



Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Indians

*Executive Branch of Tribal Government
Office of the Chief Executive*

Via E-mail

May 22, 2025

Sheldon Boyd, Speaker of the Assembly
Carolyn Beaulieu, District I Representative
Wendy Merrill, District II Representative
Harry Davis, District III Representative

Re: Nomination Letter for Kelly Applegate to Serve Subsequent Term as Commissioner of Natural Resources

Aaniin. It is with great respect and wholehearted enthusiasm that I nominate Kelly Applegate to serve an additional four-year term as the Commissioner of Natural Resources for the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. Kelly has shown an unwavering dedication to the land, waters, and people of our Band. His leadership has been rooted in both traditional Ojibwe values and innovative, effective practices that protect and restore the natural world around us.

Kelly has served the Mille Lacs Band with unwavering dedication through his work in the Department of Natural Resources since 2006. Upon his promotion to Director of Resource Management, he quickly demonstrated his ability and commitment to protecting the Band's natural resources. Now, after more than 18 years of service, he continues to play an instrumental role in guiding the Department of Natural Resources and ensuring that cultural values and traditional knowledge remain at the heart of the Band's environmental policy.

Highlights of Kelly's accomplishments as Commissioner of Natural Resources include:

- The creation of an electronic tracking system to document departmental work and impacts;
- The development of structured, transparent process for seasonal fishing declarations and permits;
- The nurturing of key partnerships with the State of Minnesota to protect walleye populations in Mille Lacs Lake;
- The expansion of hunting opportunities for Band members through collaboration with the Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission;
- Leading the Water Over Nickel initiative to safeguard our water from harmful mining operations, including the winning of a regional Emmy Award for his involvement in the Water Over Nickel short film; and
- Helping return the Cove property to the Mille Lacs Band, a deeply meaningful achievement for our people.

Letter from Chief Executive Virgil Wind to the Band Assembly

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Kelly is not only a capable leader and thoughtful policymaker; he is also a person of deep integrity and kindness. Kelly listens with humility, communicates with clarity, and leads with purpose. He honors the voices of our Elders, encourages community involvement, and defends the Band's treaty rights with unwavering commitment. Kelly's dedication to preserving and improving our natural resources for future generations is reflected in everything he does.

Moreover, Kelly has cultivated a strong sense of teamwork within the Department of Natural Resources and built respectful, productive relationships with tribal, state, and federal partners. His diplomatic approach, organizational skills, and focus on practical solutions have earned him widespread respect and trust.

During his next term, Kelly plans to continue work on a Land Management Plan; continue focusing on land acquisitions, fee-to-trust applications, and the building of relationships with local counties; continue protection of Mille Lacs Band treaty rights; and continue development of tribal youth to practice and understand their treaty rights. Kelly also plans to focus on the changing climate and determine how the Band can become a climate resiliency leader. Finally, Kelly intends to educate Band members about enrollment issues and work with the Band's Enrollments Department to fully understand enrollment issues at the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe level.

Kelly Applegate truly embodies what it means to be a leader. He works not for recognition, but out of a deep love for our people and the land we hold sacred. I fully support his continued service as Commissioner of Natural Resources and am confident that he will keep leading with wisdom, vision, and heart.

Miigwech for your time and consideration. I look forward to a swift and effective confirmation process.



Virgil Wind
Chief Executive

CC:

Kelly Applegate, Commissioner of Natural Resources
Caleb Dogeagle, Solicitor General
Jared Miller, Legislative Counsel
Danielle Smith, Parliamentarian / Clerk of the Assembly

Enclosure:

Kelly Applegate's Resume