

Laura Eustice

As a lifelong Minnesotan who enjoys angling, foraging and recreation on our waters, I recognize the critical importance of protecting our most valuable resources: our waters, our wildlife and biodiversity, and the health of our people.

I am writing to voice my support for both the MPCA's identification of 2,395 wild rice producing waters and the addition of 20 wild rice producing waters impaired due to sulfates exceeding MN standards. As 30 year resident of the Iron Range, I would also like to see Dark Lake added to MN's 2024 draft Impaired Waters List. In addition, I believe the MPCA should:

A) Move to RESTORE, not just list, wild rice waters impaired due to sulfates;

B) Move quickly to determine sulfate load reductions and enact long-overdue regulations on mining pollution to restore wild rice waters. The most efficient and common sense way to restore these waters is to set and enforce sulfate discharge limits in mining National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits to reduce sulfate and achieve compliance with Minnesota's wild rice sulfate standard;

C) Admit that sulfates exacerbate mercury contamination as Peer-reviewed science establishes that sulfate pollution and alteration of wetland hydrology exacerbates the effects of air deposition of mercury. TMDL studies and plans to restore mercury impaired waters must all consider the effects of sulfate pollution and other aggravating factors that increase mercury release from wetlands and sediments and mercury methylation.

Thank you.