

Testimony in support of SF 1247, The Wild Rice Act

Wild Rice is iconic to Minnesota and all its various communities, including indigenous peoples. But it is more than a potent symbol and a source of food. Wild Rice is the canary in coal mine for water quality. It cannot survive when water is significantly impaired. Hence keeping water fit for wild rice, keeps water fit for other aquatic plants and for game fish and game birds such as ducks but just as importantly for all of the water ecosystem. This bill recognizes steps that should be taken to assure such water quality if maintained and, where currently deficient, achieved. Accordingly I urge the committee to support this bills advancement.

My standing to make this request is as a private citizen, but also as someone who worked professionally with wild rice as an assistant scientist with the University of Minnesota. I wrote an extension service publication on Wild Rice Marketing. As part of the related research I visited every commercial wild rice operation in the state and talked at length with the people involved. Growers and processors. While this was long ago, in the 1980's, it made a profound impact on me. The areas where wild rice grows are among the most vulnerable economically in the state. The Red Lake and White earth reservations and other Canadian Shield portions of the state.

We have an opportunity to place into law additional protections of this resource and we should do so.

Yours,

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