



# HO-CHUNK NATION

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Concerns about Air Quality Impacts and Human Health Remain After Release of Industrial Sand Mining Health Impact Assessment**

BLACK RIVER FALLS, WI – The Institute for Wisconsin’s Health recently released a Health Impact Assessment of the industrial sand mining industry in western Wisconsin that fails to provide an accurate and complete analysis of the health threats posed by this emerging industry.

Similar to other citizens all over western Wisconsin, members of the Nation are experiencing negative impacts from the industrial sand mining industry first-hand, whether it is dust in their homes, polluted water on their lands, or destruction of sacred lands. Thus, as a Level 1 Partner for the report and a stakeholder with a significant interest in protecting public health from industrial pollution, the Nation feels that it is necessary to weigh in on the topic at this time.

While the Nation commends the Institute for Wisconsin’s Health for taking the initiative to take on the monumental, and extremely important, task of developing a report on the health impacts of this emerging industry, we are disappointed with the conclusions drawn in the report, particularly in the section on air quality impacts, and we believe a more robust assessment of the air quality impacts is required before such conclusions can be drawn. The Nation does not believe it is appropriate nor sufficient for the authors of the report to rely on a cursory review of regional Wisconsin DNR monitoring data and industry-produced data from a handful of industrial sand operations in Wisconsin and Minnesota to make conclusions about the industrial sand mining industry as a whole.

Although the Institute for Wisconsin’s Health was forthcoming about the possible constraints and limitations of a Health Impact Assessment, the limited scope of the assessment of air quality impacts as a whole and the incomplete and inaccurate nature of the analysis of existing data and research related to particulate matter emissions indicates that a project of this magnitude and complexity may have been somewhat outside of the capabilities and expertise of the Institute.

The report includes minimal discussion about fine particulate matter (or PM<sub>2.5</sub>), which likely presents the biggest threat from industrial sand mining operations. The science is settled that fine particulate matter causes serious, sometimes life-threatening health problems. Exposure to the fine dust exacerbates asthma, and can lead to serious cardiovascular and respiratory illness. Occurrences of such negative health impacts have already begun to be reported by Wisconsin citizens living in close proximity to industrial sand mining operations.

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It is also known that industrial sand mines emit PM2.5 into the ambient air. Tests at these facilities confirm that these fine particles make up a part of, and sometimes all of, the dust that comes from emissions stacks. Additionally, the Journal of Environmental Health recently published a study of air quality monitoring near industrial sand operations in Wisconsin, which showed elevated levels of PM2.5 in the ambient air around these facilities. However, the report does not include this recent academic research on air quality around industrial sand facilities nor a comprehensive discussion about the potential health impacts of PM2.5 emissions from these facilities; this is despite the fact that one of the Nation's recommendations was to include more independent scientific studies that were not produced by industry actors.

The report's less than sufficient analysis of PM2.5 emissions, and conclusions about air quality impacts, which are based solely on industry-produced data, are critical shortcomings because of the significant impact this emerging industry is having on western Wisconsin and its citizens. The Nation, along with other tribes in the state, continues to be concerned about the era of deregulation within the Wisconsin DNR and is justifiably concerned that this report has the potential to be used as a tool to further the deregulation of the industrial sand mining industry.

Despite disagreeing with some of the conclusions found in the report, the Nation continues to believe that the Institute for Wisconsin's Health is a good organization and partner and hopes to be able to work closely with the Institute to address issues related to the industrial sand mining industry moving forward.

For more information, please contact Lynette LeGarde at (715) 284-9343 or email at [Lynette.LeGarde@ho-chunk.com](mailto:Lynette.LeGarde@ho-chunk.com).

*The Ho-Chunk Nation* is a sovereign nation and was federally recognized in 1963. The Ho-Chunk Nation employs more than 3,400 employees throughout the state of Wisconsin, Minnesota and Illinois. The Ho-Chunk Nation owns and operates Ho-Chunk Gaming Black River Falls, Ho-Chunk Gaming Tomah, Ho-Chunk Gaming Nekoosa, Ho-Chunk Gaming Wittenberg, Ho-Chunk Gaming Wisconsin Dells and Ho-Chunk Gaming Madison.

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