

# Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa

## Reservation Business Committee

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### FDL Builds Electric Vehicle Charging Stations and Upgrades to Cleaner Technologies Through Volkswagen Settlement

**Fond du Lac Lake Superior Chippewa, MN, June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021** – As part of its commitment to being a good steward of land, air and water, Fond du Lac (FDL) is leveraging funding from the Volkswagen emissions settlement to build electric vehicle charging stations and replace diesel vehicles with cleaner technologies.

A \$2.8 billion Mitigation Trust Agreement was created from the \$14.7 billion series of settlements Volkswagen entered into after the Environmental Protection Agency's allegations of Clean Air Act violations six years ago. The trust, administered by Wilmington Trust, was developed to offset excess emissions caused by Volkswagen's vehicles, some of which might have emitted up to 30 to 40 times more pollution than allowed by law.

All 50 states, Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, and federally recognized Indian tribes can apply to access the trust's funds to implement mitigation activities. Funding eligibility depends on several factors, including the number of registered affected Volkswagen vehicles within the boundaries of the applying entity. A separate \$55 million was earmarked in a trust called "Volkswagen Diesel Emissions Environmental Mitigation Trust for Indian Tribe Beneficiaries," which allows tribal nations to also access mitigation funding directly.

To date, FDL has been able to secure approximately \$1.3 million from the Volkswagen Diesel Emissions Environmental Mitigation Trust to upgrade two plow trucks, three dump trucks, a septic pump truck and propane truck, in addition to building three electric vehicle charging stations.

Two of the three charging stations have already been built. One is located at the Black Bear Casino and Resort's primary parking lot. The other is near the Tribal Center, the facility from which the Band administers its government executive functions. The third charging station is planned for the Min No Aya Win Clinic, the Band's central health institute from which it has been performing essential COVID-19 response efforts during the pandemic along with providing health services unrelated to the pandemic.

"A lot goes into planning where to put these charging stations," says Joy Wiecks, an Air Coordinator at FDL. "There has been a large increase in demand for electric vehicles recently and the feasibility of them becoming the new standard will depend on our ability as a country and planet to create the supporting infrastructure. These charging stations were strategically placed to help fill a gap in this busy transit corridor."

The Band envisions these incremental changes as part of a comprehensive approach to doing its part to address climate change. In 2007, FDL adopted the Kyoto Protocol and



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Tribal Enterprises  
**Terry Savage**

implemented strategies to reduce fossil fuels by 50 percent, while decreasing carbon emissions by 80 percent, with the ultimate goal to be carbon neutral in the near future.

“Making use of innovative technology isn’t just good for business, it honors our people’s way of life,” says Terry Savage, Executive Director of Tribal Enterprises. “We know that by being on the forefront of cleaner energy implementation, we can better serve our community, customers and partners. These charging stations send a clear message to anyone coming to FDL that we support ushering in a new era of cleaner infrastructure. We’re doing our part to make electric vehicles a feasible option to everyday consumers.”

In addition to utilizing direct funding from the Volkswagen settlement, FDL also partners with state, federal and municipal agencies to collaborate on broader mitigation projects.

<Picture attached: Fond du Lac Band member Dan Danielson charging his electric vehicle at one of the three charging stations that were installed on the Reservation.>

### **About Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa**

The Fond du Lac Band (Nagaajiwanaang; where the water stops) is one of six Chippewa Indian Bands that make up the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe. The Fond du Lac Reservation was established by the La Pointe Treaty of 1854. Archaeologists, however, maintain that ancestors of the present-day Chippewa (Ojibwe) have resided in the Great Lakes areas since 800 A.D. The Band includes 4,200 members.

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