



117 South First Street • Montevideo, MN 56265

April 3, 2025

Chair Hawj
Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee
Re: S.F. 1247

Chair Hawj and Committee Members,

CURE is a rurally based, non-profit organization dedicated to protecting and restoring resilient towns and landscapes by harnessing the power of the people who care about them. We appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of S.F. 1247.

Minnesota is defined by its waters. From the mighty Mississippi to the quiet northern lakes, our state's identity, economy, and way of life have always been tied to clean water. But just as our lakes and rivers sustain us, they also sustain Manoomin/Psín, wild rice. Wild rice is a plant that is a sacred relative to many Indigenous communities, a pillar of Minnesota's natural heritage, and a critical part of the intricate web of life that supports fish, waterfowl, and countless other species.

Wild rice is unique to the Upper Midwest, thriving in the shallow, clean waters that make Minnesota special. Many of us grew up canoeing through its golden stalks in the late summer, watching birds take shelter in its grasses, and feeling the quiet sense of connection that comes from being on a lake where wild rice still flourishes. It is one of the few foods that is still harvested by hand, using traditional methods that have been passed down for generations.

But wild rice is more than just a food source; it is a keystone species, a barometer of clean water, and a source of economic and ecological benefits. It provides habitat and food for more than 17 species of wetland-dependent birds, including wood ducks and blue-winged teals, as well as for fish, amphibians, and invertebrates. Its deep, fibrous root system stabilizes sediment, reducing shoreline erosion and improving water clarity. It also acts as a natural filter absorbing excess nutrients like phosphorus and nitrogen, the key contributors to harmful algal blooms. Safeguarding wild rice means ensuring the ecological health of our waterways, ensuring that Minnesota's lakes and rivers remain viable for generations to come.

Yet today, wild rice is in trouble. Climate change, habitat destruction, invasive species, and pollution have already caused significant declines in its abundance. And according to the Governor's Task Force on Wild Rice, these threats are only getting worse. Once-thriving beds have disappeared from lakes and rivers where they stood for centuries, and unless we act now, we risk losing not just a plant, but a legacy.

SF 1247 is a crucial step in ensuring that this irreplaceable species and all it represents is preserved for future generations. By supporting the waters that sustain wild rice, we also ensure the availability of fresh drinking water, abundant fisheries, and the preservation of outdoor traditions that so many Minnesotans cherish.

For these reasons, CURE urges the Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee to pass S.F. 1247. We thank the Committee for its attention to this critical issue and for its commitment to protecting Minnesota's natural resources.

Sincerely,

/s/ Sarah Mooradian

Government Relations & Policy Director

CURE

117 S 1st Street

Montevideo, MN 56265

(320) 269-2984

sarah@curemn.org

/s/ Dawson Weathers

Legal Intern

CURE

117 S 1st Street

Montevideo, MN 56265

(320) 269-2984

weath205@umn.edu