

Marco Good

Comments for KeeTac MPCA hearing

Thank you for the chance to comment on your proposed wastewater variance for the expanded operations at KeeTac.

I was disappointed when I attended your public meeting on Sept 3 not to be able to deliver these comments orally. It seemed to me that EVERY local and state government representative who attended got to speak, when they have many other chances to speak publicly in St. Paul and in their districts and communities. Like representatives of the unions and mining contractors, they are paid to represent corporate interests. Most of us who oppose this pollution are unpaid. I gave a whole day and traveled for eight hours to attend this meeting.

It always frustrates me when the workers and their corporate masters and government representatives blame those of us who care for the environment for the short term nature of their employment.

The boom and bust economy of the profiteers is responsible for their tenuous employment, not us.

Please pardon my primary concern, which is for the Water, the Earth, and the natural world, over the short-lived business of plundering resources and leaving devastation in its wake. It is not my intention to denigrate the concerns of workers in the industry.

When I first moved to Greaney, just a few miles North of Keewatin fifty years ago, I learned from a wonderful man, an Anishinabe Elder named Arnold Sweet, how to pick and process Manoomin, our sacred gift known as Wild Rice.

At just this time of year, we would be out in the sunshine for a few weeks gathering the multicolored grains as they ripened, slowly gliding across the flat-calm waters of the Vermillion River or Big Rice Lake, just north of here. The rhythmic swish, swish of the knocking sticks whispered as our canoe rocked gently side to side while the life-giving carpet of rice beards slowly covered the bottom of the boat. Those were some of the best days of my life.

It is no mystery why there is no rice today in the Rice River just to the North of where we are, downstream from MinnTac, which has been violating the scientifically established 10mg/l. standard by at least 40 times for at least 40 years.

I am deeply saddened that the MPCA has never in all those years been allowed to enforce that peer-reviewed standard, which is based on solid meticulous research by Dr. John Pastor and others at UMD. That standard has been ignored by the mining industry and the politicians who represent them, not us, just as the executive outlaws in power in Washington do today with every judicial mandate they have been given.

There is no viable technology that can undo this ongoing damage to our Waters and our Life. Expanding operations without addressing this problem of catastrophic sulfuric waste at the top of the watershed of North America will only kill more Manoomin, and everything else that needs clean water to live.

Some day I hope we will have a government that represents the people and the natural world we depend on for our survival as much as they represent extractive industrial corporations.