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Minnesota has nearly 2,400 waters that produce wild rice and 35 of those waters are currently impaired, or polluted, by sulfate. Wild rice plant biology and sulfur biogeochemistry are complex. Significant natural variability in hydrology and other features of aquatic environments that support wild rice prevents the MPCA from prescribing a fixed, step-by-step approach to developing a site-specific standard that would suffice in all circumstances.

The MPCA framework provides more clarity for the public, facilities, and tribal nations regarding the protection of wild rice. It defines what constitutes protection of the wild rice beneficial use, establishes expectations for facilities requesting and agency staff reviewing a site-specific standard application, and identifies consistent data collection and informational needs used to review a thorough site-specific sulfate standard application. The ultimate expectation is that the MPCA will require a demonstration that the waterbody has and will maintain a wild rice population that is self-sustaining and productive.