

## **FBRF Comments to Wisconsin Tribal Repatriations Meeting**

Lac du Flambeau, WI

July 24, 2016

Good Morning.

Thank you Mr. Quackenbush for this opportunity to speak with you about a significant part of the the cultural heritage resting in Black River specifically on land that is proposed to be a Kohler golf course and thank you all for allowing FBRF to be here today.

I am honored to speak to you about Friends of the Black River Forest's work to preserve our ecological and cultural resources on the shore of Lake Michigan adjacent to Kohler Andrae Park.

- We hope to gain your support in alerting the Nations and the public to information on the sacredness of this site and our moral imperative as stewards of the earth to preserve it.
- We ask you to embrace this entire piece of land as the birthplace of original peoples, containing evidence of thousands of years of continuous habitation.
- We ask you to use your voice and influence to bear on the Kohler Company to preserve this significant cultural site which has been recommended for the National Registry of Historic Places.

When we heard of the proposal to bulldoze 247 acres of this parcel to create a championship golf course many were horrified. Their families have lived here for generations. The first thing said was "this is sacred land." However we were immediately fearful because we knew Kohler's power in using the state, Sheboygan County and small towns to get what it wants. So we organized to elect people to our Town board who would hold Kohler to the law. We have been met with legions of Kohler lawyers and a public relations team that presents this desecration of sacred land and the destruction of our resources as a positive for our town, and if not our town, the state. While touting its economic benefits the Kohler Company refuses to release the data used to arrive at their conclusions.

Before we received the Kohler-commissioned archeological review we knew:

- The Black River area in Sheboygan County was inhabited by very early peoples. Residents have found artifacts for years spread throughout Black River.
- We are familiar with Indian Mound Park ¼ mile away from the Kohler land which many fought to preserve because of the effigy mounds.
- We know that bulldozing 247 acres and deforesting at least 60% will forever alter the hydrology of the land, affecting our water bodies, destroying a major migratory bird route, and devastate animal habitat shared with the park. The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology has written the DNR regarding the serious impact of destroying this important bird area. The Wisconsin Wetland Society wrote the DNR about the serious impacts to the ecosystem from destroying the wetlands which are highly functional. Quentin Carpenter an evaluator of Economic Impact Reports at UW-Madison gives the Kohler company report a D- for its incompleteness and lack of honesty regarding serious environmental impacts.
- The dunes Kohler plans on moving or covering are rare, taking 5000 years to form and are protected in Kenosha and Door County. The company says the course will affect only 5 acres of wetlands. We know that deforesting a wetland forest exposes many other acres to the sun.

Now we find that this land is an extraordinary resting place for the prehistoric sacred remnants of original people in this area. (See archaeological review).

We have retained an attorney who monitors the DNR in its preferential treatment of the Kohler Company. At least 36 DNR staff worked for the Kohler Company in 2015 when no application has yet

been filed by the Company. We keep in contact with the USACE, will be monitoring the Sheboygan County Board and legislators who have supported bills leading to further degradation of our resources.

The DNR has withheld documents from us for over a year. The ones we have, show the agency complicit with upper management's desire to make things work for the Company.

We were not prepared for dealing with a company who touts being a steward of the environment and proves otherwise.

This is what we have discovered.

- The Kohler Company has a long history of ignoring regulations and breaking agreements. Every condition of the town of Mosel's Conditional use permit was violated by the Kohler Company in the building of Whistling Straits.
- Herbert Kohler, Jr. shook hands with Mr. Summers of Mosel agreeing not to block the family's view of Lake Michigan. An 800 foot berm was built.
- In the Lake Floras area of Oregon criminal trespass was committed in the State Park with 16 pits dug destroying native flora.
- The bill was sent to Jay Hoekstra of Kohler.
- After an agreement with the DNR to enter their land using State land only for surveying, the Company entered on May 10 with chain saws, skidsters and brush mowers to ready the property for the course designer's visit. Our local lore confirmed by long time residents tells the story of Kohler's River Trails subdivision construction in which human remains near the north burial mound were put in plastic bags and disposed of so as not to stop the project.
- The Kohler Company has sued every town it goes into. It has reneged on an agreement with our town of Wilson to fund an environmental consultant unless we use the one it wants.

Now we read that the Company will just 'work around' 195 acres on which human remains may lie along with thousands of other artifacts beyond the 25,000 discovered. The Kohler Company cannot be trusted.

Our state resources have been violated enough with mining, fracking, hi-capacity wells. All of this began with one permit. We have an opportunity to take a stand before this culturally significant site is covered up by a golf course. We have an opportunity to say "no more" to greed and corruption which have polluted our waters and ruined our land. Saying no will send a resounding message that the violation must stop and it will stop at this sacred site. This is one of the last pristine pieces of land on the shore of Lake Michigan. No more digging, no more sacrilege. We must use what has been found to honor these early people the ancestors of Nations.

Join us in bringing the pressure of public opinion on the Kohler Company to be the steward of the environment it claims to be. Surely the Kohler Company does not need another golf course at the expense of our ecological and cultural heritage.

Thank you for our time and attention.  
Friends of the Black River Forest