

Judith Grant

I support the MPCA's efforts to identify wild rice producing waters and add new water bodies to the list of wild rice waters impaired due to sulfate. However, the 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.

The MPCA's current Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) plan to study and reduce pollutants in impaired waters is all well and good; however, it will not protect human health, ecosystems, and the exercise of treaty-reserved rights from sulfate impairment of wild rice and mercury contamination of fish. Therefore, it is important that the MPCA move to restore wild rice waters impaired due to sulfate pollution. How to do this? The MPCA should: 1) determine how much sulfate needs to be reduced for each waterbody impaired by mining pollution to comply with Minnesota's sulfate standard, 2) write mining permits with stringent sulfate limits, and 3) enforce those permits. This effort could drastically cut the number of Minnesota wild rice impaired waters.

The MPCA should also recognize how sulfate pollution exacerbates the effects of mercury deposited from the air in its studies and plans to restore mercury impaired waters, and set firm deadlines to analyze watersheds and establish regulatory controls that reduce mercury to safe levels.