

(The following letter was sent to Wisconsin Chippewa Chairmen from the Wisconsin Delegation and is indicative of political pressure exerted on the tribes to diminish the exercise of their rights.)

We are writing to express our deep concern regarding what we understand to be tribal intentions to engage in a heavy harvest of walleye from up to 254 lakes in northern Wisconsin.

We fully understand that courts have determined that the tribes have certain rights with regard to hunting and fishing in the ceded territory, but we are greatly concerned that the tribes exercise those rights in a manner that does not create a danger to the livelihood of anyone else, or unfairly impinge on the ability of others to also use the resource in a given area.

The court has provided ample authority for the tribes to exercise their court-determined rights in a manner that would not in fact shut down lakes in the ceded territories to non-tribal fishing. We urge the tribes to be sensitive enough to exercise restraint sufficient to prevent individual lakes from being limited only to "catch and release" fishing for other people who also have a right to share the resource — especially when, as we understand it, many of the lakes would not even have walleye if it were not for state stocking programs financed by license revenue. It is our understanding that some tribes appear to be exhibiting such restraint in their planning, but that others may not be.

The tribes have a legal right to exercise rights defined for them by the courts. But, common decency and fairness require that those rights be exercised in a manner which does not eliminate the rights of others to share in the resource or threaten the livelihood of resort owners on individual lakes because of the refusal to share that resource on any given lake.

Obviously, if the tribes choose, they can legally exercise these rights without exhibiting due sensitivity to the needs of other groups. But, the tribes will then have to appreciate that if they do engage in tribal activities that needlessly inflame the situation and needlessly abuse the rights of other groups to share in the resource, then members of the congressional delegation will certainly have to take into account the tribes' lack of cooperation and their lack of sensitivity in assessing tribal requests for federal grants and projects.

It is important to all of Wisconsin that tribal members, non-tribal fishermen and government officials all approach this issue in a cooperative, balanced and restrained manner.

The congressional delegation is committed to the proposition that all citizens must conduct themselves in a manner which does not cause undue hardship to other groups and parties. Common sense as well as common fairness dictates that. The delegation will be paying very close attention to which tribes demonstrate the sensitivity required in this situation and which tribes don't.

Sincerely,

A collection of handwritten signatures arranged in two columns. The left column contains signatures for James J. Connelley, Herb Kohl, Jim Ahearn, Pat Roth, Tim Woady, and James D. Keigha. The right column contains signatures for Phil Knutson, Jim Keenan, Tom Petri, Stan G. Green, and Bob Kesteven.