

Scott Russell

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. The draft 2024 Impaired Waters List is a good start. There are some important additions needed.

Thank you for identifying 2,395 wild rice producing waters, and adding 20 wild rice lakes. I would ask that you add Dark Lake, just west of the MinnTac mine. The mine has operate since the 1990s (oldest data I could find) and the whole time has been out of compliance with the wild rice rule with little to no consequences. The company has promised changes and largely failed to comply with them with little to no consequences. The MPCA has acknowledged as much in your effort to update MinnTac's permit.

From my reading of MinnTac's history, the MPCA has bent over backwards to get it into compliance, with little success. You have not imposed significant sanctions. U.S. Steel is playing you, and you know it. It drags things out, making promises it doesn't plan to keep. Without significant sanctions, the company will never comply. I'm guessing this is true for other mining operations. Make sure all mining operations have specific sulfate limits in their permits and enforce those limits.

Please acknowledge that sulfate pollution, among other factors, increases toxic mercury contamination of fish. MPCA's St. Louis River mercury load, for example, must reflect this science. A lot of work and money has gone into cleaning up the St. Louis River, this would be another step in the right direction. This is a critical issue for everyone, but particularly for Ojibwe people who depend on fish as a food source.

MPCA must validate its decades-old assumption that reducing the mercury in air pollution alone will make Minnesota fish safe in 75 percent of mercury impaired waters by 2025. MPCA must reassess mercury in fish, especially in waterbodies threatened by mining and last tested in 1998.

Please live up to your mission statement to protect and improve the environment and human health.