

Christopher Loch

I support 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. 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. 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. 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.