

SF 1247

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Our State Grain Needs Protection

Chairman Hawj (HER), Thank you for this opportunity to testify. My name is Annette Drewes, I studied wild rice harvest and management across Minnesota and Wisconsin, participated in the Governor's Task Force on Wild Rice in 2018 and co-authored the DNR's 2021 LCCMR tribal and state collaborative wild rice monitoring project.

I am asking you to support SF 1247. Minnesotan's long have embraced wild rice as their state grain, yet offer the native plant, a plant that is the foundation of a cultivated industry as well, few protections and have too long ignored the people who first gathered this grain. Much of the requested protection around pesticides is simply to identify wild rice waters in planning and management that is already taking place. I know of harvesters who sell this gourmet native food to Europe and across the U.S.. The annual harvest of wild rice is important economically, helping out hundreds who live near the poverty line. Currently there is very little known about how pesticides impact wild rice waters – and its time to change that.

This bill also requires consultation with tribal nations and involves them in planning related to education and training. Involving tribal nations, the ones who have been most active in monitoring wild rice is the right thing to do.

Finally, in regard to the mapping component of this bill. The need for assessing where wild rice grows is immediate. The DNR's current knowledge is limited because we have not had the tools. Recent collaboration with the tribes, utilizing LCCMR funds is getting us closer to being able to assess wild rice statewide, on a yearly basis. Move this bill forward, with much needed funds to accomplish this task. Thank you for your time.

Quick facts:

1. Minnesota has roughly 4x the amount of wild rice waters as Wisconsin. Wisconsin, and Michigan are working to bring back natural wild rice. **Minnesota has the highest abundance of wild rice in the U.S., yet wild rice is declining.**
2. **Wild rice is difficult to map.** Growing up from a seed each year, some years are abundant, others can be bust. The DNR has relied on wildlife managers to identify wild rice waters (NRRI map data below) primarily because there has been no other available way to accurately inventory wild rice waters. I know, because I co-wrote the grant, and coordinated the DNR's work with tribal natural resource staff to begin collaboration using field monitoring developed by the tribes, and satellite imagery to begin to assess wild rice waters statewide. **Supporting mapping technology will require additional funds**

moving forward. (See DNR's 2025 LCCMR grant: Advancing Collaborative Wild Rice Monitoring Program Technologies)

3. **In 11 counties, counties represented by Senator's Green and Wesenberg, over ½ of the wild rice waters exist** (645 of 1200 - a very rough number, and a calculation relevant only to 2020). In these same counties (primarily Aitkin, Clearwater, Beltrami, and Itasca) the majority of cultivated wild rice is also produced.
4. The **University of Minnesota, from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture**, has been funded for decades for wild rice research, while very little money has gone to the Minnesota DNR for mapping or conservation of natural stands of wild rice. **This year alone SF 1178 designates nearly a million dollars (\$900,000)** over two years toward wild rice research to benefit the cultivated wild rice industry. **In contrast the MN DNR receives funds for managing wild rice based on license sales, less than \$70,000 a year.** Fifty thousand. There are fewer than 2000 licenses sold a year to harvest wild rice

NRRI Minnesota Natural Resources Mapping Tool

Data furnished by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fish & Wildlife, Wildlife Unit. Data confidence to 1/17/2020. Wild Rice Waters by County

Analysis results

Count of Wild Rice - MN DNR , by County

Chart Table	
County	Result
Aitkin	90
Beltrami	42
Benton	0
Cass	129
Clearwater	25
Crow Wing	132
Hubbard	70
Itasca	114
Lake of the Woods	3
Mahnomen	5
Mille Lacs	11
Morrison	24