

## Alex Comb

Wild rice grows and flourishes in a fairly small growing area. I don't think it's well known exactly why it grows in one area and not another. It is known that water levels affect growth within its natural growing area and that sulfate levels are also a determining factor.

Why doesn't it grow in New England, which seems to have a similar environment to northern Minnesota? I've no idea. There has to be reasons. What we all know is that it does grow and historically has grown in a broad area of northern Minnesota. It is an important food source for people and I suspect wild life and has a sacred role to play for native people who have depended on it for thousands of years.

The mandated level of sulfate pollution at 10 parts per million was determined by scientific study. No studies have been shown to suggest this is too low a threshold. That waterways which have been allowed to exceed this level have been known to have impaired growth of wild rice. To suggest that area not now growing wild rice or growing it sub-standardly, should no longer be protected by that level of sulfate pollution seems irresponsible. If levels are too high now in places, they should be identified and measures taken to reduce those levels, not abandon the protection.

We need to protect our waters for wild rice and also for other forms of life and preserve the quality of our drinking water. We live in a special place - let's keep it that way.