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I support MPCA's efforts to identify 2,395 wild rice producing waters & 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. Outstanding issues that are NOT yet addressed: MPCA must control sulfate pollution, complete Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) studies, and commit to restore sulfate and mercury impaired waters in Minnesota. MPCA has no commitment to limit sulfate loads and restore Minnesota wild rice waters impaired due to sulfate by any date. MPCA must update taconite permits, add sulfate limits, and penalize violations of permits that have sulfate limits. These actions alone could restore half of Minnesota's 55 wild rice waters listed as impaired due to sulfate pollution. MPCA has planned no individual TMDL studies of 75 percent of Minnesota waterbodies impaired by excessive mercury. In fact, they only plan to start TMDL studies for 4 percent of Minnesota mercury impaired waters. MPCA must accept the science that sulfate, among other factors, exacerbates mercury contamination from air emissions and complete individual and rigorous mercury TMDL studies that protect fish, public health, and the exercise of treaty-reserved rights.

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.

I am puzzled to not see Lake Hiawatha listed as it is badly impaired. Also I cannot understand why the immense trash from soiled diapers to syringes and all manner of street debris washed into her is not measured as part of TMDL. Trash is IS a pollutant as surely as chloride and various nutrients. Water Legacy helped clue me in to this recent review and the current issues that are still not being addressed. I am sorry that I was only at the last minute aware of this recent opportunity to comment and thus unable to encourage the many others I know that care (in a timely fashion) before the deadline today. I do thank you for taking my comments.