
 - EPA Clean Air Act 103 award, FY26-27: \$150,000
 - Program Manager named Michigan's representative on EPA's Regional Tribal Operations Committee

BUILD AN AIR PURIFIER IN 20 MINUTES

A DIY box that clears wildfire smoke, dust, and airborne germs — no tools required.

A Corsi-Rosenthal Box is a powerful air purifier that you can easily build yourself using locally sourced components for a fraction of the price of a commercially manufactured air purifier.





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Environmental Program - Surface Water and Drinking Water

- **Surface water**
 - 100-page Quality Assurance Project Plan through two rounds of EPA review
 - Comment letters on Clean Water Act 401 and Army Corps Nationwide Permits
 - \$100,000 EGLE stream restoration proposal (Hoban Creek); EPA wetland proposal
- **Drinking water**
 - Monthly sampling at six facilities: all results acceptable
 - Consumer Confidence Reports delivered to all three housing systems
 - EPA deficiencies at four non-NRD sites: closing steadily, six remaining
 - Service contracts with Facilities and Casinos in development



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Environmental Program - Brownfields and Emergency Response

- **Response**

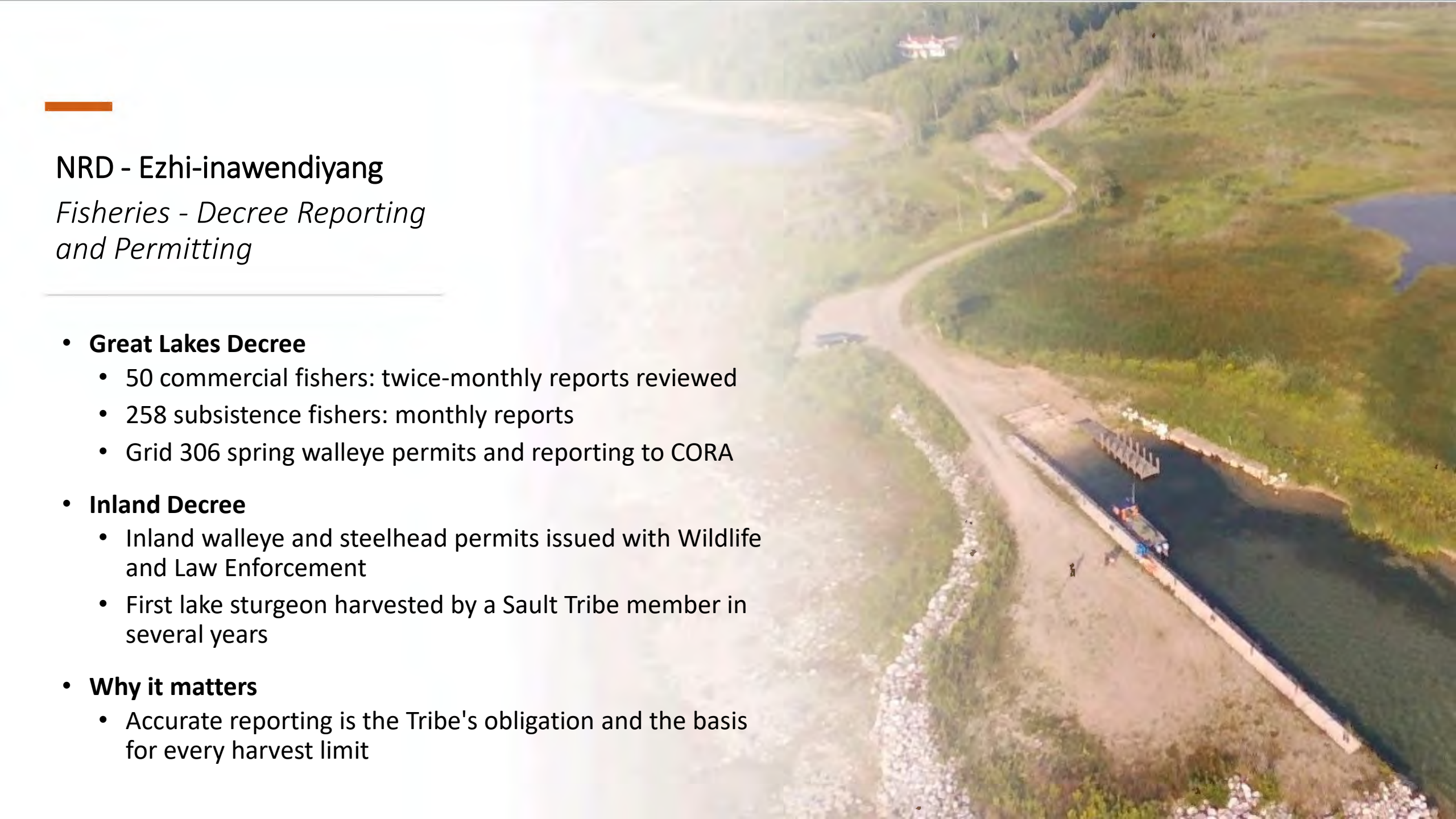
- McKay Bay oil spill (April): response and cleanup with Law Enforcement and the Coast Guard
- National Response Center notifications tracked monthly

- **Service to other Tribal entities**

- Food Sovereignty: three orchard sites evaluated against 20 soil factors
- Housing
- Construction: pre-demolition hazardous materials walkthrough

Standards

- Culturally significant plants written into Tribal cleanup standards

An aerial photograph of a river flowing through a green, forested landscape. A large dam structure is visible in the lower right, with a long concrete wall and a small bridge or walkway crossing it. The river is surrounded by lush vegetation and some buildings are visible in the distance.

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Fisheries - Decree Reporting and Permitting

- **Great Lakes Decree**
 - 50 commercial fishers: twice-monthly reports reviewed
 - 258 subsistence fishers: monthly reports
 - Grid 306 spring walleye permits and reporting to CORA
- **Inland Decree**
 - Inland walleye and steelhead permits issued with Wildlife and Law Enforcement
 - First lake sturgeon harvested by a Sault Tribe member in several years
- **Why it matters**
 - Accurate reporting is the Tribe's obligation and the basis for every harvest limit

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Fisheries - Assessments

- **Commercial fishery**
 - Winter samples from Lakes Michigan and Huron
 - May: six samples, three ride-alongs, 57 stomachs for a diet study
- **Laboratory**
 - More than 375 whitefish and about 100 walleye aged
 - Thin-section otolith aging adopted, the industry standard
 - Hatchery vs. wild origin determined for 150 walleye
- **Field**
 - 82 walleye collected at four sites to measure hatchery contribution
 - Biologists at the Technical Fisheries Committee and Modeling Subcommittee





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Fisheries - Atikameg

(Lake Whitefish) Initiative

- **Egg to fingerling**
 - 1.5 million eggs incubated; 909,000 fry hatched, survival over 90 percent
 - 450,000 fry stocked into ponds in May, double last year
 - 291,717 fingerlings stocked in June
- **Research**
 - Carp River telemetry data returned and under analysis
 - Larval drift netting to test translocation success
- **Funding**
 - The Nature Conservancy grant received; \$1.3 million GLRI proposal awarded

NRD - Ezhi-inawendiyang *Fisheries - Ogaa (Walleye) Hatchery*

- **Spawning and rearing**
 - 27 pairs; 5 to 5.5 million eggs
 - 2.3 million fry stocked to ponds; every target met
 - 901,995 summer fingerlings stocked, double last year
- **Next**
 - GLRI award: \$215,406 to enhance native walleye stocks
 - Hatchery rehabilitation and Odenaang pond proposals

2026 Stocking Location	Fingerlings
St. Martin Bay	300,933
Lower Cheboygan	152,415
Upper River	100,504
Sault Area	82,209
Lake Nicolet	78,565
Raber Bay	76,944
Lake George	75,600
Potagannissing Bay	34,825
Total	901,995



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Fisheries - Outreach and Non-local Beings

- **Youth and community**
 - Boat to School: about 60 sixth graders toured the Barbeau hatchery
 - Sturgeon in the Classroom: three schools released sturgeon into the Black River
 - Elder Meals: 235 pounds of walleye filets delivered
 - Booths at Family Fun Night, Engineers' Day, and the Homecoming Powwow
- **Non-local beings (aquatic invasive species)**
 - Spring early detection sampling in the St. Marys River; eDNA planned with USFWS
- **New: Adaptive Management of Great Lakes Giigoonyag**
 - GLRI project building best practices with member and fisher workshops

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Wildlife - Program Introduction

- **What the program does**
 - Population assessments of plants and wildlife
 - Harvest monitoring and stewardship under the 2007 Inland Decree and 2006 USFS MOU
- **Three initiatives plus harvest management**
 - Hemiboreal and Boreal Forests: ishkode, marten, ma'iingan, grouse, forestry
 - Coastal Resilience: wetlands, manoomin, marsh birds, mudpuppies, bats
 - Harvest reporting, lotteries, and regulation cycles
- **New in 2026**
 - Program Manager, Forest Ecologist, Permitting Specialist, seasonal technicians



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Wildlife - Harvest Reporting and Regulations

- **Reporting**
 - Thousands of 2025 harvest reports digitized into the annual Harvest Effort and Summary Report
 - Shared with the decree parties and posted on the Sault Tribe website
- **Lotteries and permits**
 - 2026 bear and elk lotteries drawn June 15
 - All five 2025 elk tags filled and reported
- **Regulations**
 - Tribal recommendations submitted on State deer regulations
 - Preparing for the 2026 - 2028 elk regulation cycle
- **Hunter education**
 - Hunt Safe Program in planning with Law Enforcement; youth proposal submitted to BIA



SAULT TRIBE HUNT SAFE COURSE



Sault Tribe Natural Resources Division and Law Enforcement staff are offering a hybrid Hunt Safe Certification Course, combining online learning with an in-person field day.

Participation is open to Sault Tribe Members 10 years of age or older. This course is being offered free of charge. Space is limited. Please register by August 3!

Course completion will result in a Sault Tribe issued Hunter Education Card that satisfies Tribal and State hunter education requirements.

Field days will be held from 9am-1pm.

Field day options:

Sault Ste. Marie: August 12 **FULL**

Manistique: August 25

Sault Ste. Marie: August 27

For registration forms, course availability, and questions, please contact Leane Kinsella at Lkinsella@saulttribe.net or call 906-632-5040.





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*Wildlife - Hemiboreal
Forest Initiative:
Ishkode (Fire)*

- **American marten**
 - Four marten now collared in the Ishkode Project area
 - Movement data will show how fire shapes habitat use
- **Fire and vegetation**
 - Laser scan data on the USGS network: public before-and-after views of burned plots
 - Staff progressing through BIA Red Card certification
- **Grouse and forests**
 - Sharp-tailed grouse lek surveys completed; spruce grouse GPS data downloaded
 - Forest Ecologist II hired to lead vegetation and forest inventory

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Wildlife - Ma'iingan (Gray Wolf) Assessment

- **Monitoring and modeling**
 - Camera detection histories built; draft abundance models for the Hiawatha East Zone
 - Monitoring methods reviewed to align with Anishinaabe values
- **Trapping and collaring**
 - Trapped May 31 - June 14 with a contracted veterinarian and MDNR coordination
 - No wolves captured; less activity than prior years; approach being adjusted
- **Policy**
 - Tracking the Endangered Species Act, the Pet and Livestock Protection Act, and Michigan HB 6008
 - Goal: understand impacts of changing wolf rules on treaty rights and on ma'iingan



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Wildlife - Coastal Resilience Initiative

- **St. Marys River restoration**
 - Invasive species treatment across 20 acres with Three Shores CISMA
 - Manoomin habitat model refined with Loyola University (\$61,008 subaward)
 - New Circle of Flight manoomin proposal submitted
- **Marsh birds and black terns**
 - Marsh bird surveys completed at 25 sites
 - Ten black tern platforms at Munuscong: 13 eggs, chicks hatched in June
 - Acoustic recorders at seven sites in manoomin beds with University of Michigan

Sault Tribe Wildlife Program



Zhiishiib
Bufflehead Duck



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Wildlife - Mudpuppies, Bats, and Species of Concern

- **Mudpuppy monitoring (with Fisheries)**
 - First Tribal mudpuppy survey: winter trapping at Munuscong Bay
 - Five artificial spawning structures monitored weekly
 - Citizen science campaign: members reporting sightings with photos and GPS
- **Bats**
 - Two White-nose Syndrome grants awarded (USFWS and Wildlife Management Institute)
 - Training and equipment for bat monitoring in 2026
- **Other**
 - Eagle and migratory bird repository process in development
 - Chronic wasting disease surveillance coordination





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*Consortium for
Cooperative Ecological
Resilience (CCER)*

- **What CCER is**
 - Created under Board Resolution 2023-192 to build research relationships with universities and federal agencies
 - Decision support, modeling, and data management for all NRD programs
- **Key partners**
 - U.S. Forest Service Northern Research Station (Joint Research Venture)
 - University of Michigan SEAS: graduate and postdoctoral support contracted this spring
 - MSU, NMU, Ohio University, Loyola, Lake Superior State
- **Capacity built**
 - Two Research Ecologist II positions filled in January
 - Structured data portal built in the Axiom Research Workspace

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CCER - Hemiboreal

Decision Support Project

- **The project**

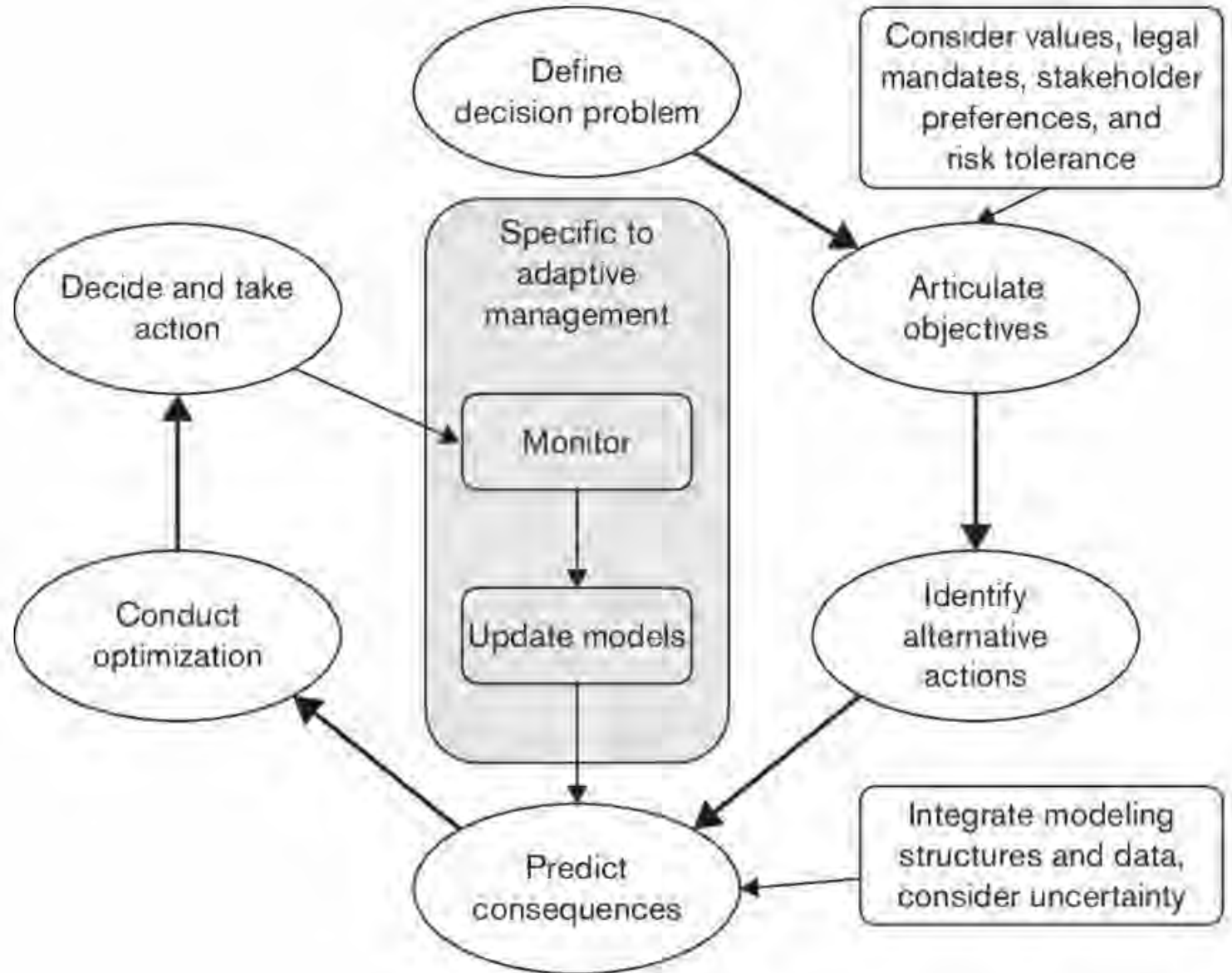
- Sault Tribe, CCER, USFS, and USFWS co-developing adaptive management frameworks for key ecosystems
- Structured decision making with Anishinaabe protocols built in from the start

- **January - June**

- Agency project teams onboarded in March
- First in-person workshop hosted in Sault Ste. Marie, April 28 - 30
- Outputs synthesized; decision tools chosen for the next phase

- **Next**

- Steering committee in late summer



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CCER - Great Lakes Manoomin Stewardship and Coordination Plan

- **Background**
 - BIA-funded, Sault Tribe-led regional manoomin plan for the Great Lakes basin
- **January - June**
 - Interviews with manoomin practitioners across the region
 - Virtual planning sessions with Tribal natural resource agencies
 - Co-facilitated the second Great Lakes Manoomin Gathering, Menominee Nation, May
 - Workshop notes synthesized and shared
- **Next**
 - Establish the standing planning team and begin the draft plan



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CCER - Applied Research and Conservation Finance

- **Applied research (Hiawatha East Zone)**
 - Marten collaring and abundance modeling with Wildlife
 - Draft wolf abundance models; multi-species camera models
 - Moose habitat and population proposal with Wildlife (Resolution 2026-44)
- **Conservation finance and land return**
 - Global Land Restoration Fund MOU; new master's cohort on land acquisition tools
 - First Nations Development Institute cohort site visit, July 14 - 15
 - Focus: hemiboreal ecosystems, including the Shingle Bay Preserve





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*Grant Partners and
Funding Agencies*

- BIA: Rights Protection, TPA, Tribal Youth Initiative, Hatchery Maintenance, Trust Land, Forestry, Circle of Flight
- BIA - Great Lakes Restoration Initiative
- EPA: Clean Air Act 103, Clean Water Act 106, GAP, Brownfields, Wetlands
- EGLE, NRCS, USFS, USFWS
- First Nations Development Institute, The Nature Conservancy, Wildlife Management Institute
- Sault Tribe Housing Authority and Utility Authority



NRD - Ezhi- inawendiyang *Budgets*

- **Revenues and expenditures**
 - NRD managed 50+ cost centers in the first half of 2026
 - 6% is Tribal Support
 - New awards on the horizon
- **Space costs**
 - Grant budgets being modified for the new buildings
- **Simplification**
 - Next EPA cycle: four grants consolidated into one Performance Partnership Grant

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Challenges and Opportunities

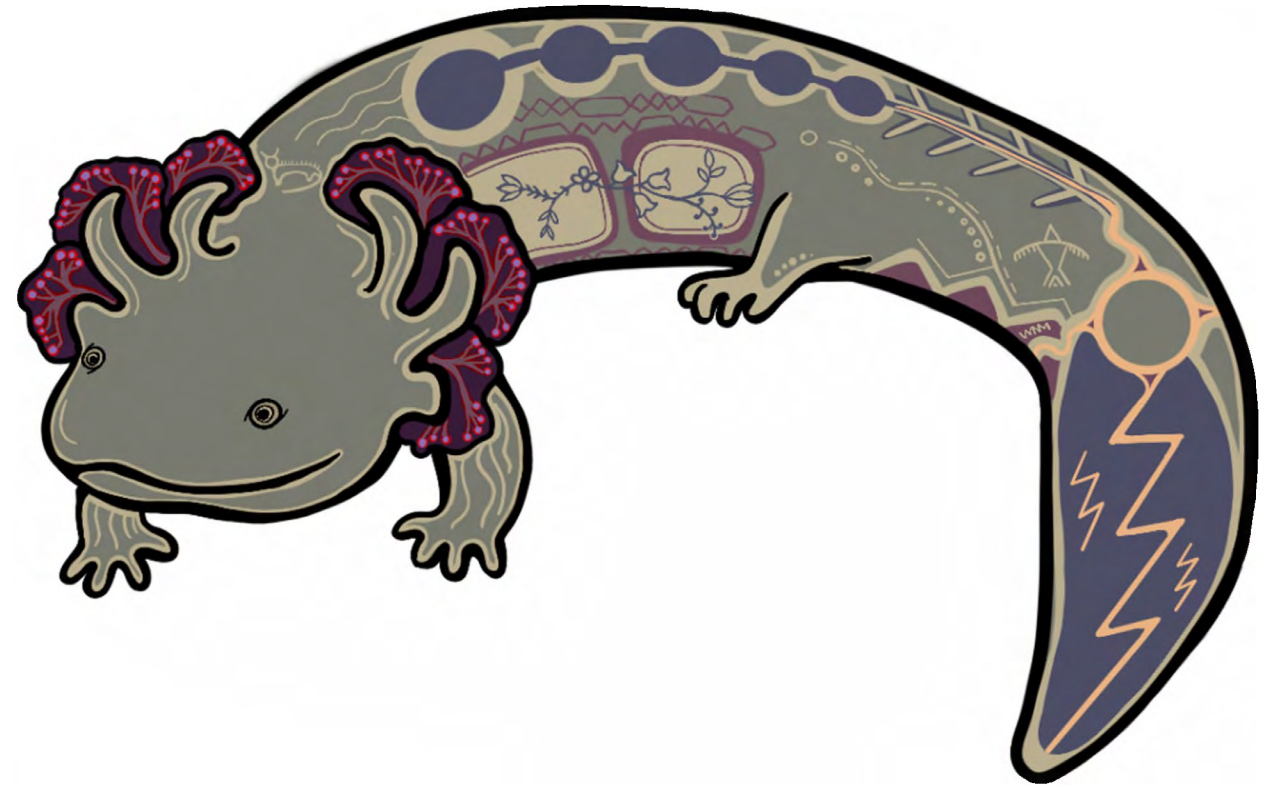
- **Opportunities**
 - New buildings; co-stewardship momentum; about 94% percent externally funded; new capacity
- **Challenges and responses**
 - Federal funding uncertainty: diversify, consolidate, grow only what we can sustain
 - Environmental Program vacancies: two scientist positions posted; interviews in July
 - Unfunded responsibilities for other Tribal entities: internal service contracts and a land framework
 - Administrative burden: consolidate awards; seek funding for an Assistant Director



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On the Horizon: July - December 2026

- **Division**
 - IPBN national meeting, November 2 - 6; Seney and TNC drafts to a Board workshop; open house; fill vacancies
- **Fisheries**
 - Summer Giigoonh survey of northern Lake Michigan; follow stocked whitefish in the Pine River; fall egg collection
- **Wildlife**
 - Elk orientation and fall seasons; manoomin seeding; black tern and mudpuppy monitoring; next marten and wolf efforts
- **CCER**
 - Hemiboreal steering committee; draft regional manoomin plan; conservation finance tools
- **Environmental**
 - Surface water plan approval; drinking water contracts; remaining EPA deficiencies



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Manoomin Seeding: Community Seeding 2026

Wild rice on the St. Marys River

- Fall 2025: 1,200 pounds seeded at six sites
- 2026 seed from Tribal harvesters in Wisconsin and Minnesota; manoomin sets the schedule

Community seeding event

- Wednesday, August 26, 5:30 PM, Munuscong State Wildlife Management Area
- Ceremony, then hands-on seeding from kayaks, canoes, or wading
- All community members welcome

Watch [@seventhgenerationprinciple](#) for more dates



WHAT TO BRING
We'll have some kayaks, canoes, and life jackets available, but supplies are limited — if you have your own, please bring them along!

Wear clothes you don't mind getting wet, and bring a change for the ride home.



WHAT TO EXPECT
A hands-on day on the water.

We'll open with a ceremony and some snacks, then get to work seeding from kayaks, canoes, or wading right in the water. Plan to get wet — and maybe pick up a unique smell. Manoomin has a scent all its own.



Manoomin restoration artwork by Nicole Malepor

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You Are Invited: NRD Open House, Tuesday, September 8

199 W. 3 Mile Road, beginning at noon

- Noon: coffee and refreshments
- 12:15 PM: opening, invocation, remarks from the Tribal Chairman
- 12:30 PM: community lunch; tours and staff visits
- 1:30 PM: first quarterly community presentation, Fisheries and Wildlife

Quarterly presentations

- Live on Zoom and recorded
- Next quarter: Environmental Program and CCER



SAULT STE. MARIE TRIBE OF CHIPPEWA INDIANS
NATURAL RESOURCES DIVISION
OPEN HOUSE
TUESDAY, SEPT. 8 - NOON

Tour Our New Facilities - Meet NRD Staff - Learn About Our Work

The Sault Tribe community is invited to join us for an afternoon of celebration as we show our appreciation for our two new buildings.

Noon: Event begins, coffee and light refreshments available

12:15 PM: Opening and Invocation

1:30-2:30 PM: Join us for the first installment of our new quarterly series highlighting the work NRD programs are doing in our community. This month we will have speakers from our **Fisheries and Wildlife Programs.**

**199 W. 3 Mile Rd.
Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783**

The flyer features a dark green background with white and yellow text. It includes two photographs of modern, dark-colored buildings with large windows. The top left corner has a circular logo with a colorful design. The bottom right corner features two circular logos: one with a white bird on a dark background and another with a colorful design. A small map of Michigan is located in the bottom left corner.



Facebook: Sault Tribe Seven Generations



Instagram: @seventhgenerationprinciple



Questions?

naturalresources@saulttribe.net