

January 4, 2024

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)
c/o Leya Charles
520 Lafayette Road
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear MPCA:

The purpose of this letter is to express my support of MPCA's efforts to identify 2,395 wild rice producing waters and add 20 new waterbodies to the list of wild rice waters impaired due to sulfate. It is a great start, but I believe MPCA should also add Dark Lake, a wild rice lake in the Rainy River watershed contaminated by mining pollution, to the list of wild rice waters impaired due to sulfate.

Further, MPCA's current Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) plan to study and reduce pollutants in impaired waters is too weak to protect human health, ecosystems, and the exercise of treaty-reserved rights from sulfate impairment of wild rice and toxic mercury contamination of fish. **MPCA should move quickly to:**

- **Restore wild rice waters impaired due to sulfate**

The most efficient and common sense way to restore these waters is to set and enforce sulfate discharge limits in mining National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits to reduce sulfate and achieve compliance with Minnesota's wild rice sulfate standard.

MPCA should:

- a) Determine how much sulfate needs to be reduced for each waterbody impaired by mining pollution to comply with Minnesota's sulfate standard,
- b) Write mining permits with stringent sulfate limits, and
- c) Enforce those permits. This new effort by MPCA would cut the number of Minnesota wild rice impaired waters approximately by half.

- **Restore mercury impaired waters and fish**

MPCA should:

- a) Recognize how sulfate pollution exacerbates the effects of mercury deposited from the air in its studies and plans to restore mercury impaired waters, and
- b) Set firm deadlines to analyze watersheds and establish regulatory controls that reduce mercury to safe levels.

Thank you for your work to identify the wild rice producing waters and add new waterbodies to the list of wild rice waters. Please continue this positive approach by adding Dark Lake to the list, and to strengthen the TMDL plan.

Respectfully and Sincerely,

Annette Jewell-Ceder