

Margot Monson

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Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
520 Lafayette Road No
St Paul, MN 55155-4194

RE: Minnesota's Draft 2024 Impaired Waters List

Commissioner:

Due to the fact that there have been decades of impairment of many lakes, rivers, and streams in MN, it is well past time to actively work for the restoration of Minnesota's waters.

Wild rice grows in nearly 2400 different waters in MN and is an important staple in the diets of indigenous people. It is also critical to the culture and economy of our indigenous residents. Due to the accumulation of sulfates present from mining operations, much of the natural wild rice habitat has been seriously degraded. This information has been known for decades but nothing has been done to officially and scientifically document these wild rice producing waters as impaired because of pressures from corporate agriculture, coal and mining interests. Now that the US EPA has sited the MPCA for failure to list the impairments, the MPCA must act.

I believe the necessary steps that need to be taken are the following:

1. Officially document all of the 2395 waters that produce wild rice.
2. Document the 55 Minnesota wild rice waters that are known to be impaired due to sulfates, including Dark Lake, a wild rice producing lake in the Rainy River watershed contaminated from mining pollution.
3. Make a formal commitment to establish sulfate limits no greater than 10 mg/L to restore all of the impaired waters. This means that the sulfate concentrations must be determined for each impaired water body and mining permits must be written and enforced with stringent sulfate limits.
4. Develop a specific plan for reducing mercury contamination of waters that contain fish. Set firm deadlines to analyze the watersheds and establish regulatory controls because of the dangers to human health from eating mercury contaminated fish. This plan must require annual reports available to the public.

Thank you for your consideration.

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