

SF1247 Alison (Doe) Hoyer - Written testimony

My name is Alison (Doe) Hoyer, and I grew up in Rochester, Minnesota and I currently live in South Minneapolis. I'm testifying today in support of SF1247, the Wild Rice Act.

When I was seventeen, I was a Rotary Youth Exchange student in Brazil. In preparation for my exchange year, we were instructed to bring something unique from our state as a gift for our host families. I ended up bringing wild rice to share, and it was perhaps the first time I recognized that wild rice is unique to Minnesota, only growing here. This cemented for me the realization that wild rice is *special*. I still bring wild rice as a special gift when traveling elsewhere, and I have since developed a relationship with wild rice through cooking.

In college, I studied linguistics at Macalester and later went on to complete a seminary program at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities. Something I still think about regularly from my seminary coursework is a short article by the Potawatomi ethnobotanist Robin Wall Kimmerer. In the article, she points out that the English language uses "it" to refer to the natural world, rendering a species like wild rice as inanimate in our grammar. But, she points out, the natural world *is* alive. As a linguist, I share this to point out that the English language we speak conditions us to think about wild rice as an inanimate object, as an "it." But our Anishinaabe and Dakota relatives recognize wild rice as kin, as a valued and sacred species with inherent rights to exist and thrive.

I believe that the Wild Rice Act is so important because it helps all of us to recognize wild rice as special, as alive, as sacred, and as inherently worthy of existing. I urge you to please support and pass SF1247, the Wild Rice Act, to secure this knowledge in our state laws and protect wild rice for all future Minnesotans. Thank you.