

Molly Wick

Please deny U.S. Steel's request for a variance from the sulfate water quality standard for waters used for the production of wild rice. As a PhD Water resources social-ecological scientist, I understand and have collected data on how Manoomin is a culturally and ecologically important species. Few places in the world have a food source like manoomin growing right in our rice lakes. The standard exists to protect it because of this immense importance. In addition the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa and other sovereign native nations in Minnesota have treaty rights to traditional lifeway's including foraging wild rice in the ceded territory, which cannot be exercised if rice is degraded or extirpated due to high sulfate runoff. It is the responsibility of the state and federal government to ensure Band members can exercise these rights which were reaffirmed on treaties signed by both the US and these sovereign Native Nations. Furthermore all residents of Minnesota lose opportunities to connect with and harvest manoomin if it is degraded or lost. What is the point of having a water quality standard if we do not choose to enforce it and make industry meet the standard? Manoomin in Northern Minnesota is too important to risk further declines.

Thank you,
Molly Wick