



Office of the County Administrator

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COUNTY STATEMENT CONCERNING WALZ-ELLISON DECISION REGARDING RESERVATION STATUS

The County and many of our non-Band residents living in the three townships of Kathio, South Harbor and Isle Harbor are disappointed and confused by Attorney General Keith Ellison's and Governor Tim Walz's decision to reverse the long-standing and bipartisan positions of former governors and attorneys general on the status of the Mille Lacs Reservation.

This decision to reclassify the three townships was made without meeting with the County or its citizens to discuss the reasons for their decision or to understand the possible impacts of this change. The County has extensive experience and expertise regarding this issue that directly and persuasively refutes their position. It's also worth noting that the County Board in early October 2019 sent a written meeting request to the Governor, but no meeting with the Governor has occurred. Just last month the Governor drove by Milaca on his way to the January 14, 2020 State of the Mille Lacs Band Address. Given these developments, the Governor's lack of response must be seen as deliberate and dismissive of the interests of his citizens.

The County remains confident that the longstanding position, taken by the Band, the Federal Government and the State, for over 100 years, that the 1855 Mille Lacs Reservation was disestablished will be the final decision by the federal courts. The decision by the Governor and the Attorney General does not change the legal status of the Reservation or negate the strength of our legal position. We are confident that it will not prevent a full and fair hearing of the issues before the federal courts.

The County urges all its citizens, residents and visitors – Band members and non-Band members – to continue to treat each other with respect and dignity and to “agree to disagree” on this issue even while focusing on the many, many things that bind us together as a community. We are confident that, whatever the outcome of the legal process in federal court, we will move forward as neighbors and friends.

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