

July 8, 2026

The White Sand Lake Association today confirms that the Association has filed an action in the United States District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin asking a federal court to resolve a narrow but consequential question of federal law: whether a tribal government may regulate the activities of non-members on privately owned, fee-simple land and on navigable waters in the state of Wisconsin.

At its core, this is a legal question about the limits of jurisdiction — and that is a question federal courts are uniquely positioned to answer. The Association has great respect for the Lac du Flambeau Band and for tribal sovereignty. This filing is not a challenge to the Tribe's authority over its own lands and members. It asks only that a federal court determine where, under federal law, the boundaries of that authority lie.

The Association emphasized that it exhausted every reasonable avenue to resolve the dispute cooperatively before turning to federal court. After invasive Eurasian water-milfoil was discovered in White Sand Lake in 2023, the Tribe closed the only public boat landing. With no assured access to the lake, the Association sought to build a landing on privately owned, fee-simple land. Approvals from all relevant federal, state and county authorities were received. Legal counsel advised that Tribal approval was not needed. The Association offered financial support for remediation, purchased materials to help suppress the milfoil's spread, organized volunteer labor, and repeatedly sought to coordinate with the Tribe's Natural Resources Department.

In coordination with outside Counsel, the Association did not reach this decision lightly nor quickly. Last year the Tribe sued the Association and a lakeside property owner seeking to fine the Association for clearing a driveway on private property and to force the closure of the launch. The Association first asked the tribal court to dismiss the claim based upon applicable federal law. After the Tribe rejected this request, the Association was compelled to file its action in federal court to settle the question of federal law.

Founded in 2004, the White Sand Lake Association is a volunteer organization of property owners whose mission is to protect and preserve White Sand Lake. Many of its members have cared for the lake for generations. The Association conducts water-quality monitoring, ran the Clean Boats/Clean Water inspection program to prevent the spread of invasive species, supports shoreline and habitat protection, and sponsors environmental education on and around the lake.

No state, county, or federal agency — including the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency — has alleged that the Association's conduct harmed the lake or violated environmental law.

Because the matter is in active litigation, the Association's comments are necessarily limited. The Association will not discuss the specifics of the pending proceedings beyond the filings themselves, which are matters of public record.