

## Diane Stuart

The MPCA's plan to permit the requests of two taconite mining companies to increase sulfate pollution in northern Minnesota streams and rivers, the BWCA, and the Lake Superior watershed is ironic given its stated reason for existence: MN "Pollution Control" Agency. The possible environmental risks of authorizing a policy that increases the natural sulfate levels in these waters include:

1. Harm to wild rice (sulfate added to water and sediment high in iron form iron sulfide plaques on wild rice roots and impair seed production - decreasing the availability of rice for food)
2. Increased mercury contamination of fish - also affecting the food chain
3. Adverse consequences in the future that we are not even aware of now

This appears to be a treacherous policy to pursue in light of the world-wide environmental calamities the world is facing: global warming; drought and famine; air pollution; and decreasing freshwater supply in aquifers and lakes, to name but a few. We need to maintain our clean water in MN and promote and protect diverse food production sources. Sound environmental policy needs to be based on human needs and not for the bottom line of commercial mining concerns.

Additionally, wild rice is not only a food source for the Anishinaabe; it is of central cultural significance to them as well. The State of Minnesota needs to honor prior agreements with Native Americans and be respectful of their history, culture, and beliefs.