

Lauren Bilek

I am a Minnesotan who cares about the religious liberties of all Minnesotans.

Wild rice is sacred to the Anishinaabe, and Wild rice is central to the cultural and spiritual traditions of our Indigenous relatives here in Minnesota. Just as Minnesota law protects other people's cultural and worship practices from degradation by mining, it is important to protect Indigenous spiritual practices from mining. For example, churches and cemeteries are not sacred to all Minnesotans, but state law blocks surface mining within 500 feet of a church or 100 feet of a cemetery because they are sacred to some (Minn. R. 6132.2000 Subp. 3(M)). The 10 mg/L sulfate standard similarly protects manoomin that is sacred to some Minnesotans from the harmful impacts of mining.

If Minnesota will protect a church from the aesthetic effects of mining that is 500 feet away, it should also protect manoomin from the existential threat of waterborne sulfate. That's why I ask you to apply the 10mg/L limit to the Keetac mine without any variance.